

Jason Upchurch - Systematic Theology - Bibliology - Part 2 - Rom. 2:12-16

If you remember from a couple months ago we began a series on systematic theology that we'll come back to once every every 6-8 weeks or so. We'll come back to Mark's gospel next week.

But if you missed that first sermon about systematic theology I encourage you to listen to it or read it because I think it is a helpful overview of the trajectory of this series.

What we call systematic theology, the Bible usually calls this doctrine. That's the word you'll see in the Bible. Systematic theology is what the whole Bible teaches about any given topic: it could be angels or Jesus or the Holy Spirit or prayer or the church.

It's systematic because it seeks to look at a single issue in the Bible and then organize the all the biblical data on that issue in a helpful way.

Last time we introduced the idea of systematic theology and saw that the writers of the Bible and the apostles and elders of the NT were especially concerned with teaching their churches doctrine. Teaching expositionally through books of the Bible is our main diet, but people also need doctrine. Sound doctrine.

And we study systematic theology - doctrine - not to become bigger nerds than the church down the street. We study this to fuel our worship of the Triune God. God has revealed himself to us through his Word and our desire is to know it better through this study.

Last time we began looking at Bibliology: the study of the Bible. What does the Bible say about itself? Bibliology is one of the 7 major systematic theology categories: theology proper, anthropology, Soteriology, Christology, Ecclesiology, eschatology.

And under Bibliology there are many subcategories. There are many ways we would describe or define the Bible. Last time we saw that the Bible is God's Word and that God's Word is inspired.

2 Tim. 3:16: All Scripture is breathed out by God. The KJV says all Scripture is given by inspiration of God - same idea. The word we have in our hands are the very Words of the living God.

This morning we're going to look at two other categories under the heading of Bibliology - I was really hoping to get to 3 or 4 but I got a little excited. We're going to look at the Authority of the Bible - God's Word isn't a suggestion or an option for people. Since it is his very Word it has authority in our lives.

And we'll look at the Inerrancy of the Bible - does the Bible contain errors? Can we trust it?

These are all different ways to describe the Bible or understand the Bible. I'll tell you that a lot of what's about to come is a distillation of several Systematic Theologies: Joel Beeke, Greg Allison, Wayne Grudem.

1) Authority of the Bible. What do we mean by saying the Bible has authority? We mean that all people are required to submit to the Bible as the supreme source of truth and practice.

The Bible is authoritative in the lives of all people because it is God's Word. It comes from him and no one gets an exemption to its demands.

We see this in a lot of ways.

First of all, the hundreds of times in the Bible we see the phrase "Thus says the Lord..." and then the prophet goes on to say what the Lord says with the expectation that the people will obey. What that is telling the hearers is that the message about to come is from God himself, not the messenger. And God requires obedience to it.

When I send one of my kids out to gather all the other kids to come in for dinner I tell them, "Tell them that Dad says to come in." Why do I do that? Because if they don't say that, then the other kids think that child is just

trying to boss them around with authority they don't have. But if they say "Dad says" then there's authority that they themselves don't even have, but they gain it through through my message.

That's what the Bible is. Dad says. God says. When we stand on the Bible and preach the Bible we have an authority equal with God himself, because it's not our message it's God's message.

In **Rev. 2-3** there are the letters to the 7 churches. If you go look at those brief letters, every single one starts with a description of Jesus as the actual one sending the message: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand," "the words of the first and the last, who died and came to life," "the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze."

Every one of those descriptions of Jesus to the churches illustrates his divine power and authority over all the churches that the messengers are to convey to the church. So when messengers get to those 7 churches it's not just their opinion they're giving. It's a message from the Son of God himself. And Jesus makes it clear all the messages he gives are for all the churches.

I mean imagine if we got a letter in the mail from Jesus. And somehow we knew that we knew it was actually from Jesus - his actual words to Redeemer Bible Church. We'd probably pay attention wouldn't we? That's powerful.

You guys, that's exactly what you hold in your hand from **Gen. 1** to **Rev. 22**.

Now, let me just give you some verses to jot down. This is a lot of verses and there listed in your bulletin in case you need to go back. The fact that the Bible has authority is so baked into the Bible it's hard to not trip over verses that either declare it or assume it.

John 10:35: Jesus says the Scripture cannot be broken.

In the Greek it's *ou dunatai* - literally: it is not able to be broken. It is impossible to break the Scriptures. They are from God, they are eternal and immovable his Word breathed out to us and so they always have authority over us.

The apostles also spoke knowing they were speaking with the authority of Jesus.

1 Thes. 4:1-2: Paul urges the church in the Lord (as though Jesus were right there giving the message)...and the instructions he gives are through the Lord Jesus (exactly what Jesus would say because they are his words).

When we open Paul's letters we're not just reading the religious musings of some first century rabbi-turned-Christian from a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. These words are from the Lord to the Church and are expected to be obeyed by all the church in all the ages until the Lord returns.

Heaven and earth will pass away but my word will what? Never pass away. (**Matt 24:35**)

1 Cor. 14:36-37: the commands Paul gave were from the Lord. It was so clear, in fact that they were from the Lord, that Paul says that if they're really filled with the Holy Spirit - if they're really Christians - they should know that immediately he is speaking on behalf of God.

Why? Because Christians can discern the Word of God because we have the Spirit of God.

Rom. 15:4: Whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

He's talking primarily about the OT. Even though we're in the NC the OT still instructs us - has authority over us - who are in Christ.

Matt 7:28-29: And when Jesus finished these sayings [the Sermon on the Mount] the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus preached at this mass of humanity, some who believed in him and some who didn't. But he preached at all of them with authority and he did so not only because he is God and has intrinsic authority, but because what he preached is **God's Word** and so it applies to all people.

In the book of Acts, Peter and John are powerfully proclaiming the gospel to the religious leaders who had killed Jesus just a few weeks earlier and the religious leaders were astonished at their boldness to proclaim the Word of God with authority and the Bible says:

Acts 4:13: When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Who do these guys think they are preaching with boldness to the high priest and his family and all the Sanhedrin? Where do you get off telling us what to do? Well, when you're around Jesus you learn to be bold because you have authority. You're not a coward because what you hold in your hands are the very words of the living God.

We have authority because the Bible has authority. And when call people to repentance all we're doing is expressing the commission we've given by Jesus in **Matt 28:19-20** to go into all the world and make disciples.

Paul knew the same thing which is why he preached:

Acts 17:30-31: The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

All men everywhere are to repent from their sin and turn to Jesus. That's not a vague, nebulous idea. That's very specific: every single person on the planet is called to submit to the words of God. It has authority over all people.

All people are called to conform their lives to the living Word of God because it is only here that we understand what good and evil is according to the eternal God. And God demands obedience to his standard.

But what if they don't obey? He has a fixed a day on which he will judge the world according to that standard.

In fact the Word of God has so much authority, there's a part of it that is written on the conscience of every human heart. **Read Rom. 2:12**

What's he saying? He's saying whether someone has the written Law or not, if they don't obey the Law, they will perish - they will go to hell. There will be judgment. Why? **Read 13-16**

Here's why no one gets a pass: because the Law of God - which is recorded perfectly for us in Scripture - is in some way even written on every human heart. When some pigmy in Africa who's never heard the gospel sins and they feel bad about it, that's the remnant of the written Law that is actually written on everyone's heart.

People know stealing is wrong. They adultery is wrong. They know idolatry is wrong. They know hatred and murder is wrong - even without reading the Bible because it's written on their heart and is a standard for their life. What we have written down is the perfect law that's preserved that has ultimate authority.

It's interesting that most of the unbelieving world actually follows the moral code of the Bible most of the time. They call it "feeling good" or "doing the right thing" but it's really submission to the authority of the Law written on their hearts.

And it's so comprehensive that any time anyone takes an action there is a God-given, built-in system of accusing or excusing behavior.

I grew up in the Tri Cities and growing up there was always talk of radiation because we grew up around the Hanford project where they refined the uranium for use in the first atomic bombs. And so I remember they would bring these Geiger counters - basically a wand connected to a box that would detect radiation. And what you wanted was to hear no sound. If there was no sound, the object wasn't radioactive. If there was sound, it meant this thing had radiation and was bad. The more radiation, the more beeps and the more bad.

That's kind of how our conscience works. Every time we do something it passes by our moral Geiger counter. If there's no sounds, we're good. Our conscience excuses us, it let's us go.

But if we do something bad it starts beeping and giving warnings it means there's sin. And the more vile the sin, the louder our conscience beeps and screams at us like the Geiger counter to warn us. That's the Law of God built into our heart.

That little internal meter - our conscience - is there whether we want it or not. It rules our lives whether we want it or not.

The same is true with the Bible. The Bible has authority over all people whether they want it to or not. The Bible just elaborates on what's already in everyone's heart.

That's why Paul says on the day of judgment everyone's secrets will be judged.

So the Bible has authority.

In fact, one way the Bible describes conversion/salvation is when someone submits to the authority of the Word of God. **Turn to Rom. 6:15.** This is an interesting passage. Paul is telling the Romans that if they're in Christ they can't just go on sinning. That's not a thing for followers of Jesus. "But if we sin, then Jesus gives us more grace and so more grace is good, right?" No. That's not how this works. **Read 15-6**

Paul says if you just keep sinning, if you just keep presenting yourself gladly as slaves of sin then you will die. You'll go to hell is what he's getting at. Because that is living according to the flesh - that's delighting in our sinful fleshly desires. Look at the contrast. **Read 17-18**

What happens at conversion? What happens at conversion is that someone who was a slave to sin - they gladly devoted themselves to the sinful world - have now obedient from the heart.

It's heart felt obedience to the authoritative Word of God. It's obedience to the doctrine, into which they were delivered. That's what conversion is. It's not just knowing doctrine. And it's not just outward devotion occasionally. It's a heart felt obedience - internal obedience - to God's supreme authority as explained in his Word.

John 10:27: Because Jesus says My sheep hear my voice.

Jesus's voice - his words and commands to follow him - are authoritative. But only the sheep hear them.

Two quick applications:

First, if you're a believer that means that the Bible is the supreme authority in our life. It rules our lives. What made us a believer is our heartfelt submission to the Word.

So, we have to ask ourselves? Is every aspect of our life conformed to the Word of God? Or do we skirt around things? Do we avoid sanctification in some areas? The Bible has a lot to say about a lot of things. Purity, sexual

immorality, husbands and wives, children, obedience to the law, paying taxes, men working, wives raising kids, modesty, honesty, anxiety, money.

Is there anything we're avoiding?

Second, this is what we are calling people to in salvation. When we tell people the good news of salvation we are calling them to submit their entire lives to the authority of the Word of God. Not part of it, not some of it. But all of it.

Acts 20:27: Paul says that he did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul taught every aspect of the Word of God to the Ephesians. There was no part he held back, no stone he didn't over turn, no doctrine he avoided, no sin he left out, no act of obedience he said was optional.

When we call people to the Lord we call their entire lives to be conformed to the entire Word. Because the Bible has authority.

2) Inerrancy - without errors.

What we mean by inerrancy is that the Bible is without any error. It contains only truth.

It contains truth about historical matters: matters of science and history. The names of kings, names, how God has acted, people groups and their descriptions.

For decades liberal historians denied the existence of the Hittites, which the Bible talks about over and over. They couldn't exist because we haven't seen any physical proof of them. Which is like me saying blue whales don't exist because I've never seen one. But they denied the Hittites existed for decades, then you know what they found? Ruins and incontrovertible evidence of Hittites. The Bible was right all along.

Same liberal scholars: "How do we know there was even a King David? We have no historical evidence!" And then they start finding all kinds of historical evidence.

The Bible gives us an accurate description of science because it's truth. Now, the Bible isn't primarily a science book - that's not its goal. But where it speaks clearly it speaks to those issues.

What about creation? How do we know God created in 6 literal days a few thousand years ago? Because God tells us; and then he organizes commands and the week around 7 literal days.

What if there's a discovery that disproves the Bible! Do you know how many so-called discoveries have "disproved" the Bible? Thousands. You know what's still standing? The Bible. You don't have to worry about some amazing discovery that will disprove the whole Bible. Because what we have is without error.

The Bible is without error when it talks about spiritual matters. There really are angels, demons, heaven, hell, God, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. How do we know? We can't see any of this. Because is truth - it is without error.

John 17:17: sanctify them by the truth, your Word is truth.

Prov. 30:5-6: Every Word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

All of God's words are perfectly true. And they're so true that if you add anything to them - calling your addition God's Word - you are immediately a liar because your words are not his words.

The Qu'ran, the Book of Mormon, the Pope, Ellen White's writings...it's not just that they're not the Bible. They are lies and they are written by liars.

In **Deut 13** Israel was warned about false prophets who would come in and do great signs and wonders - actual demon-powered miracles. How do we know they're liars?

Deut 13:2-5: and if [the false prophet] says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God

Impersonating what God says as true is a direct attack on God. It's a direct attack on his commandments and in the OC God had people put to death for that. His Word is true, everything else is a lie.

Tit. 1:1-3: Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the **truth**, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which **God, who never lies, promised** before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his **word** through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

Heb. 6:18: It is impossible for God to lie. He cannot do it because he is truth.

John 14:6: Jesus says I am the way, the what? The truth and the life.

Psalms 12:6: The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in the furnace on the ground purified seven times.

God's Word is the absolute purest thing possible. There's no mixture of anything wrong or errant.

This goes against the whole idea that the Bible is just a book man invented or made up. It's not, it's a divine book given to us by God.

Now, let me give some caveats to all of this because if you go online and read the scoffers you'll get a whole litany of examples where the Bible has errors. Bart Ehrman is a scholar who has made a name for himself on trying to show the ridiculousness of the Bible. So it's important we have some background.

First, when we say the Bible is inerrant, we are referring to the original documents that were written. The original book of Matthew, the original book of 2 Chronicles, the original book of Ruth and so on. Why do we say that? Because we don't actually have those original documents - all we have are copies of them. And if all you have are copies inevitably what you have are differences in the copies.

If everyone here tried to write their own copy of Malachi from a single document, there would be differences. Imagine if 400 people tried to make copies, would there be more or less differences? There'd be more.

Liberal scholars claim that the more copies we find the more errors there are and the less we can trust the Bible.

Actually the opposite is true. The more copies we find, the more we are assured that we have what the original manuscripts said. There's a whole system of literary science called textual criticism that seeks to evaluate what an original document says when all you have are copies. And we have so many ancient copies of the Bible - over 5,600 copies of just the NT alone, way more than any other ancient document - that we know with laser precision what the originals were.

In fact, at this point even finding thousands of more copies wouldn't help us. So we believe the original manuscripts are inerrant, but we have so many copies we essentially know exactly what the original manuscripts say with almost 100% certainty.

Why **almost 100%**? Because there are some places - you'll see this in your footnotes where it say "or it could be this" where we don't 100% know for sure. We have a really good idea, but it could be something else. But none of those impact anything significant in our faith.

Other objections include the Bible teaches a flat earth because it uses phrases like "4 corners of the earth." The Bible does not teach a flat earth. But it does use what we call phenomenological language, just like we do.

We say sunset instead of earth turn. There are some parts of Scripture that are difficult to reconcile or mesh in our finite understanding, but never do they contradict and never do they deny reality.

Martin Luther said of Scripture: "Not only has Scripture never erred; it cannot err." There is no error, that's inerrancy, and Luther also affirmed what we call infallibility: that it is not possible for Scripture to err.

Since Scripture is God's Word, and God cannot be wrong, it is impossible for Scripture to be wrong. And so all Scripture is true. And more than that it's truth.

What if you come upon a passage that you think is wrong? What if you find that one corner of Scripture maybe I forgot about, the one place in the Bible where this whole thing unravels?

Then I would say test it. Don't avoid it, don't ignore it. Put it to the test. Dig in, ask every question, do everything you can to see if Scripture can hold up to the scrutiny.

I promise you it will. Because it's God's authoritative, inerrant Word, will never ever be broken.

Pray