

Authority

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[0 : 0 0] So this evening we want to look at the theme of the God-breathed book and tonight the theme is the authority of the Bible why it's got authority or why it's not just an ordinary human book and it's a bit of... it's not really... well it is a series but I've done it a bit badly because it's tonight and then we've got three weeks of doing the Psalms again for young people, for identity and the questions that go with that and then we're going to come back to do the next three from this God-breathed book series so it's just a short series of four sermons tonight we're looking at authority, in other words it matters because it's God's word to us then we'll look at the clarity of the Bible, that is we can understand it and we're going to look at the necessity of the Bible, we need it and then we're going to look at the sufficiency of the Bible, it's enough it tells us what we need to know, it doesn't tell us everything but it tells us what we need to know so these are the four themes that we're going to look at and today we're going to look at the authority of God's word and we're going to look at this claim that Paul makes inspired by the spirit of God all scripture verse 16 of chapter 3 of 2 Timothy chapter 3 all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting sorry, teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work and I'm really going to just speak about the first section there about all scripture being God-breathed and look at the implications of that so we're not doing a tight study of God's word here we're going to look at that theme of God's authority so we have here all scripture is God-breathed now of course all scripture here we take as being the whole Bible but when Paul originally wrote these words he wrote them before all scripture was completed didn't he he was writing scripture as he said all scripture is God-breathed and we know that there's 51 references to this word scripture in the New Testament and all of these 51 references are to the Old Testament scripture of God so while Paul is reminding us that scripture that is the Old Testament is God-breathed, it comes from God and has the authority of God we take it to mean more than that we take it to mean all of scripture, why can we say that?

well we can say that because we recognise that even at this point Paul recognised and the church recognised that there was more than just the Old Testament in 2 Peter 3, 16 Peter speaks about all of Paul's letters and calls them scripture even at that early point he uses the same word to refer to all of Paul's letters as Paul here used to refer to the Old Testament Bible that was an amazing thing, it's not very amazing for us we just think it's kind of ordinary but for someone at that time to make the claim that the scriptures or the words that Paul had written, the letters that Paul had written were the same as the Old Testament scriptures to use the same word was an amazing claim and then Paul himself in 1 Timothy 5 verse 18 quotes from Luke's Gospel and calls it scripture so we've got all the epistles and we've got all the gospels being called scripture by the New Testament itself so we recognise and see that the Old Testament was scripture and this formulated New Testament books as they were coming together were also scripture, were from God and we recognise and the writers recognise that they had a special place because they were writing scripture they were writing God's word the Holy Spirit was promised to the disciples in a special way to reveal truth to them for the church of God

Paul went, were told into this third heaven and he met with Jesus and Jesus told them unspeakable things but also told them many things that he would have used to contain that is contained in his teaching so we recognise that this verse itself becomes a proof verse for all of scripture, Old and New Testament being God breathed now people talk about the canon of scripture, the measure of scripture that is all the books from Genesis to Revelation belonging to God and people sometimes ask, well how do you know that these are the only books that were inspired by God?

well we know that because right from the very beginning even as they were being written, even as they were being read they were being read and written as scripture Paul's letters were to be passed around all the churches and the authority of God himself they were to be seen as equal to scripture so that at the very beginning it was the church that was growing out of acts that recognised what was scripture it wasn't later on at some council that they all sat down and said this is what we are going to make the Bible and we are going to leave out certain books and we are going to include certain books really the church at that time simply recognised what was already understood to be God's word and that became the canon, the books of the Bible that we have now that is very important it is very important because you have things like the Gospel of Thomas which people will talk about and other books that maybe other people will think are scripture but we recognise them and I will go on to say a little bit more about what makes scripture scripture as we go on so all scripture, scripture as we have it has been handed down to us is the Bible, is God's word

God's word for us so when we read the Bible we are reading what God wants us to read we are reading what God wants us to hear from Him okay, all scripture as God breathed, we are told here is breathed out, is expired by God God breathes out His word into those who wrote the different letters and books of the Bible He communicated to them He spoke to them He shared with them what He wanted them to know and the original manuscripts that they wrote are the manuscripts of God they are without fault, they are without error they are absolutely correct and proper because they were breathed out by God God is a communicating God and He speaks to us through His word and God used many different ways to do this to communicate His word to His people

[7 : 38] He used human beings you know, you can read the different titles lots of them are names of people Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and then there's Paul's letters and then there's different books were written by people the early books written by Moses some written by the prophets they were written by people who were breathed into by God the word that He wanted them to share sometimes it was by dictation thus says the Lord sometimes it was in a vision sometimes it was with dreams sometimes they researched things out Mark's Gospel, Luke's Gospel, Dr. Luke he's a medic, he researched things and he found out what God about the story of Jesus and was inspired by the Spirit to record that sometimes it was from memory sometimes it was eye witnesses and God used many different ways to get His truth across as He breathed His word into people's lives very often He used people's own personalities as well and their own characters come across their own personalities integrity of their own personalities as He brings the truth to them and we know that His word and it's important for us to know the differences as well because of maybe sometimes what people say but He spoke in different, not only through different people but in different genres didn't He?

some of its history, some of its poetry some of its law, some of its parable some of its epistle letters, some of its prophecy some of its narrative, some of its biography so it's very varied the Bible it's truly varied with various people and various genres used by God yet He breathed into all of it and the Bible is also God breathed but is progressively revealed so He reveals more and more about Himself as the Bible goes on I'll give you one example in the Old Testament God is very intent on simply revealing Himself as a one God the larger God is one, He says when He talks about the commands and right through the Old Testament the people of Israel believe in one God because they're surrounded by nations that believe in a multiplicity of gods and God says, no, there's one God there's one God, there's one God, there's no idols there's one God and yet in the New Testament we find God the Father being spoken of and then Jesus being worshiped as God the Son and then God the Holy Spirit and so we have a progressive revelation once that we recognize there's one God we are shown that this is a complex and a glorious and an amazing God who is one God and three persons so we find that there's progressive revelation in the Old Testament there's a theocracy with Israel and a king and God being the king or God being the leader of that theocratic nation in the New Testament the kingdom is spiritual and we're all part of it and it transcends borders and it transcends nations so there's an unfolding revelation an unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ so that even we recognize that although all of the Bible is God but it's not all of the same authority no, not all the same authority, it's not all of the same weight there's some bits of the Bible that are more important than others

I was wanting to tell someone about the gospel or about God and about the message of salvation I wouldn't generally put them to numbers I would put them to the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John because there's not all the same weight of Scripture but all is God breathed so we recognize that the Bible is his authority word it is all from him, it is useful for us it is God breathed now obviously there's a problem with that using that text to say that God's word has authority, isn't there?

have you noticed the problem with that? well the problem with that is that it's a self-authenticating claim, isn't it? it's saying, this is the word of God why is it the word of God? because I'm saying it's the word of God because I say, the Bible says it's the word of God so it's a self-authenticating claim it's its own claim all Scripture of which this text is a Scripture is saying is God breathed it says so now that argument I guess is slightly circular but the Bible can't appeal to a higher authority than itself can it?

anything that's claiming to be authoritative, absolutely authoritative can't then appeal to a higher authority, can it? because then the higher authority that it appeals to becomes more absolute and more important than itself so there is a sense in which it's a circular argument but it is a self-authenticating argument it's an absolute claim it is no one and nothing to which it is subordinate so it can't get measured by something greater or something more perfect or glorious than itself so it becomes self-authenticating and yet there are many evidences that we recognize that help us to understand that the Bible is indeed its own authority and is unique as God's word it's a unique collection, isn't it?

[13 : 32] how many Old Testament books do we know? 39 Old Testament books New Testament 27 written over 1600 years how many authors?

40 three different languages three different continents and the authors are very ordinary people they're not geniuses and yet we have one message coming through this amazing book written over so many years in different continents by different people at different times one clear message authenticating it as having a greater author a more unique author God himself it's preservation and the evidence of the original manuscripts that we have written and preserved over centuries like no other book and with evidence like no other ancient book there are around 5000 written manuscripts bearing testimony to the original letters and manuscripts that were written there are 24000 other manuscripts that back up the original manuscripts that are God's word that is absolutely outstanding there is no other ancient writing that has anything like that amount of evidence to back it up

Homer's Iliad has 634 Plato has 10 Caesar has 10 the Bible is 29000 manuscripts, copies of the original letters and books that remind us that this is God's word being preserved even the majesty of its style kind of self authenticates the Bible it bears the truth doesn't it in its wisdom and in its justice and its presentation of Jesus and his nature and his walk, his teaching his work, his salvation the majesty of that style right through it bears testimony to it being God's word the fulfilled prophecy just think about all the prophecies written hundreds of years before Jesus that are fulfilled in Jesus remarkably accurately fulfilled prophecy it's enduring popularity 100 million copies of the Bible every year but I mentioned on Wednesday night

I got the facts slightly wrong on Wednesday night about the Bible in Chinese it's one billion the one billionth Bible has just recently been printed on the biggest Bible printing press in the world over 29 years but it's still a remarkable fact of the enduring popularity of the Bible in the lives of people all through the world testifying to its authenticity and also the transformed lives the fact that people can take God's word and have their lives transformed they don't need to be in a church it's not the authority of the church that gives the Bible its authority it's not because the church says something about the authority of the Bible that makes it authoritative people's lives have been transformed they've never been near churches but they've taken up Scripture and they've met with Jesus Christ and they've been touched by the power and authority and the reality of God's word it doesn't depend on what the church thinks or otherwise or culture it has such direct authority and influence in people's lives it exposes if you let it give you your need and mine it brings grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ it transforms and gives hope to millions of people because the self-authenticating word has these other evidences that it belongs to God but there's also a spiritual dimension to the Bible being God's word and it's a recognition that even though we know it's God's word it can be evidenced in all these ways even though it's self-authenticating and it has its own claim there's a problem and the problem is that we don't accept that there's a beautiful statement in the Westminster

Confession of Faith written in kind of old language but it expresses it with a says talks about the majesty of his style the consent of all the parts the scope of the whole which is to give glory to God speaking about the Bible the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation is through the incomparable excellences and the entire perfection thereof are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God yet not withstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts so the reality is that we need God and we need God's Holy Spirit to convince us that the Bible is God's word so you know when we speak to people and they say well I don't believe the Bible and don't believe God's word we can argue very strongly we can point to the evidences we can say why it's self-authenticating we can speak to it being God breathed but ultimately we can't persuade anyone and no one will be persuaded unless in answer to prayer the Holy Spirit works in their lives 1 Corinthians 2 verse 14 the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God they are foolishness to Him and He cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned so the authority of the Bible while it has all these evidences and while it is God breathed is not enough for us we are blinded by our sin and we need God and we need the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to come under its authority so you and Braap in a Christian home and becoming a Christian himself was not persuaded merely by the beauty and the authority and the claims of the Bible but because the Holy Spirit opened up that truth to Him and enabled Him to see that can I just mention very briefly one or two objections to that claim and this can by its very nature only be a very introductory message speaking about the authority of God's word one or two objections many people today for example will say it's impossible for any book to make that claim to be God's word to be authoritative to be the truth in other words truth can't be known and today's skeptics are very there's a great deal of skepticism about any kind of authority and any kind of certainty everything's relative what authority can you say that the Bible is God's word well that becomes a philosophical argument and we can't go into that really this evening other than recognizing that that statement itself that everything is relative is an absolute statement and a rejection of truth being known to say that truth can't be known is in itself an absolute statement on what authority can truth not be known but in life in general if you move away from philosophy in life in general we believe that truth can be known now I've put a slide up with different books that you can look at on this and if you're anyone taking notes please just take a note of some of these books because they'll go into a lot of these issues in much more detail than I can or willing to this evening but we do believe you can just leave that up we do believe that truth can be known we believe it in our everyday life we believe it in a million different ways

[22 : 33] we live on the basis that truth can be known and we believe that the Bible speaks of an absolute truth and that that is a declaration of the mind of God the truth can't be known or people often say to you seriously you don't seriously take the Bible literally you don't believe the Bible literally today we talk about being under the authority of the Bible that it's infallible it's the word of God that it's absolutely without error and people say you take it literally is it not just full of fables?

well in many ways it's a kind of a red herring question because it all depends on what people mean by taking the Bible literally doesn't it? but at its fundamental we recognize it as an account of God and an account of our relationship and broken relationship with God it's not a science manual but it's an account of God and the glory of God and when that is your foundation and when you recognize that and when you believe that then for example miracles just aren't a problem they're just not an issue it depends on where you're beginning with and what you believe and what you don't believe so we recognize and have no problem with miracles because we believe in a God of miracles and therefore we take the miracles for example when they're written as narrative when they're written as we look this morning at the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking in water as literal, they're not symbolic, they're not fable they're written as literal and we accept them as literal but we do recognize that there's many different parts of the Bible that are written in different genres and in a crass literalistic way for example it talks about Herod being a fox and we don't take that literally

Herod isn't a fox with a tail or Jesus being the door or the Bible says there is no God we don't take that literally because the Bible says the fool says in his heart there is no God and we've got to be intelligent about it and recognize that there's pictures, there's parables there's stories, there's truth, there's imagery but we know as we study and look at God's word the different nature of the writings that there is and then maybe the third objection that some people have is that it's exclusivist, you claim absolute truth that's crazy that nobody else believes that truth there's no room for different roads and paths to God how can you be so proud as to say that well again I think it depends how you say these things and it depends what you say it is not our claim to exclusivity it's not our claim to saying we've got things right we're the only people with the truth the claim is God's, the claim is Jesus Christ's

I am the way, the truth in life all scriptures is God's breath and is useful for us there's no other way to the Father Jesus is the only revelation, the only answer the only hope, the only way forward it's his claim so we do have to acknowledge that it is exclusivist because of the authority of God and of his word and it is a self revelation and if it is, if he is who he claims to be there can be no higher authority there can be no other truth because truth can be known because of who he is and we recognise that and we accept that in our lives there's many other objections but a lot of these books will deal in great detail with some of these things and it's important I think to be able to defend scripture and to defend its authority and to defend it as God's book and to be able to knock back some of the cheap arguments that people will bring against that but just very briefly as we close what are the implications of that in our lives well the first and very significant one is to recognise within all of this talk of God's word and the authority of God's word is the importance of the spiritual dimension that none of these things can be recognised as Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians unless we have the Holy Spirit revealing them to us in other words we need God not just evidence we need God in our lives and we don't just need proof and we don't need more proof and we don't need more evidence we need more of God in our lives because the problem is that we're sinners and that we rebel against him and that we don't like his truth and we're blinded to it because of our selfishness and our pride and our independence but when we disobey him or when we disobey God's word rather or disobeying God and that is a spiritual spiritually recognised truth that the Bible is not a throwaway book it's not a take it or leave it but it is his book because it reveals him and his word in the beginning was the word the word was with God and the word was God

God spoke and it's a revelation of himself and when we disobey that revelation and we disobey the God of that revelation so we can't cheapen the Bible we can't make it insignificant we can't just sit there and say it's all just about feelings and about this kind of relationship with God that I've got spiritually it's about this God who reveals himself in his word and there's a spiritual dimension which says that every time we open his word we don't just need a commentary or we don't just need intellectual understanding we need the Holy Spirit and so we open the Bible with prayer say Lord I need you here it doesn't make any sense to me without you I need you we open it by prayer there's a spiritual dimension and we understand that the whole direction of the Bible the whole revelation of God it revolves around the cross of Jesus Christ it's the fulcrum so everything before the cross of Jesus is pointing towards it and everything after the cross looks back to that because a revelation of the truth of God in love

[29 : 45] God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so everything in the word everything in this God authoritative book points to the cross of Jesus Christ it's no good saying I live by the book like a rule book I live by the book by its laws no good no good living by the book will only send us to a lost eternity because we can't do it we live by the Christ of the book the Christ of the book who fulfilled the law on our behalf and who enables us by His grace to know Him and to know what He wants us to be in our lives so there's this crucial centrality of the cross within our lives but also I think we need to take the Bible seriously therefore not only because it reveals the word and Jesus and the cross but because it's God's revelation to us it's God's breath and it's useful for teaching, rebuke and correcting and training and righteousness so that we might be equipped to live our Christian lives take the Bible seriously work at understanding it don't just kind of be don't just open the Bible and say

I don't understand it and close the book and give it no guts and no effort and no work you know anything that we regard as significant and important will expend energy in it if it's worth it, if it's God's word to us is it not worth working at?

we defend it you know when someone in your workplace or in your classroom or in your home or whatever it might be, say the Bible's a lot of rubbish, you don't believe that do you?

don't just shrug your shoulders and say well, yeah, I do that but you know, be intelligent about that and think of how best to answer that are we ashamed or embarrassed by the Bible because we don't know it we take it seriously and we haven't worked out some of the big issues and when people throw questions at us do we say well, that's a great question I have no idea what the answer to that is it's easy to find the answer to all these things because hundreds of clever, intellectual and spiritual people have found the answers before us we just need to climb on their shoulders we don't need to do all the groundwork we just need to maybe read some of these books and find out what some of the clear answers to people's objections are and not condemn or criticise or try and win the argument in a self-righteous way but humbly and gently say well, this is God's book it's God's book that has changed and is changing my life learn from it make it big in our life significant and important if it is what it says to be

God breathed book for us God's communicated word of revelation and then lastly and very briefly in a sense which is the theme of the whole sermon or maybe should have been the theme of the whole sermon maybe thought I haven't even come to it is submit to its authority it's authoritative because of what it is because it's God's word it's God breathed the Holy Spirit enables us to see that and to know that Jesus says if you love me you will obey my commands so it's inextricably linked to love if you love me you will obey and it does make demands of us if you're not a Christian tonight it makes the demands of you to come to Jesus Christ and that's the authority of Scripture and as Christians it makes ethical and moral demands the young people will be looking at some of them in the field in the realm of relationships and sexuality this evening it's to mould us, it's to guide us it has teaching about honesty and about ethical living it is teaching about relationships in the home about marital, about wife and husband about how we deal in business about how we work in all of our lives how we deal with problems and opposition and hurt and betrayal all of these things we are to come under its authority so every day this week you will have a crossroads and you'll say God's way or my own way

[34 : 23] I guarantee you I say a prophetic word this evening that every single one of you and me will have decisions to make this week God's way or my own way bitterness or forgiveness obedience or disobedience impurity, holiness whatever it might be we will be at a crossroads and the path you take and the path I take will depend on what authority we give the Bible what significance we give it and God's an amazing God because what does he do?

he gives us a book that we can close he gives us the dignity of not being like robots but he says you can close this book anytime you want and you can walk your own way there are consequences for that but you must make the choice you're made in my image and in grace you're redeemed and I'm not going to force you you're going to live with a closed book or an open book and along with an open book goes an open heart his God and his word authoritative in our lives amen Lord God we pray that your word would have its authority it's a great and a large subject to deal with and today in the world in which we live your word is under so much attack it's mocked and derided by so many and we are losing confidence in the word and maybe it's because we haven't worked through some of these important issues we haven't gone with the claims of Scripture itself and we haven't founded ourselves on these truths help us to do so and help us not to be spineless but those who are really strong about your word because it's based on your love for us and on your huge compassion and sacrifice on our behalf and you've given us your word lots of it we don't understand Lord there's bits we don't have on earth you would have given the Bible in such form and why it seems so much of the Bible is taken up with what we regard as difficult issues or give us wisdom and grace to understand it's all part of your pattern and revelation and self-disclosure and maybe come under its authority the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the repentance that also comes from recognising and living under the authority of the Bible for Jesus' sake, amen.