

# Theological Equipping Class

## *Bibliology: Authority*

April 2, 2023

What is authority? *the power or right to control or command* (right and might)

The power of connotations

Why are we averse to authority?

Definition: "The idea that all the words in Scripture are God's in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God." (Wayne Grudem)

### **Scripture**

- "The authority of the Scriptures is the great presupposition of the whole of the biblical preaching and doctrine." (somebody)
- "It [i.e., this authority which comes to us from the Bible itself] calls for instant and unqualified acceptance of every statement of the Bible on the part of man." (Edward Koehler)
- "To ignore, disregard, or reject any doctrine of the Bible is rebellion against God's authority, and will not go unpunished." (Edward Koehler)
- "belief in the authority of Scripture and submission to the authority of Scripture are necessary consequences of our submission to the lordship of Jesus." (John Stott)
- "What Scripture says, God says!" (Augustine)

Discussion: What are some of the various authorities you have or have had in your life? God, natural law, husbands, elders, parents, government, employer, law.

- When two or more are in tension, how do you decide which to follow?

### **What does Scripture say about itself?**

1. God is authoritative.
2. The Bible is the word of God. Again, this is inspiration. Authority rises or falls with inspiration.
3. Therefore, the Bible is authoritative.

Scripture is authoritative, because God is its author.

### **Authority of God**

- In some sense, any attack on the doctrine of Scripture is an attack on the doctrine of God.
  - "the Bible is not true"
  - "the Bible is unclear"
  - "the Bible contains scientific or historical errors"
  - "the Bible is not authoritative"

What are texts we might look at to demonstrate the authority of God?

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)*

So on what basis does God have authority?

Monty Python's Holy Grail illustration

Authority: *exousia* – ex + ousia

Arguments for his authority:

1. Creation
2. Redemption
3. Omniscience
4. Omnipotence

4 sources of authority:

1. revelation
2. tradition
3. reason
4. feelings and experience

Medieval period

16<sup>th</sup> century Protestantism

18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment

20<sup>th</sup> century Postmodernism

What's left: feelings and experiences

## Inspiration

- How do we know that the Bible is the word of God?
  - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3:16–17)
  - *And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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 1:19–21)
  
- Isn't that circular reasoning?
  - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,* (Hebrews 6:13)
  
- We say that Scripture is self-attesting. If the Bible really is the word of God, then there cannot be a higher authority to which we can appeal!
  
- The role of the Spirit
  - *And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Corinthians 2:13–14)
  - *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* (John 10:27)
  - "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, 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."  
(Westminster)

## The Authority of Scripture

- Texts that demonstrate that the prophets & apostles argued that inspiration implies authority.
  - “thus says the LORD” literally hundreds upon hundreds of times in the Old Testament
  - *And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25)*
  - *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)*
  - *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:6)*
- Effect: failure to believe or obey resulted in punishment
  - *I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ (Deuteronomy 18:18–20)*
  - *If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. (2 Thessalonians 3:14)*
  - *Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. (2 Thessalonians 3:6)*
  - *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (1 Corinthians 14:37–38)*
  - *For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard. Hebrews 2:2–3*

### An exception?

*To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. (1 Corinthians 7:10–12)*

*Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. (1 Corinthians 7:25)*

## History

In a sense, all history might be boiled down to a question of authority.

1. The garden: did God really say?
2. What is the issue Moses and Pharaoh are disputing?
3. What is the question in the wilderness and entering the promise land?
4. What about the prophets?
5. What about the ministry of Jesus?

Nature abhors a vacuum.

## The Purpose of Authority

God's authority is perfect. It exists for our good, for our flourishing.

1. *For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. (2 Corinthians 10:8)*
2. *For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. (2 Corinthians 13:10)*
3. *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)*

CS Lewis analogy of dog and a lamppost