

**The Authority of the Scriptures in God**  
**Isaiah 55:8-11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Brothers and sisters in Christ – Back when life was simpler there were two boys, eight and ten years old, who lived in a small farming town and were exceedingly mischievous.

Whenever something went wrong in their community, eventually it turned up they were involved in some way, and their parents were at their wits' end in trying to deal with them.

Their mother heard that the local pastor had worked with delinquent boys in his previous ministry, so she decided to seek his help even though they were not a church-going family.

The pastor agreed to speak with the boys, but said he wanted to see the younger boy first and alone. So the mother sent him down to the church later that afternoon.

The pastor sat the boy down in his office, in front of his huge, impressive desk and for about five minutes they just sat and stared at each other. Finally, the pastor pointed his forefinger at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy looked under the desk, in the corners of the room, all around, but said nothing.

The pastor pointed at the boy again and repeated more sternly, "Where is God?" Again the boy looked all around but said nothing.

A third time, in a louder, firmer voice, the pastor leaned far across the desk and put his forefinger almost to the boy's nose, and asked, "WHERE IS GOD?"

The boy panicked and ran all the way home.

Finding his older brother, he dragged him upstairs to their room and into the closet, where they usually plotted their mischief. He finally said, "We are in BIG trouble!"

"What do you mean, BIG trouble?" his brother replied.

"Well..." the boy answered "Apparently God has gone missing from the church, and they think we did it!"

Now friends, we are faced with a similar situation or challenge in our day and age.

Many people in the church are asking "where is God?" because God has apparently gone missing from the scriptures.

Oh to be sure, you'll still see His name featured all across its pages and He's the main character in 99% of the stories – but when many people in our society, and even in the church think about the bible (*and I say think because very few people actually read it*) they think it's a book about God – but not really a book from God that carries His divine authority.

And so the expectation that one can read the bible and have God reveal Himself to you from those pages and words, and the expectation that the scriptures carry His divine authority is

just not there – and so in that sense brothers and sisters God has gone missing.

And once God and His authority go missing from the scriptures, it doesn't take very long before God is missing from among His people – His church.... and when God is missing from among His people - God goes missing from our nation.

Now that's a rather extreme evaluation of how things standing in the state of the church and our nation I realize that...

But ask yourself - Are you aware that when you are reading the scriptures you are reading something that is unlike anything else that has been written and that its purpose is to reveal to you a divine being whom you could not even begin to imagine or comprehend or know how to know without it?

And do we believe, I mean really believe... and accept... that the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament which comprise the Holy Scriptures carry the Divine Authority of the Almighty, All-powerful, and Everlasting Creator of all that

exists and as such that “*scripture is the only rule for faith and for life!*”

It’s good to reflect on this friends, and to be reminded of the fact that the authority of the scripture ultimately rests upon God.

And even as we have looked at how the authority of the scriptures is grounded in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit - that authority is only real in so far as Jesus and the Holy Spirit point us to God and also ultimately are God.

And we’ve looked at those two sources of authority first because there is something about Jesus Christ that draws us to Him – His humanity makes Him so relatable to us...

And these days people are very open to spirituality and if something can be shown to be spiritual – then it becomes very appealing to us...

So we might be willing to give the Scriptures a degree of authority based on Christ and the Holy Spirit because of how we find Jesus or spirituality appealing – but that is still authority which is conferred by us on the scripture because we like something about it.

But friends – when it comes out that the Scripture is from God; and that in and of itself it carries divine authority; and that calls for obedience and acceptance on its own merits by everyone – well...

That will quickly reveal if any of the falsehoods or half-truths about scripture – such as it being a book of our opinions written about God, or a book that contains inspirational truths, or a book that gives us good moral laws and good examples to follow, have made their way into our hearts.

And if they have brothers and sisters... I pray that as we look at how the authority of the scripture comes from God, those falsehoods and half-truths will be destroyed - and that an

awesome reverence and an eagerness and desire for this incredible book which reveals God to us will take their place.

So how do we know that the scriptures come from God? Who says so and on what authority?

Do we believe the Bible as we have it today comes from God because at some point in the life of the early church it floated down out of heaven, just like the Holy Spirit had descended at Pentecost – printed and bound and ready for distribution?

Or perhaps someone discovered it - like Joseph Smith discovered the writings of the prophet Mormon, after being instructed by an angel to go and dig up some golden tablets buried in a hillside in New York State.

Or perhaps it is divine because someone received a supernatural message and wrote it down – like Mohammed received a message from an angel and thus wrote the Koran...

No Brothers and sisters, we believe that the scriptures come from God because they make that claim themselves. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says “*all scripture is God-breathed*” which means that the bible comes from God – its source is God.

Now someone might point out that this is Paul who makes this claim, and that the scriptures he is referring to are the collection of Old Testament writings which the Jews considered to be Holy – so how is this talking about what we now call the Bible?

Well, remember what we looked at over the past two weeks with how the Old Testament points to Christ, with how Christ authorized the apostles to proclaim and teach about how He was the Messiah.

And then how the Holy Spirit continued to speak through the Apostles as He had spoken through the Prophets...

And how all the New Testament writings of the Apostles which showed and instructed people on how to become wise for

salvation in the Christ who was promised in the Old Testament are also considered to be scripture...

And how the Holy Spirit enables people to see and understand this...

So in looking at all of this we've established, from an internal source, how and why the bible - as we have it today - has God as its source and carries His authority.

And to be honest - that internal, cohesive witness of the scriptures is all that matters.

The claim of scripture to be God-breathed doesn't depend - in fact it can't depend - on external evidence or proof because there is nothing outside of God which is adequate enough to stand as a reference for God.

When we look for assurance or proof of something we are looking for something with more or greater reliability or

authority to back something up which is dubious or suspicious in its claim.

Will I be a good employee? Certainly - but my assurance is suspect because I'm looking after my own self-interests, so don't take my word - ask my references, because their word will carry more weight than mine - especially if they are established and well respected people in their field and or community.

Who or what is greater than God? In order to vouch that what God has said or done to reveal himself is true and reliable and trustworthy? Nothing...

So God's revelation is always a self-authenticating revelation brought about by the Holy Spirit, so it is the internal witness of the scriptures - its claim to be God-breathed which establishes its divine authority - and must be accepted by faith.

However having said that, there are external factors which do bear witness to the fact that the scriptures come from God;

Friends, consider that the bible as we have it today was formed over a time period of fifteen centuries where the major civilizations of our history rose and fell and their cultures changed and evolved and was written in three different languages.

And there were forty different authors who contributed to the writings in the bible over that time period, coming from a diverse variety of backgrounds, contexts, occupations and levels of education – there were kings, fishermen, a tax collector, farmers, shepherds, and prophets – even a doctor.

And these authors wrote in different periods in world history and under a variety of different personal circumstances, and from a variety of locations across the ancient world – North Africa, the Middle East, Asia Minor – even southern Europe...

And yet in spite of all this diversity and the passage of time there is a coherent story-line, a unity of theme, and consistency of intention and fulfilment and purpose that weaves all of these sixty six books together!

That is a remarkable occurrence, and it ought to be enough of a witness to consider the Bible's own claim that it comes from God, carries His authority – and then accept that by faith.

We might also consider the external factor of the effectiveness of the bible. Consider how many millions of people across the ages have had God reveal Himself to them through the scriptures?!

Consider how through the reading and study of the scriptures millions of people have come to know that humanity was created in God's own image, but that through Adam and Eve's rebellion they share in their original sin and perpetrate their own sin and offend their Creator.

Consider how this revelation has prepared millions of people to ask the question "what do I do?" and then receive the

answer from scripture *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”* (Acts 16:31)

Consider that whenever there is any concerted effort to try to stop the spread of the gospel, and persecute the Christian faith – the persecutors attempt to take away access to the scriptures...

And along that line brothers and sisters in Christ, consider that the most effective way in which the Devil has been neutralizing the Church in the West is through people who call themselves Christians denying that the scriptures come from God and carry His divine authority.

And again, looking at some of these external factors ought to make us pause and consider seriously whether we will accept by faith the internal claim of scripture to be God-breathed and carry His authority.

So, by the faith worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we do accept the scriptures as God-breathed but we may still wonder why it is necessary?

Because... many people, even in the church, are asking “Is there a God? Where is God? Who is God” and still others are asking “are we not god(s)?”

Brothers and Sisters in Christ – we take for granted what we know about God and who He is and it can be easy to assume that it’s just common knowledge.

But imagine that you had no bible input into your life at all – in fact some of us here have lived through a time in our lives like that – How would you know anything at all about God?

Or if there was just one God? Or if we ourselves weren’t gods? Or would you even be wondering about God?

Our second scripture passage today from Isaiah emphasizes the vast chasm that exists between God and humanity.

God himself is speaking in Isaiah 55:8 and He says *“my thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways”*

So right away we have it on good authority that God is a separate entity from us human beings, he is not a force of our collective human consciousness, and there is a categorical distinguishing between divine and human which God describes in vs. 9

*“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

God graciously condescends to our level of understanding and uses the example of how the heavenly realm is “higher” or very different from the earthly realm to try to help us understand how far beyond our created humanness His divinity is.

And yet God desires to have us as His covenant partners – ruling His creation, imaging Him to the world... that is what He created us for. (Genesis 1-2)

And we need God because He is the source of life, of existence; we are utterly dependent upon Him. (John 1:1-4) So God sends His word to accomplish these purposes and again He uses a created example so that we might understand - but also know that what we can visibly see contributing to sustaining our earthly life, the rain and productive land and grain and bread... comes from His Word.

God says *“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

God is determined to cross that vast existential chasm which exists between who He is in His very being and uncreated



existence and who we are in our created limited mortal existence.

Even before sin put a barrier in that vast chasm - there was still a gap between God and us that needed to be bridged by His Word.

And now that sin is also a factor God's Word needs to reveal it to us and instruct us on how to overcome it.

So brothers and sisters in Christ - what we believe, what we confess and what we trust - is that in this collection of sixty-six books we have God's Word...

His creating, sustaining, searching, reclaiming, redeeming, forgiving and transforming Word – coming to us through the words that are written on its pages...

They are God-breathed and they carry His authority and they are suitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training us

to be loyal covenant partner through the only means God has provided for us to do so – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

May the Word of God speak to us this morning to accomplish this purpose in our lives brothers and sisters.

Amen