

The Divine Authority of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments

● We shall follow the outline:

- What do we mean by the Old and New Testaments?
- What are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?
- The Necessity of Scriptures.
- That these Scriptures and no others are the very Words of God
- Deduce some inferences for living

What Is Meant By Old And New Testament?

- At root, it is the covenant of grace which is called a “testament” and is properly a “testamentary covenant.” It is testamentary because there are no preconditions necessary for the participants.
- *Christ* is the testator; He made the testament, and confirmed it with his death.
- The *Spirit of Christ* drew the testament, dictating it to the holy penman.
- This testament of Christ’s is one and the same as to substance, though sometimes more clearly revealed than at other times.
- The Old Testament is the more obscure draft of Christ’s will, and the New Testament is the more clear one. Thus they only differ in *circumstances*, while the substance of both are one and the same; one Mediator and Testator, one legacy or promise of remission of sin and eternal life, one faith as the way of obtaining it, and one “rule of the house” or law to govern it.

What are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?

- The scriptures of the Old Testament are those which begin with Genesis, and end with Malachi; and the scriptures of the New Testament are those which begin with Matthew, and end with the Revelation.

The Necessity of Scripture

- General revelation so-called:

- Does not reveal that there is no salvation outside Christ (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:11).
- Does not reveal that the only way to God is by faith (Mark 16:16; John 3:16; 17:3).
- And there can be no faith in or knowledge of Christ except by special revelation of him in Scripture.
- Scripture is therefore necessary for our salvation.
- **General Revelation is insufficient:**
 - Those who have only nature's light, and do not enjoy divine revelation, are without God and hope (Eph. 2:12).
 - But those who are without God and hope cannot glorify God and enjoy him.
 - Therefore we must have Scriptures in order to fulfill our chief end.
- This necessity for Scripture is laid not only upon the novice in Christianity, but also for all those who would perfect holiness in the fear of God. The Scripture is written for all indifferently and without discrimination (Col. 3:16).
- Even those who are mature will find enough in Scripture to provoke them to further growth. Thus the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," Ps. 119:18.
- It is but blindness for some to pretend that Scripture is for the weaker sort and that the "more perfect" must follow the Spirit; for if that "spirit" teaches anything contrary to the written word, it is a spirit of darkness and not of light (Isa. 8:20). If it teaches another doctrine than we have received in Scripture, it is anathema (Gal. 1:8).
- "No skill or wisdom of men representing them in the clearest point of view, nor all the power of the most elaborate and persuasive reasonings, can produce this effect. This work is the province of the Spirit of God, which he accomplishes by an internal illumination of the mind, giving blinded sinners a saving discovery of divine truths; by powerfully subduing man's obstinate will, and enabling cheerfully and readily to obey the will of God and the authority of Christ; and by working on our affections, exciting in us ardent desires after God and Christ, and a high esteem of divine truth, and removing the prejudices in our minds against it, and opening our hearts to receive the word and comply with the design thereof." – Thomas Boston, *A Body of Divinity*

The Word of God

- Christ is God's Personal Word, but the Scriptures are his written word (Hos. 1:2, etc.).

- Consider,
 - The antiquity of some of them, which are more ancient than any human writings and give us a history of the world and mankind such as could be known only to God himself, viz. the creation of the world; for how could men tell what was before men had being and thus it could not be passed down unless actually revealed by one who was present.
- Consider, further:
 - The preservation of it until this very day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued until now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.
 - The candor and sincerity of the penman of the writings. They honestly declared what was delivered and received from God, plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men who are born along by the Spirit of God.
- Consider, further:
 - The exact fulfillment of Scripture prophecies.
 - Isaiah prophesied that a man named Cyrus would deliver the Jews from captivity, not only before the captivity ever took place but more than 100 years before Cyrus was even born.
 - Jeremiah, a little before the captivity began, prophesied the exact duration of it.
 - How all the prophecies of the OT point to Christ and how he fulfilled them all.
- Consider, further:
 - The blood of the martyrs who confirmed the divinity of the book when they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth of it; in which it is apparent that they were carried above what human power alone could do.
 - The Scriptures have been confirmed by many incontrovertible miracles:
 - Many miracles wrought by Moses, Christ, apostles
 - These miracles confirmed the doctrine they taught
 - They were done in the presence of witnesses
- Reason, as follows:
 - Scriptures must be from either the creature or from God. If from creatures, then from either angels or men. Not from good angels, for they would not so cheat as to claim the word is from God. Not from devils, for the doctrine of Scripture overthrows their kingdom, pronounces their doom, uncovers their malice, brings men out of their service. By the same reason we may eliminate good and bad men from authorship. The only possibility remaining is that the Scriptures are from God and directly inspired by him.
- Reasons From Within Scripture Itself
 - The heavenliness of the matter of the scripture
 - The efficacy of the doctrine, in its convincing and searching the conscience
 - The majesty and sublimity of the style
 - The consent of all the parts of scripture

- The scope of the whole scriptures, which is to give all glory to God
- The full disclosure it makes of the way of man's salvation
- The entire perfection of the scripture;
 - That is, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

Heavenliness of the Matter

- Thus they are called "holy" (Rom 1:2) and are "pure" and "purified" (Ps. 12:6).
 - The sublime mysteries therein revealed, which nature ever so much elevated could never attain to the discovery of, such as the holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son, and the spiritual and covenantal union between believers and Christ
 - The most exact holiness of its precepts, commanding all holiness, and forbidding all impurity of heart and life under the pain of damnation; and that so universally, as all the writings of philosophers have come far short of.

Efficacy of its Doctrine

- In its convincing and searching (Heb. 4:12)
- In converting the soul from its most beloved lusts, even when crosses are all that are promised (Ps. 19:7)
- In rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses (Ps. 19:8)
- This efficacy lies not in the bare words, letters, or syllables, which have no other power than to signify the things; but it is the ordinary means which the Spirit makes use of for these ends, without which it will be but a dead letter.

Majesty of Style

- An elevated and grand diction runs through many passages of the Scriptures, particularly in the books of Moses, some parts of the Psalms, in the book of Job, and the writings of the prophets.
- There is something so truly majestic and sublime, so grand and magnificent in the style of the sacred writings, as has forced heathen philosophers to acknowledge it, and select passages there from as instances of the truly sublime.
- At the same time let it be observed, that there is nothing affected, no flights of false eloquence, no exertions of a luxuriant genius, no labored strokes of a warm imagination, no forced images, no distorted metaphors, no quaint allusions, or unnatural comparisons which are frequently found in the most admired productions of ancient and modern writers; but the utmost plainness and perspicuity, a noble simplicity, and an elegant familiarity, level to

the capacity of the illiterate, reign throughout the sacred volume.

Consent of the Parts

- Scripture written by many men over a long time
- Yet precepts, narratives, and designs all agree
- Many “modern” writers claim that the Scriptures contain discrepancies of fact and even internal contradictions
- We maintain that all such discrepancies and seeming contradictions can be resolved with some basic principles
- There is nothing in Scripture that is unimportant. That being true, we must reconcile every passage with every other passage. No contradictions can be entertained as finally unresolved or irresolvable.
- The authors of Scripture were guided by the Spirit of God in everything they wrote (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- Since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16), not of private interpretation (origin), nor came by the will of man, but holy men were moved by the Holy Ghost, then what is the source of the error or contradiction? If Scripture is the word of God, then it must be altogether pure (Psa. 19:7-8).
- If there are errors or contradictions in Scripture, then it cannot be trusted as a foundation for a sure and divine faith, for a fallible testimony can only sustain a fallible faith.
- But if the Scriptures are fallible, then we have no certain way of determining which are true and which false. Which contradictory witness should we then believe? We are left with nothing but our own opinion as though Scripture did not exist as an authority at all.
- We refuse to believe that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or contradictions may exist, they may be reconciled and most or all have actually been reconciled in years past such that it will satisfy any sober person, whose writings and commentaries may be consulted on any particular passage.
- It is a high arrogance to maintain that because one person cannot reconcile a seeming difficulty that therefore no one can do so.

The Scope of the Whole Scriptures

- The design throughout is to give glory to God: to exalt none but the infinite majesty of heaven, to humble all mankind, and empty them of themselves that God’s grace

may be all, and men in themselves nothing, but entirely dependent upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

- Who could ever have told of the Son of God dying for the sins of the elect of mankind, and have made a disclosure of the way of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?
- But Scripture has made this plan well known and has at the same time made every opposing “way” repugnant to believers.
- The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.
- Some things are clearly expressed in Scripture in so many words, as “thou shalt not kill.”

Good And Necessary Consequence

- If one can prove anything to be true from good and necessary consequence from the Scripture, it is as binding upon the conscience as if it were expressly set down in so many words.
- Good and necessary consequence is included in the sense and meaning of words. Words without meaning are no longer signs of anything.
- Example: If I invite someone to come close to a fire, it is a good and necessary consequence that my meaning is that he should be warmed or make use of its light.
- Similarly, the Scriptures are designed to give us hope (Romans 15:4), but this cannot be obtained without the use of consequences. And the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16), but can only be profitable if we know the meaning and consequence of the words. Good and necessary consequence must therefore bind the conscience if we would be “thoroughly furnished.”
- Consider that the great fundamental article of the faith, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah (Christ), before the New Testament was written, could not be proved to the Jews by express Scripture testimony, but by good and necessary consequence. Yet Christ told them that there could not be any salvation apart from such a belief, for he said “If ye believe not that I am he (Messiah), ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).
- Our Lord Jesus himself, while he would prove the fundamental article of the

faith regarding the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees of his day, did not adduce a text that said so in express words, that the dead shall rise again, but proved it from good consequence, yet no less truly or firmly than if he had produced an express text for it, Matthew 12:32.

- And it is no less evident that the apostles followed his example in this method, as in treating the resurrection of Christ, Acts 2:25, or of the resurrection of all mankind, 1 Cor. 15, and of the justification of a sinner before God in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.
- To reject all argument from consequence, one must either show that Scripture condemns the practice by adducing some express text to that effect or admit that he only knows one may not argue from consequence by himself using an argument from consequence.
- If one were to say that Scripture leaves such a matter indifferent, then he cannot lawfully condemn an “indifferent” or “neutral” practice.
- Refusing to admit good and necessary consequence overturns all religion: law and gospel, faith and practice. Without it, it cannot be proved that this person or that person is required to keep God’s commandments or believe the gospel. There is no text saying “John Smith must keep the law” or “Joe Brown must believe the gospel.” Rather the Scripture presents us with a universal premise: “All men must keep the law.” But then we provide the minor premise, “John Smith is a man.” We then conclude by good and necessary consequence that John Smith must keep the law of God.

The Scriptures Are A Perfect Rule of Faith And Practice

Or, “Scripture contains **the whole counsel of God** concerning things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, and is either expressly set down or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced therefrom.”

- God has expressly forbidden adding anything to his word; therefore it needs no addition; but what needs no addition is perfect. Therefore the word of God is a perfect rule.
 - Deut. 4:32
 - Prov. 30:6
 - Rev. 22:18
- Ps 19:8 specifically asserts that the law of the Lord is “perfect.” In that Psalm we may learn:
 - It converts the soul

- It makes the simple wise
- It rejoices the heart
- It enlightens the eyes (understanding)
- 2 Tim. 3:15 maintains that Scripture is able to make one “wise unto salvation.” But how can it do so unless it contains everything necessary for salvation?
- Consider the end for which Scriptures were written, “that believing men might have life” (John 20:31) and “through patience and comfort of the Scriptures they might have hope” (Romans 15:4). If anything necessary to salvation were not in the Scriptures, then they could not answer the end for which they were written.
- The Lord Jesus taught his disciples all that he had heard of the Father, viz. those things necessary for their salvation (John 15:15) and for making them his friends.
- He commissioned the church to teach his commandments even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). But this they cannot do with a living voice, so they do so through the Scriptures. And if the apostles would write of such things as what day of the week the money for the poor should be set aside, then how could they have neglected more weighty matters?
- Finally, the nature of the Scriptures teaches us their perfection. For if they were not perfect then they cannot be the only rule, because a rule must always be commensurate to the thing regulated. But nothing is to be added, which makes them the only rule. So as the only rule, they must also be a perfect rule.

Inferences

- The authors of Scripture were perfect penmen because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, even in things of the least importance (2 Tim. 4:13). Far less is there any real contradiction or error because the authors were all guided by the omniscient Holy Spirit.
- The power the Holy Scriptures have to bind the conscience does not come from the church or even from the authors. Rather because God alone is lord of the conscience, he alone has authority to bind it and does so by means of the Scriptures.

- The church is built upon the Scriptures and not vice versa (Eph. 2:20). This foundation is doctrinal, not personal. The superstructure depends upon the foundation; the foundation does not rest upon the superstructure.
- If the authority of the Scriptures depended upon the church, then our faith would be built upon human testimony, which is fallible. We believe we know the church when it proclaims the Scriptures, and not the other way round. Human testimony can be the foundation of divine faith.
- How can any prove that the church is to be believed except by the testimony of the Scriptures? But that would be to say that Scriptures are primary. And this gives us our point.
- Either the church has a reason to believe the Scriptures or not. If so, then let the reason be given. If not, then we should not accept them.
- The Scripture is God's own Word (2 Tim. 3:16). How blasphemous is it, then, to maintain that the Word of God depends upon the word of men! One may as well say that God has his authority from the church.
- The Scriptures are "self-authenticating," therefore. They do not, in the final analysis, depend upon the testimony of men for their validity and veracity. The Scripture evidences itself to be the very Word of God. The Word is in itself a lamp and a light and needs no other light to be shed upon it.
- The Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we have full assurance in the Word of God. Thus "great scholars" may be less persuaded of God's truth than common tradesmen. The sun is sufficient light whether blind men can see it or not.

The Necessity Of Inward Illumination

● Matthew 16:17

● 1 Cor. 2:10-12

- If the Spirit of God takes this illumination to himself as his proper work, how can any other arrogate the work to himself, as if he were fit by nature to do it?
- But if we cannot do it for ourselves, we can certainly not do it for another.
- There is an utter inability in man by nature to know savingly the things of God. They are above his capacity and beyond it. This is plain from 1 Cor. 2:14, where not only the act of receiving them is denied to natural men, but the very power of discerning them; and the reason given is "because they are spiritually discerned" and the natural man lacks the necessary equipment.
- The spiritual man, however, has precisely the discernment needed (v. 15).
- If it were natural ability that gave men the power to discern the things of the Spirit, then surely the most educated and intelligent men would have the most insight. But that is not the case, which is clear from 1 Cor. 1:20, 26-28.
- This same point is brought out by Christ in Matthew 11:25ff.
- God has placed this treasure in earthen vessels so that men might praise God, knowing that it is the power of God and not the power of the

preacher's persuasion; not the act of the messenger, but of the Spirit of God, gives true understanding of Scripture.

- Apart from saving illumination, the natural man regards the things of God to be “foolishness” (1 Cor. 2:14). Even the converted, when without the actual influence of the Spirit, are not far from reckoning as they do who are natural men, as in the case of the apostles, looking on the account brought to them of the resurrection as an idle tale (Luke 24:11). How much more, then, men who are altogether destitute of the Spirit?
- The Lord promises his Spirit to the end that men may be taught to know the truths of God savingly, Ezek. 36:26; John 14:16-17; and John 16:12-13. If we were furnished already to know the truths of God apart from the Spirit, then it would be vanity to promise the Spirit.
- The prayers of the saints for this illumination prove its necessity, Ps. 119:18; Eph. 1:17-18; Col. 1:9. And they pray in this way because they are very conscious of the need for it.
- Finally, consider John 6:45 “And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Here “coming to Christ” means having justifying faith in him. But there is a promise that every last one who hears comes. This cannot therefore refer to an external teaching, hearing, or learning. For many who thus hear never come. Instead it refers to an inward teaching that comes in such a way that the learner believes in Christ. And all those who hear in such a way do actually come to Christ, according to this passage.

The Scriptures As Our Rule

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.

The Properties of God's Rule

- It is a perspicuous or clear rule. Not all things in Scripture are equally plain either in themselves or to all men, yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.
 - Some portions of Scripture, it must be admitted are somewhat obscure and difficult to interpret, but in such things as are necessary to salvation the Scriptures are very clear. In this respect, it has been said that the

Scriptures are of such a depth that a lamb may wade in them, but an elephant may also swim in them.

- Though some of the difficult doctrines of the faith that are necessary to salvation are so high that we can never fully comprehend them, yet the way of Scripture's teaching them is very clear.
- While it may be that something necessary to salvation is obscurely spoken of in one place, yet in some other place we will find that doctrine clearly taught.
- By the "unlearned" we do not mean the unconverted, for we have already learned that the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit is necessary for a right understanding of the Scriptures. Rather, we mean simply that the unlearned Christian may use the appointed means (preaching, reading, hearing, memorizing, etc) and come to a sufficient understanding of the Scriptures to live a godly and productive life to the Lord.
- The Scripture teaches its own perspicuity in this sense. It is called a *lamp* and a *light*, Ps. 119:105. Its very entrance *gives light*, Ps. 119:130. Thus Prov. 6:23. The Apostle Peter also calls Holy Scriptures a *light* (2 Pet. 1:19) and particularly the word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, which of all the Scripture seems often to be most dark. Yet he calls it a light shining in a dark place, showing that where it shines, though the place be dark, yet the Word dispels the darkness.
- God has given his Word in such a way that its commands are not far from the understanding; the lowliest believer has no reason to complain of the difficulty of it in things necessary to salvation. Thus Dt. 30:11ff., "For this command which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, etc." And it continues, "But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."
- If all things necessary to salvation must be understood by all Christians, then the Scriptures must be clear even to the lowliest believer. But the former is true. 1 Cor. 2:15, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" and 1 John 2:20, 27, "Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but the same anointing teacheth you of all things."
- Consider to whom John was writing; not only to learned men and great theologians, but to all believers, even to "little children." This is because "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."
- Of unbelievers, Paul said that the things necessary to salvation were hidden from them, because the god of this world has blinded their eyes (2 Cor. 4:4). As for others, God himself has taught them (2 Cor. 4:6, cf. John 6:45).
- God promised to write his law on his people's hearts, and that he must

himself teach them to know him (Jer. 31:33, 34). Therefore Scripture must be perspicuous in things that are necessary for knowing God, for that which is written on our hearts cannot be other than clear to us and that which God actually teaches us can no longer be obscure to us.

- If the Scriptures are not so clear in themselves so that they require the church or its magistracy to teach us its right interpretation, then our faith must ultimately be resolved in the testimony of men; but that cannot be, for human testimony is not infallible or authoritative in itself and cannot therefore give divine faith or infallible persuasion.
- Finally, the perspicuity of Scripture is obvious if we consider its author who is the Father of lights, and the purpose for which he gave the Scriptures, that they should be a rule of faith and life. Shall he who made the tongue not speak clearly?
- It is a **perfect** rule. Nothing is necessary to be thought, believed, or done but what we can find there. Thus 2 Tim. 3:16, Ps. 19:7. But we have already insisted upon this previously.
- It is the **only** rule. This is implied by the perfection of the rule. We would only need something additional if the Word were not already perfect. Thus everything must be brought to this canon (Isaiah 8:20). We must try all our traditions (Matthew 15:3), spirits and revelations (1 John 4:1), and nothing shall be added to it (Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18; Dt. 12:32).

Inferences

- The opinions of the church fathers, decrees of councils, acts of assemblies, covenants, and minister's sermons, are not the rule of faith to us; nor can any of them bind us but as they are agreeable to and an expression of the Word of God, by which all of them must be judged and tried (Isaiah 8:20).
- Translations of the Scriptures into the common language of the people is a necessity wherever the gospel comes. How could the unlearned otherwise know them?
- This should also give us a just abhorrence of the superstition of those who believe every act should be judged by natural conscience alone without reference to the written Word of God.
- We should also abhor every ceremony added by the wit and wisdom of men. Such ceremonies imply the imperfection and insufficiency of Scripture. No holy days but the Lord's Day, no sacraments but baptism and the Lord's Supper, no offices in the church but those instituted by Christ and the apostles. We must not worship God in whorish garments, but in the white linen of his institutions.
- Finally, there is an implied exhortation to study the Holy Scriptures. Read them in your families, and read them in secret. Cry out to the Holy Spirit who dictated them, to cause you to understand them.

Do not kiss the cover and lay your Bible on a shelf, as too many so-called Protestants do in this day, for their dust will be a witness against you in the great judgment. Prize the Bible above all other books, as you prize the Author himself. Remember that it shows you the way of salvation, as a lamp and a light.