



10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Every Sunday we come to church to worship the Lord, listen to a sermon from the Bible and then hopefully apply it to our lives in some way. If you think about it, it's kind of a strange thing that we do. Other religions have some form of worship but most of them don't have a worship service. Orthodox and conservative Jews will read from the Old Testament but don't really think about how it applies to their lives. But as Christians, and especially as what we call evangelical Christians, we are people of the book, of THE book. We study it, memorize it, teach it, proclaim it and seek to live it out. We believe that this book is actually the word of God and it is supposed to shape us, we are not supposed to shape it. If this is our final authority than it means that we are not in charge of our lives. Each Sunday and every day of our lives we live our lives as if this is really God's word.

But why do we believe these things? To the watching world, it is quite radical to constrain your beliefs and actions to a book that was written thousands of years ago. The vote handed down

from the Supreme Court this past week is going to make living by the book that much more difficult. Not that fighting gay marriage is our highest goal but neither can we agree that homosexual behavior is acceptable.

In this passage we are told that *all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*. Understand this—you aren't going to be persecuted for being nice or doing nice things, You are going to be persecuted for doing what is perceived to be intolerant things or holding intolerant beliefs. In other words, if you believe that this is God's word—and you believe it such that it affects your behavior as we talked about last week—then you will be persecuted. That's a promise. But if this isn't completely true, then why would you allow yourself to be persecuted?



Every time we open this book we start with the foundation that this book is 100% true but we need to certain about this. Let me start by showing you what happens when you begin to slip in your confidence in the Scriptures. I think you know that the most liberal, Ivy league schools in the nation were all once just as committed to the Scriptures as we are, schools like Princeton, Harvard and Yale. J. Gresham Machan was a professor of NT at Princeton Seminary in the early 20th century. By the late 1920's, Machan realized that Princeton would never again return to its evangelical roots so Machan left Princeton to start Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

The seal designed for the school has the Greek phrase “The whole counsel of God’ inscribed in the center. Thankfully the school has not abandoned its evangelical roots but that does not mean that rotten professors cannot sneak in the backdoor. Watch to this brief [video of professor Peter Enns](#) and see if

you can catch onto his core beliefs.

Even in this one minute clip you can tell that this professor is mocking the historical details of the Genesis account. He does not believe it is real history but just a made up story that illustrates a truth. He views Genesis in the same manner as the story of the Tortoise and the Hare. Obviously, a rabbit and a turtle did not race each other but the story still teaches a good lesson. Westminster Seminary fired this man about three years ago. This example reminds us of the importance of reaffirming our confidence in the word of God because families, churches and seminaries can lose their foundation in less than a single generation.

This morning we are going to work our way through our church's statement on Scripture and use this 2 Timothy passage as the Biblical foundation.

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the

ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

1. We believe

The first phrase, “we believe,” is an important starting point. If you are going to believe what follows, you must believe it in the sense that we spoke about last week. Your beliefs determine your behavior. In turn, your behavior will reveal whether or not you actually do believe what you say you believe.

2. God has spoken... through the words of the human authors

The key phrase here is that the Bible is *breathed out by God*. Many translations use the phrase “inspired by God.” This is where we get the idea of the Bible being the inspired word of God. But what the Bible means by inspiration is very different than what we usually mean in every day language. Artists musicians and writers often say that they were “inspired” to write a book compose a song or paint a masterpiece. In centuries past, this almost always meant that God was the source of the inspiration. But nowadays it can mean that the person was inspired by a beautiful sunrise or maybe they were inspired by eating a giant burrito with extra guacamole. Some people no doubt do receive inspiration from God, after all, all creativity comes from God’s common grace to all people. Part of being created in the image of God is to be creative. But people can also be actually inspired by demons and evil influences as well. We need only to listen to certain music or watch certain movies to know that this is true.

Obviously this is not the kind of being “inspired” that we mean when we talk about the inspiration of the Bible. This is why I prefer the phrase “breathed out by God” because that is closest to the original meaning. The phrase comes from a single word: Theopneustos (θεόπνευστος) which is literally “God breath”. You can see the word for God, *Theos*, and the word for breath, *pneuma*. God breathed out his word. The word is his word. This is an amazing way to describe how the Bible came to be. There is a similar verse in 2 Peter. *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). Those who wrote the Bible were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Trying to figure out exactly how human authors wrote down the inspired word of God is a bit like trying to understand the virgin birth. In fact the language has a similar ring to it. The angel Gabriel described the virgin conception this way. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” In other words, the virgin birth of Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are both completely divine acts. Both guarantee a perfect outcome—the birth of the sinless Christ and a book without errors—and both involve a somewhat mysterious cooperation between the human and the divine. Mary was “overshadowed” by the Holy Spirit and the Biblical writers were “carried along but the Holy Spirit.”

3. In the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments

When Paul said that all Scripture is breathed out by God, to which portion of the Scriptures was he referring? The word “Scripture” simply means writings but of the 49 times it is used in the

New Testament it always refers to the Old Testament. So Paul was clearly saying that the Old Testament was breathed out by God, but how do we include the New Testament in this?

Probably the most clear verse for this is found in 2 Peter 3:15-16. *Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.* Peter placed Paul's letters on the same level as "the other Scriptures." When Peter wrote this, the O.T. had been a closed book for hundreds of years. There is no way you could just start adding to the Scriptures unless it was widely recognized as such. What if I announced to you that I had written a letter to our church that was so inspired I wanted you to consider it on par with Scripture? Assuming I wasn't pulling one of my typical stunts, you would think me either insane or possessed—or both! And you should.

But they didn't consider Peter insane or demon possessed when he claimed that Paul's letters were on par with the other Scriptures because everyone recognized that this was a true statement. Furthermore, Paul himself knew this amazing fact.

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).

Paul and a few other New Testament writers knew that what they were writing down was the God breathed word of God. Now we know that not everything that Paul wrote down made it into the NT. For example, Paul wrote a total of four letters to the church in Corinth but only two of them survived which we call first and second Corinthians. There is no third and fourth Corinthians in our Bibles presumably because God did not consider them to be fully inspired and therefore he did not preserve them.

4. Verbally inspired word of God

This phrase is important because some claim that the Bible is true in a general sense but you can't say that every word is the inspired word of God. But Jesus himself believed in verbal inspiration. *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matt 5.18).* Belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible goes hand in hand with the next phrase.

5. The Bible is without error

The inerrancy of the Bible is constantly under attack. One of the most helpful descriptions of the doctrine came from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. It was written in 1978 and signed by over 200 evangelical leaders. Here is one helpful statement.

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all false-hood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific

*hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.*¹

Many people have taken hits over the years for standing on the doctrine of inerrancy. In the early 1980's, the Southern Baptists were having a civil war over the conservative group who held to inerrancy and the more progressive side who rejected inerrancy. Charles Stanley was preaching at a Wednesday night service when one of the deacons of the church approached the pulpit and was so angry that he punched Stanley in the face. Young Andy Stanley was only thirteen years old at the time and saw this whole thing play out. At that moment, to young Andy, and to thousands of other believers, Charles Stanley became a hero for Biblical faith. *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

It's also important to make a distinction between the terms inerrancy and infallibility. Inerrancy and infallibility used to mean the exact same thing and to many people they still do, but there is a subtle distinction that if you are not careful, you could be led astray.

Much of the controversy has surrounded Fuller Seminary in California. This was their statement of faith written several years after their founding in 1947. "The books which form the canon of the Old and New Testaments as originally given are plenary [fully] inspired and free from all error in the whole and in the part."

That sounds really good, something to which we could all agree. But notice the changes they made to their statement of faith on 1971. "All the books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, are the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."²

They removed any statement about being free from error and only left the word infallible. To the average person it may seem like I am just splitting hairs but in reality this change was catastrophic. When infallible is used in this way it means a sort of limited inerrancy. In other words, they believe that the Bible does contain some errors, lots of errors actually, but when it comes to the message of salvation, you can trust what the Bible says. Now tell me—does that make sense to you? How can it be true in some parts but full of errors in other parts?

Since I am somewhat of a jokester, Sheila Eisermann created a way not to be taken in by my endless kidding. Here's the rule for having a friendly conversation with Rich Maurer. (You might want to write this down for future reference.) Sheila tells people never to believe the first thing that comes out of my mouth. So I am not joking 100% of the time but I usually lead off with some smart remark. This is a bit like what the infallibility crowd wants us to do. They want us to separate what is true from what is not true when we read the Bible. You can usually tell which parts are not true when I open my mouth, but what do we use to decide in order to tell truth from error in the Bible? Moreover, whatever guide we use to judge the Bible's truthfulness would of necessity become more authoritative and truthful than the Bible since it is being used to determine truth, right?

6. in the original writings

But did you notice that this statement says that the Bible is free from error in the original writings. This may be true, but since we don't have the original copies, how do we know that our Bible is still free from error? Here's an excellent illustration which might help with this.

Suppose we wish to measure the length of a certain pencil. With a tape measure we measure it at 6 ½ inches. A more carefully made office ruler indicates 6 9/16 inches. Checking it with an engineer's scale, we find it to be slightly more than 6.58 inches. Careful measurement with a steel scale under laboratory conditions reveals it to be 6.577 inches. Not satisfied, we send the pencil to Washington, where master gauges indicate a length of 6.5774 inches. The master gauges themselves are checked against the standard United States yard marked on a platinum bar preserved in Washington.

Now, suppose that we should read in the newspapers that a clever criminal had run off with the platinum bar and melted it down for the precious metal. As a matter of fact, this once happened to Britain's standard yard! What difference would this make to us? Very little. None of us has ever seen the platinum bar. Many of us perhaps never realized it existed. Yet we blithely use tape measures, rulers, scales, and similar measuring devices. These approximate measures derive their value from their being dependent on more accurate gauges. But even the approximate has tremendous value—if it has had a true standard behind it.³

It is true—we don't have the original copies and if we did, they would probably be worshipped as idols by countless people. But we do have thousands of ancient manuscripts that have allowed us to reconstruct the original with 99.9% accuracy.

Many years ago I had a conversation with a Muslim man who told me that Islam is superior to Christianity because the original copies of the Bible have been lost but the original copy of the Koran still exists. I didn't know how to look up the information to know whether or not he was giving me accurate information. Eventually I did find that this is not true. The oldest remaining (partial) copy of the Koran was written at least 150 years after the original. By comparison, a portion of the gospel of John exists that was written thirty years after the original. And we have thousands of these manuscripts

7. Complete revelation of his will

It's important to note that what we hold in our hands is not everything that God knows or could have written down for us. The disciple John said as much at the close of his gospel. *Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written* (John 21:25).

Out of all that God could have written down for us he chose what we have in our Bible. Therefore, what we have is complete but it is not exhaustive. It's not all that there is to know but it is sufficient for what we need to know. Plus, if this is sufficient for us, it means that God hand-picked each word and preserved it for us. He could have chosen from trillions of other words and events but he purposely chose the words in this book. It elevates the importance when you see it this way.

8. For salvation

In verse fourteen, Paul wrote: *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

I love the fact that Pastor Timothy was converted by reading the Old Testament because that's all he had when he was a child taught by his mother and grandmother.

Going back to the difference between infallibility and inerrancy—if the Bible has errors, how do we know we can even trust it when it comes to the message of salvation? The answer is that we cannot. Do you realize that your eternal destiny is wrapped up in the reliability of the Scriptures? Our salvation is based on the gospel message found in the Scriptures being true and faithful. If the Bible is full of errors, then we lose the gospel. We lose and certainty of our salvation in Christ.

9. Ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged

This is the platinum bar of life. It is the measuring rod for all truth. It is the rule of law, the compass for finding your way. This is why immediately following the statement on Biblical inspiration, Paul added, *and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work*

I am sure you have noticed that two of these word are instructive—teaching and training, and two are corrective—reproof and correction. If the truthfulness of the Bible is in question, then I would not want to use it to teach or correct myself or anyone else. The last thing I would want to do is to lead someone astray.

Just because the United States Supreme Court does not look to the God-breathed Scriptures as their ultimate authority for making decisions does not mean that we should stop doing so. But again, how do we know if we truly believe that this is the God breathed word of God? If our beliefs positively affect our behavior then we really do believe it.

I have never shown a five minute video during a sermon but I thought it was worth making an exception [in this case](#).

Isn't their level of joy (from the video) wonderful and contagious? This is why our statement of faith ends with an application.

10 . Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

If you believe the Scriptures are true and free from error, then we must put these truths into action. Are you struggling to believe something the Bible teaches? Are you refusing to obey something it requires? Are you unable to trust in what it promises? Our beliefs must be the driving force in our behavior.

Rich Maurer
June 30, 2013

¹ Chicago Statement on Inerrancy, Article XII

² See Wayne Grudem's experience at Fuller Seminary. During my senior year as an undergraduate at Harvard (1970), I struggled to decide between doing an M.Div. at Westminster or at Fuller. After visiting both campuses I chose Fuller and attended for a year. But I found compromises on biblical inerrancy in class after class, and therefore, in order to learn more about a sound view of Scripture, I simultaneously read E. J. Young's book *Thy Word is Truth* along with other books by WTS faculty. At the end of that academic year I left Fuller, disappointed with their departure from belief in inerrancy, and transferred to Westminster (1971). (Letter to Dr. Peter Lillback, President of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, regarding Dr. Peter Enns; Feb. 10, 2008)

³ R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969], pp. 88-89.