

Theological Equipping Class

Inerrancy of Scripture

June 4, 2023

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. (Psalm 119:9–16)

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (Psalm 119:18)

Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors. (Psalm 119:24)

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. (Psalm 119:43)

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97)

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever. (Psalm 119:160)

What Inerrancy Means

- “without error”
- *the Bible always tells the truth and...always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about.* (Wayne Grudem)
- “The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.” (Grudem)
- “Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.” (Paul Feinberg)
- “We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write. We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God’s Word.” (Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy)

What Inerrancy Doesn't Mean

1. Inerrancy doesn't mean absolute precision.

How old are you?

How far away do you live?

How many pages are in that book?

Examples from Bible: numbers and quotations

2. Inerrancy doesn't mean that there are no scribal errors in later manuscripts.

Wicked Bible of 1631

What are the original autographs? What are copies?

The science of textual criticism (we'll study in September)

3. Inerrancy doesn't mean wooden literalness.

Four corners of the earth

Sun rises and sets

Figurative speech

Arguments for Inerrancy

1. Scripture's self-testimony

- *The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.* (Psalm 12:6)
- *Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.* (Psalm 119:89)
- *Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* (Proverbs 30:5)
- *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* (Matthew 24:35)
- *But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets...* (Acts 24:14)
- *...Scripture cannot be broken...* (John 10:35)

2. Logical deduction

If inspiration is true, then inerrancy follows.

God cannot lie.

- *in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began (Titus 1:2)*
- *so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie.... (Hebrews 6:18)*
- *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Numbers 23:19)*
- *...Let God be true though every one were a liar... (Romans 3:4)*
- a triune God who is truth itself (John 1:18; 8:40; 14:6; 17:3, 17; 18:37; 1 John 4:6)

Truth, omniscience, and sovereignty

"Inerrant" simply means "without error," or "true" in the sense that we normally speak of true sentences, true doctrines, true accounts, true principles. Were God to speak to us in person, "directly," none of us would dare to charge him with error. Errors arise from ignorance or deceit; and our God is neither ignorant, nor is he a deceiver. Similarly, we dare not charge his written Word with error." (John Frame)

A logical syllogism to deduce inerrancy:

A: Scripture is inspired.

B: God cannot lie and has all knowledge.

C: Scripture is inerrant.

The logical syllogism is as follows: If A and B, therefore C.

3. Church history

“Admit even a single well-meant falsehood into such an exalted authority, and there will not be left a single section of those books which, if appearing to anyone to present difficulties from the point of view of practice or to be hard to believe from the point of view of doctrine, will escape, by the same very baneful principle, from being classified as the deliberate act of an author who was lying.” (Augustine)

“An effort must be made to bring to a knowledge of the sacred Scriptures a man who will have such a reverent and truthful opinion of the holy books that he would refuse to find delight in a well-meant falsehood anywhere in them, and would rather pass over what he does not understand than prefer his own intelligence to their truth.” (Augustine)

“If we are perplexed by an apparent contradiction in Scripture, it is not allowable to say, The author of this book is mistaken; but either the manuscript is faulty, or the translation is wrong, or you have not understood.” (Augustine)

“We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from him alone.” (John Calvin)

“The full authority which [the Scriptures] obtain with the faithful proceeds from no other consideration than that they are persuaded that they proceed from heaven, as if God had been heard giving utterance to them.” (John Calvin)

“We must not deviate from the words . . . Else, what would become of the Bible?” (Martin Luther)

Protestants vs. Catholics?

Agree: inspiration and inerrancy

Disagree: canon, sufficiency, and clarity

Enlightenment: modernity/liberalism

Defenders of inspiration and inerrancy against the tides of modernity: Charles Hodge (1797–1878), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823–1886), and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (1851–1921).

Inerrancy vs. Infallibility

Historically: inerrancy meant that Scripture didn't err whereas infallibility meant that it couldn't err, but they were used interchangeably

1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Counter-response: *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* - the Rogers/McKim proposal.

Proposal: the Bible is true and authoritative in matters of faith and conduct, but it is not necessarily true or authoritative when it comes to historical or scientific details.

True in all that it teaches, but not all that it touches.

'The Bible is *inerrant* if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any topic whatsoever. The Bible is *infallible* if and only if it makes no false or misleading statements on any matter of faith and practice.' (Stephen Davis)

'The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant.' (Stephen Davis)

"I claim that all that the Bible says ought to be authoritative for the evangelical Christian unless after careful study he finds good reason to reject some Biblical claim." (Stephen Davis)

"The church has historically acknowledged that Scripture in its original manuscripts and properly interpreted is completely true and without any error in everything that it affirms, whether that has to do with doctrine, moral conduct, or matters of history, cosmology, geography, and the like." (Gregg Allison)

Objections to Inerrancy

1. We have no inerrant manuscripts; therefore, talk about an inerrant Bible is misleading.
2. The Bible is full of errors and contradictions.
3. The language of inerrancy is a recent phenomenon and wasn't really used until the 19th century and guys like BB Warfield.

The use of non-biblical words to describe biblical concepts.

The Importance of Inerrancy

“One cannot doubt the Bible without far-reaching loss, both of fullness of truth and of fullness of life. If therefore we have at heart spiritual renewal for society, for churches and for our own lives, we shall make much of the entire trustworthiness – that is, the inerrancy – of Holy Scripture as the inspired and liberating Word of God.” (J.I. Packer)

“The trustworthiness of the Scriptures lies at the foundation of trust in the Christian system of doctrine, and is therefore fundamental to the Christian hope and life.” (BB Warfield)

“Inerrancy means the word of God always stands over us and we never stand over the word of God. When we reject inerrancy we put ourselves in judgment over God’s word. We claim the right to determine which parts of God’s revelation can be trusted and which cannot.” (Kevin DeYoung)

Sin in the garden: “has God really said?”

Sitting under the word or standing over it

Recommended Resources:

“Why We Believe the Bible” from Desiring God Ministries

“Taking God at His Word” by Kevin DeYoung

“The Doctrine of Scripture” by Mark Thompson

“The Doctrine of the Word of God” by John Frame

“The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible” by BB Warfield