

The authority of Scripture

Part 1

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[00:00:00] There are two readings in the New Testament.

The first is in the epistle to the Hebrews and the second in the second epistle to Timothy. First of all, chapter 11, verses 1 to 6.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.

And by it he being dead yet speaketh.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God [00:01:04] had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.

But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And now in the second epistle to Timothy, the third chapter, verse 12.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing [00:02:03] of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

About a month ago I was on holiday, and in the house in which I was staying were two young people.

They were of an age round about twenty.

She was just a little older a month or two than he was. His mother was a real earnest Christian.

The boy himself went to the Baptist. [00:03:02] His girl was a Roman Catholic.

With us for the midday meal on the Sunday was a brother who happens to be in this hall tonight, this afternoon.

And after we had finished our meal, the conversation arose largely between the man and the brother who was with us, and it started, as you may well imagine, on teenagers and how they react and what they do.

From that, for the next hour and a half or more, the whole subject ranged from denominations and what we hold and what we believe and what we should do and what we shouldn't do. In fact, it looked as if it was going on all the afternoon, so the folk where we were staying had to come in and tell us, you know it all very well for you, but we have work to do, and so we had to clear out. In the course of that, one particular point arose, and that was this.

[00:04:06] While we're talking, there must be at least some ground on which we can base what we have to say.

The brother said, with which I quite agree, and that was that the basis was that here we have the word of God.

So much for that. A few days ago, I had a letter from the brother referring to these Catford Lectures, and in it he closed off with just this.

Some of us have in mind that we feel we ought, in these days, to deal with some of the truths so surely held among us.

Now that was his desire in connection with some, at least, of these Catford Lectures.

My mind went back to that long conversation that we'd had together, thinking over, I came [00:05:02] to this conclusion, and it's the one matter that I want to occupy you with for a little while this afternoon.

It's all very well.

You and I, those of us who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, have a part to play, have a life to live, have a testimony to give here in this world.

And that whole testimony, that whole life of ours, needs a solid foundation.

First of all, in the fact of our knowledge of whose we are, to whom we belong, and also that we have a reliable, definite guide for the whole of our pathway. If we haven't, and how many of you, like

myself, were brought up in homes where the Scriptures of God were held in reverence, where the things of God mattered most, where from our very [00:06:01] earliest days the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and his things were very carefully spoken of and very carefully thought of, too, and from that we were suddenly plunged amongst people who didn't believe anything at all, and immediately he threw us back on our responsibilities. The first thing we found was just this. It was no use going to them and saying, Mr. So-and-so says this, or we had a wonderful brother, you know, that came to our hall and this is what he had to say. They didn't know the brother and they cared less, and what he had to say really didn't matter at all.

We were thrown back on this, that it wasn't what some brother says. It isn't even what some very revered servant of God said, whether it be in the synopsis or whether it be in somebody's lectures or somebody's addresses. It's got to be something more definite than that. [00:07:01] Oh, very well, I can go to some of my young brethren today and say to them, yes, you know what so-and-so says in his book, I've never read it. I'm not surprised, but there you are, it's a fact. So I've come back to this, that this afternoon I want us to face, first of all, the real only solid ground that you and I have, the authority for all that may be said later in connection with these Gatford lectures.

I'm thinking of it very carefully. I know you'll say, well, you're going back too fundamental for most of us here. We're all real children of God.

Let me ask, first of all, if that's true.

One can't speak of these things without coming to this fact. Have we, one and all, come to the fact of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as our own Saviour?

That occurred in my life many years ago now.

[00:08:01] Some of you will say, well, I can give you day and time. I know the circumstances.

I can't tell you the day nor the time. I only know it was a Sunday evening. I do know that. Beyond that, no, but I know the fact that that night I came to the Lord Jesus Christ and he took me and made me his child because of what he had done at Canterbury.

Now, Lord Jesus Christ did the work.

You and I are brought into the blessing. Let me say that by the way, because otherwise you'll say to me, now look here, you're talking to us like this, but we are old, staid believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the more reason for you and I to go back again and look once more carefully at the ground and the substance of that which we believe.

Many things that were taught to me in my younger days as grounds for authority are [00:09:02] now no longer held as such.

Some of them I've given up myself, for I think they weren't real grounds at all. I think they were wrong because they were in the traditions of godly men, maybe, but traditions nevertheless, which did not have a firm foundation here in the word of God. So this afternoon, very briefly, all I have a desire to

do is to get you interested enough to turn to the scriptures yourself and find whether these things are so. You remember those words, weren't you? There were those who were more noble because they didn't swallow all they were told. They weren't content to come to a Catford lecture and then read it in tidings, or at least what somebody thinks you've said in tidings, and then say, well now that is what we've got.

That is where we stand.

That won't do at all. You and I have got to come back to something definite. So I want you to look with me, first of all, and look at it in this way. [00:10:01] We've got to start where, apparently, in a week or two's time, a brother of mine whom I've known, well, since he was born very nearly, is going to be speaking on God. And I want us to start right there. My text is taken from the 11th chapter of Hebrews that we've read together. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Oh, you say, well we believe in God, we all do. People do nowadays.

They may do in your place, they don't always in ours. They may come from a very wicked town, although it's a small one, but nevertheless a lot of them don't.

They don't believe in God at all.

There is no argument in the 11th of Hebrews for God. It's stated as a fact that he that cometh to God must believe that he is.

You and I must be convinced, first of all, of God.

[00:11:03] But that's not enough. Of course, many of us have gone as far as that. But you know, you and I who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, forget that word that's connected with it.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is.

Not that he acted in days gone by.

Not that he was the one who, in some marvellous way, sent our Lord Jesus Christ here into this world, and for our sakes, punished him at Calvary, that you and I might go free. That's lovely. I'm glad to hear it. It's good when we start there, but remember this, God is.

He is the great central object, the one personal factor outstanding all others in your life and mine.

That we so often forget.

Three parts of the depression that you and I suffer from, three parts of the despondency as we look around on the Church of God, arises from this fact that we've forgotten that [00:12:03] God is.

We almost think he's gone to sleep. That he's given over this world now, and allowing things to go on as they were. Says the apostle here in Hebrews 11, he that cometh to God must believe that he is. Not that he was, not only that he will be, in all circumstances, at all times, he is. But then he says not only so, he's got to go a stage further. We must also believe that he's a rewarder of them that

diligently seek him. That's what brings me to my subject. What I want to talk about, and I'm going to speak of it, both with what it is and the effect it should have, is the inspiration of the scriptures.

He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He's a God who is interested in the world that he created, in the men and women who live on it.

[00:13:02] He's a God who is.

Therefore being a God who is, and a God who is worth having, he's a God who can deal with the men and women of the age.

He's a God who can make himself known.

He's a God who can express himself to men and women, to you and to me.

If he can't, there's no question of dealing with the inspiration of the scriptures, because if God can't, then one's speaking quite reverently.

He's not the God of the scriptures. He's not the God that you and I know. He's a God who can. Then I come to the next point, which necessarily follows.

If he can, can I say he's a God who won't?

Seeing the world in its condition as it is, seeing men and women who've gone away from him, and there's no doubt about that, for he that cometh to God believing that he is, he's deeply conscious of one fact, and that is that this world is very, very far adrift [00:14:04] from the mind of God, and the ways of God, and the righteousness of God. In whatever walk of life you come, whatever part of the country you come from, this outstanding fact is only too blatantly true, and that is that sin has ruined men and women, and they are very, very, very far from God, in those circumstances, the God who won't.

He's a God who's immoral.

That's not the God of the scriptures. So we come to this, that our God is, that he will, and that he has expressed himself to you and to me. But where?

How? I always said, one, you know, I like to think of God, and I always drink in the wonders of God, as I tread the wonderful lanes on a, not a wet day, on a nice sunny day like some of us did have over our holidays. We're looking back on some of those days now, when we are in the, I'm glad to say I'm not [00:15:04] like it, I was once, in some of the crowded streets of our cities, so when I look back on the days when we breathed God's open air outdoors, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, we can worship God there, can you?

Can you?

Remember this, he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and wonderful as the nature is at its best, wonderful as it all is, it's the expression but of one small side of that wonderful God that you and I know.

We've got to go beyond that.

So I come back again to the scripture I asked you to read in 2nd Timothy. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

And I find this, that God has made himself known, and made himself known in two ways.

He has made himself known in that which he has recorded. [00:16:03] He has made himself known supremely, and how well we know it, don't we, supremely in the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I want you to think for just a few moments of just those two ways. Remember this. If we are going to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, and Mark, I'm dealing with as a fact, I'm not concerned tonight with the mechanics of inspiration, pardon the term, it's a rough term for a rough subject, and too many of us find ourselves occupied with the cogs and wheels and not the machine that goes.

We're worried about the things that people say to us, about how did inspiration act. If you and I could understand inspiration, we could understand our God. And if we could understand our God, he's a God that's not worth having. The God supremely is the divine, above and beyond us in every way, in every detail. [00:17:02] And he, and the manner in which he dealt with inspiration, is something beyond every one of us.

And I might say that his acting and his ways are as different as your conversion and mine. We're not so many here in this hall, after all's said and done, and yet, you know, the ways in which we were won for our Lord Jesus Christ will be very varied in each of you. What brought you to Christ drove me miles away.

The very truth that led you to bow the knee to our Lord Jesus Christ is one that left me stone cold.

I wasn't the slightest bit affected. The fact is, this is the fact that matters, that we were won for him and that we do belong to him.

And the fact of inspiration is that God spoke.

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But when was that?

Wasn't in the New Testament. That's one of the verses from the New Testament, and that wasn't written then. [00:18:04] I wonder whether, as we come together here this afternoon, we really realise the very blessedness that's ours.

We go back and we read in the Old Testament of those wonderful men of God. They were, weren't they?

Outstanding in faith, outstanding in courage, in devotion to our God. And the best of them didn't know a fraction of what you and I know. Not one of them knew our Lord Jesus Christ. Not one of them knew the certainty of sins forgiven. Not one of them knew the marvellous fact that they were children of God. Not one of them knew of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to call them to be forever with himself. That's ours.

And yet, holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The New Testament puts its seal upon the whole of the Old Testament. Don't come to me then and tell me that there are this quite you don't understand about the Old Testament. [00:19:01] There's this miracle that happened in days gone by, and those stories of kings and, you know, those bits and pieces, why they make your blood curdle sometimes, some of the things that are said.

Remember this.

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. As you and I take that Old Testament in our hands, remember this. It is the word of the living God. That's where we stand.

These things which are most surely believed amongst us, and the fundamental one of all is just this, that here we have God's own expressed word.

And the more you study this wonderful word of God, the more will you be convinced that it is God's own word.

I've neither time nor the opportunity this afternoon to go into the details and the reasons behind the, for the inspiration of the Scriptures.

I'm taking you to the plain facts of Scripture now concerning itself, beyond all. [00:20:03] For we here today who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is one sure seal that passes all else.

There were two folk, perhaps it's wicked to covet, but I've often coveted it nevertheless.

There were two folk whom I've watched going along a country lane, and many and many a day I've wished I'd been there.

You remember those two that were going to Emmaus? And Jesus himself drew near and went with them, and he took these Scriptures, these Old Testament Scriptures, and they'd never heard anything like it before.

All they'd heard them read.

They knew the story of the Old Testament. They knew the facts of the Old Testament. If you don't believe that, turn to the Acts. Find the marvellous way in which the Apostles quoted from the Old Testament. [00:21:04] They were born and bred in them. They knew them, but never had they meant anything like they did then, as Jesus himself took of those Scriptures and revealed himself to them in it all. If you really want the thrill of knowing what the Lord Jesus Christ is like, take this wonderful word of his in your hands and read it again, but please read it.

I don't mean scan it, and I don't mean skip it, and I don't mean try and get through a chapter a day. Oh, I know, I've been often times told, you know, I read a chapter every day, but as far as I'm concerned, a chapter's a great deal more than I can manage. The brother Hubbard talked about forgetting things. He's got a far better memory than I've got, so my memory's very bad indeed.

Take a little piece of God's own word, read your chapter through, yes, and go back and read it bit by

bit.

The Lord Jesus, on that way to Emmaus, took of those Old Testament Scriptures, and the [00:22:05] words lived.

They expressed himself, and he made them really live in front of them. And then, yes, you know, but there are parts of it, it reminds me, of course, of the old lady, you've all heard the story, one can't help introducing it here, who went to a minister one day, and all she'd got are the two covers of her Bible, and he asked what she'd brought that for.

Well, she says, all I've got left. You've torn all the rest out. Now Lord Jesus Christ took the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, and laid his own divine impress upon them all.

Moses, the prophets, and the Scriptures, the whole three divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures, he gave them his own divine word of approval.

As I say for you and for me today, here we are, with a wonderful word of God in our hands, God's own expressed word, but not only the Old Testament, what about the new? All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, said the Apostle writing to Timothy. [00:23:05] And not by mistake, and not by accident, do those words occur in the very last letter, recorded letter, that we have from the Apostle Paul. Not when he first started out on the way, but now as he's getting towards the end of his journey, just almost before he's met that martyrdom of his, he writes these words to his dear son Timothy, like some of our fathers in the faith have written to us.

I'm thinking of several of them. Gone home to the glory now, and I can think of the letters they've written, and the words they've said to me ere they went home. Words we treasure, as Timothy treasured this to his dying day. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, all of it, all.

Then to make absolutely sure that you and I don't miss it, Peter makes a quotation in connection with the Apostle Paul. Our dear beloved Paul, why did he say that? [00:24:03] Why of course, to try and comfort them a little bit, when they got to those bits in Paul's epistle they can't understand, and we get to a Bible reading sometimes and we get really caught.

No, it wasn't for that only, I think. It was that God would give you and I to know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it wasn't left to the individual to be concerned, it was God's own impress upon it all.

That is the thing that matters today, that you and I can stand firm.

So what you hear in these coming Saturdays, if our Lord leaves us here, and what's before us we have no idea, but whatever it is, take this book, this wonderful book of God in your hands and check all you hear.

Don't take it for granted because Mr. So-and-so, who always speaks at Catford, and I always enjoy him because he says it.

We want to all make awful mistakes at times.

[00:25:04] In any case, I'm reminded of a great servant of God, I know the many stories told of him and a lot of them are fictitious. This was told to me many years ago when I was a little lad by one of his personal friends, an Irishman, like he was, and he said somebody said to him once, after he'd made a remark in a Bible reading, he said to him, yes, but in your book you said different, then he said my book's wrong.

If this contradicts the word of God, then that is wrong, this is the inspiration of the Scriptures. Oh, but you've said, I believe that, I've held to that always, all my life, I always hold to it.

Let me ask you something more, something very vital, it was vital to me.

It shook me to my very foundations when I realised this, because many another ground has been put as the ground and basis of what we do and why we do it.

[00:26:06] I was taught, my brethren here will pardon me for this personal expression, but I was taught that when an assembly came to a decision, that was it.

If it is accordance with God's own word, yes, and if it isn't, no.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and not what Brother So-and-So says, and not what a company of people gather together, whether an assembly or a gathering, whether they say it or not, it's here and here alone that you and I can stand. It's the wonderful authority of God's own word.

Yes, you know, but there's one difficulty, and that is that some of us have grave difficulty in picturing these things in our minds. Some are gifted with a very vivid imagination, and as this comes before them, they can see [00:27:01] the whole circumstances, and others of us, we flounder. Well, the one who spoke of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, spoke also in connection with him in the very first of his epistles, John, you know, wrote, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Do you believe in inspiration?

Well, here we have not only the inspired word, we have the living word.

And when he, as an old man, years more had gone by, and John, as an old man, he's writing again, he wrote those words as an old man, but he did these too, and he said, this word of life, we've handled it.

No use you telling me that it means something different. I've seen him, and I've handled him, and I've heard him, and I've known him. He's that wonderful living son of God, the Christ of God, and that's the next thing I come to.

If the impression and the definite assurance can come to you and I on the written word [00:28:02] of God, it is because that written word presents before us the living word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nowhere will you find our Lord Jesus Christ but here, in his own precious word.

To neglect the reading of his word is to neglect the knowledge, and the association, and the communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor would I always pray, but how many of our own thoughts creep into those prayers of ours.

No reason why they shouldn't, but those prayers of ours expressed before our God shall be corrected by our study of his own word. All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable, profitable if you use it.

You and I know these things, but they shall be the power in our lives, that's what's needed. Inspiration, not as a doctrine that is held amongst us merely, but that which is of power and force in the lives of each and every one of us. [00:29:04] The circumstances arise and we don't know what to do, which way should we go, I'll ask brother so and so. If it's a very wise brother, like some of my dear brethren have been when I've played them, he said to me, well my dear brother, there's two things to do, get on your knees before the Lord and ask him, and get hold of his word and read what he's got to say in answer.

It's very true you know, all scripture is given and is profitable for doctrine.

That brings me completely again, once more, to what I had to say at the very start, that all the truths that are held by us, have got to be checked by the word of God.

So many things we've held from our youth, we've been accustomed to, oh but we always do it like that, why the old brethren you said that, years ago my grandfather used to [00:30:04] talk to me about that.

It's profitable for doctrine, and the doctrine alone you'll find here.

But aren't there some things that have grown up with the age in which you and I live? The world we live in, the thoughts, the ways young people act, are different to what they were in the early days here in the scriptures, oughtn't we to, all scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable for doctrine, and alone there will you find it.

Somebody please, don't pick out the little bits we like, you'll pardon me but you know there are parts, yes I'm afraid my bible is like yours, some parts are very dirty and others are comparatively clean, there are bits we turn to because we like them and bits we leave out because we don't, it's profitable for reproof.

Oh but brother so and so you know it, I think it was very hard in what he said to me, not [00:31:06] nearly so hard as the scriptures of God are to you and I when we read them, it's profitable for reproof.

It's here and here alone that you and I are pulled up sharp in our ways and our acts and the things we do and the things we hold, it's found here in God's own word. After all this is God's own inspired word for us, for instruction in righteousness.

But I thought I was outside the law now, oh no, what a mistake that is isn't it?

You remember the 53rd of Isaiah won't you?

Let me just quote those words, in the 11th verse it says he shall see of the travel of his soul and shall be satisfied by his knowledge and this is the way it reads as you know, [00:32:04] by his knowledge shall my righteous servant none other than our Lord Jesus Christ surely shall instruct the many in

righteousness.

Where does he do it and how? Here by his own precious word, it's profitable for instruction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, truly furnished unto all good works.

You want to know just how to live, you want to know how to act, you want to know how to serve, that's the very reason that you and I have the word of God in our hands to instruct us. But how are we to understand it?

As that young fellow said round that dinner table a month or so ago, he said to us you know, yes but you know that's maybe your explanation of it, but how do I know it means just that? Well we're not left at our own devices you know. [00:33:03] The Lord speaking of the coming of the Spirit of God said this of him, he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you or using Mr. Darby's words for it which I love, he shall take of mine and shall expound it to you. That's it, we've got the word of God and the exposition given to us by God himself by his Holy Spirit. You want more than that? That you may be perfect, truly furnished unto all good works. I'm going to leave you with just four points finally.

If this is true then it will leave you and I with one great desire, because my verse in the length of Hebrew started and I left that out, he that cometh to God, that is the call for all to come to him.

[00:34:02] Oh but I have, I've come to him. It doesn't only mean cometh to God like that, it means a continual perpetual living in his presence and for that I'm going to draw your attention to those words of the 11th of Hebrews and the 5th of Genesis in connection with Enoch. It says this, Enoch was not for God took him, but it says this, that Enoch walked with God.

If he could, without the inspiration of the scriptures, without the Spirit of God in the way that you and I have, what about us today? My brother and sister, Enoch is a condemnation to us. He was a man living in those early days before the truth of God was made known in the way that you and I have it today. When nothing was known of the one body, nothing was known even of the cross of Christ and his resurrection. It hadn't taken place and here are we today. And yet, Enoch walked with God. What did he do? Four things. The first thing was, he went in the [00:35:04] divine direction. Here we have it in God's Word, the way to go. Enoch walked with God because he walked in accordance with the Word of God. The second thing was, he didn't only walk in the divine direction, but he walked in agreement with God. As he read God's Word, he didn't say, that belongs to brother so-and-so up the street. It meant him, Enoch. And he walked with God in consequence. We pick the bits for ourselves. Oh, you know, it's patent to all of us because, isn't it true, in the very headings of our Bibles too often, that the blessings of the Old Testament belong to us and the curses of the Old Testament belong to those terrible people, the Jews. But he didn't only walk with God, he didn't only go the right way, but he went in agreement with God. And because he did, and because he was so much in contact with God, he trusted him completely. And, let me say reverently and softly, God trusted Enoch.

[00:36:05] That is what should be the aim and object, that the man of God may be perfect, truly furnished unto every good work, a man whom God can trust. Your brethren may not think much of you. It doesn't matter if they don't. Probably they're wrong in any case. If they do think much of you, they're probably worse. But here we find this, Enoch walked with God because God could trust Enoch as Enoch could trust his God. And lastly, oh the most difficult thing of all, he went in step with God. He didn't hang behind when God went, Enoch was there walking with him. And he didn't get so irritable because things were going so slowly, it's time we got to move on. He walked, he kept step

with God. Now you and I, brethren, walk with God because here we have God's hope, [00:37:04] mind and counsel expressed to us and presented in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.