St Paul’s The Authority of the Bible May 2023

Intro: A Bible-respecting bishop versus a Bible-respecting vicar – who’s right?

 Diocesan Synod: *“We must listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying NOW”*

**The Big Question. When we disagree on matters of theology and Christian living**

 **what is our court of appeal? …what is our AUTHORITY?**

The Candidates:

**a) The Church** the church decides what the Bible is teaching

**b) Reason** where my judgement or ‘reason’ (led by the Spirit) decides what to accept in

 the Bible and what to reject

**c) Experience** (it feels right to me!)\* - my feelings dictate what I believe

**d) The Bible**

Church of England Doctrine: 39 Articles of Religion

VI Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. Consequently whatever is not read in Scripture nor can be proved from Scripture cannot be demanded from any person to believe it as an article of the faith. Nor is any such thing to be thought necessary or required for salvation.

Three other Articles also cite Scripture as having authority over our denomination.

**Canon A5** says:

***“The Doctrine in the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures”***

**First and Foremost the Bible must be our Rule (our court of appeal)**

 **Why? - because it is the word of One God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.**

 It is both the testimony of men to God’s revelation and divine revelation

 itself [2 Timothy 3 v 16 ; 2 Peter 1 v 21]

It’s Inerrancy = the Bible is entirely truthful and reliable in all that it affirms in its original manuscripts

It’s Sufficiency = the Bible provides all the words we need in order to know God truly and personally, and everything we need him to tell us for us to live an abundant godly life (Psalm 19:7-9; 2 Tim.3:15-17). God commands nothing be added or taken away from his word the Bible (Deut.4:2; 12:32; Prov.30:5-6; Rev.22:18-19).

It’s Reliability - It is a true historical record written close to the time of the events and has remained pretty much unchanged since the earliest manuscripts.

However… *“The rock that shatters most of this modern thinking about the Bible is how JESUS viewed the scriptures” -* Broughton Knox

**we accept the Bible as our authority because Jesus did**

What Jesus said about the Old Testament

a) It is God’s word (divinely inspired) e.g. Matthew 19:4-5 ; Mark 7:13

**Matthew 19:4-5** *“Haven’t you read,” (Jesus) replied, “that at the beginning the Creator made the male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh….”*

b) Its historical (Jesus referred to Abel’s murder, Noah’s flood, destruction of Sodom & Lot’s wife..as fact)

c) Its eternal validity John 10:35 & Luke 16:17

d) Its moral authority - Jesus, divine Son of God, submitted to the word …

 - in his personal conduct: “It is written” – the Bible settled it

- in his official ministry: Luke 18:31; Luke 24:25-26 “I must…”

 - in public controversy: (“Haven’t you read…”)

What Jesus said about the New Testament

he provided us with the NT via the APOSTLES John 14 v 15-27

a) The ‘apostles’…were exclusively ‘called’ by Jesus

b) the apostles had Jesus’ Authority

c)The apostles were divinely reminded of Jesus’ teaching

d) the apostles had to be eye-witnesses of the resurrection

e) The Apostles recognised their own authority

**So… The Lord Jesus gave his stamp of acceptance to Scripture.**

 **He made provision for the writing of the New Testament**

Jesus’ approach to Old and New Testament was:

**Reverent** - it was the word of God. We don’t make jokes about Scripture – it is the word of God. It is the way the Triune God delegates his authority.

**Jesus was Diligent** – he worked hard at it. So it’s great when we take notes during sermons and talks – study it and re-study it. Get along to home groups, prepare before the session. Like Jesus, we work hard at it. And most of all…

**Jesus was Obedient.** That is, there is no point on being convinced on the authority of scripture if I don’t obey it.

I am then like the man who built his house upon the sand. He heard the word of God, believed in the word of God, but he didn’t do anything about it. And when the floods came and the winds blew – the house collapsed. The wise person is the person who approaches scripture **reverently , diligently** and **obediently** out of loyalty you Jesus

 Jesus Said***: “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and rightly so, for that is what I am”*** *Jn.13:13*

**Some helpful passages on the authority of the New Testament:**

**1 Thessalonians 5: 20-21** *“Do not treat prophesies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on (hold fast) to the good.” C*ontrast this a statement a few verses later (v.27):

*“I charge you before the Lord (put you under oath) to have this letter read to all the brothers”* In other words “You don’t have to test this, A letter from me is authoritative, it doesn’t have to be tested”. So Paul says, “Men’s prophesies? Yes, test them. But when it comes to my letters, just read them out and accept them.

**1 Timothy 5:18** *“For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”* Of these two quotations one is from Deuteronomy (25:4) and one is from Luke’s Gospel (10:7). And Paul says “For Scripture says…” So whether it is Luke’s Gospel or Deuteronomy it’s all Scripture!

**2 Peter 3:15** *“Bear in mind our Lord’s patience means salvation., just as our dear brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort., as they do the* ***other Scriptures****, to their own destruction.”*

So Peter is saying that Paul’s letters count as Scripture (so we can’t say Paul got some things wrong, it’s not an option).

Interestingly there was a Bishop in Syria-Antioch in the year AD110 (just after the NT was written) who says “I’m not like Peter and Paul, giving commands. They were Apostles, I am just a condemned man.”

So immediately after that apostolic age leaders were saying, “if you want ‘an authority’ go back to the Apostles”.

**Tertullian** (AD200) said “Our authorities are the Lord’s apostles”



J.I.Packer *“****The problem of authority is the most fundamental problem of the Christian Church.***

 ***This is because Christianity is built on truth. That is to say, the content of a divine revelation.***

 *Christianity announces salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, in and through whom that revelation came*

 *to completion. But faith in Jesus Christ is only possible where the truth concerning him is known.”*

\* This is essentially ‘subjectivism’ - the doctrine that knowledge is merely subjective (where views are based on or influenced by… personal feelings, tastes, or opinions and that there is no external or objective truth)