

Sola Scriptura

Part 3 of 4 – Authoritative, Infallible and Inerrant

In the last article, we examined the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of Scripture and found that everything we need to be complete and fully equipped as a soldier of Jesus Christ, from instructions to evidence to correction and training, is contained in the Word of God. In this article, we will investigate our belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of God's Word, thus making the Bible the ultimate authority on every aspect of life and godliness.

The Authority of the Bible

"How can you believe a Bible that is full of errors and contradictions?" Questions like this are asked of Christians every day by people all over the world. However, those who ask such a question usually don't even have a particular error in mind, but are rather making this general assertion simply because they have heard it from someone else. The pervasive idea that the Bible is full of discrepancies stretches across cultures, peoples and time. It has circulated from person to person, generation to generation, and nation to nation as a kind of gossip without any real substance. Be that as it may, the question assumes that the Bible is filled with so many discrepancies that it is impossible to believe that it is of Divine origin, and therefore it does not have ultimate authority over us. That's why the doctrines of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture are so important and relevant. Recognition and acknowledgement of the total truth (inerrancy) and trustworthiness (infallibility) of Holy Scripture is absolutely essential to a full grasp and confession of its authority over our lives.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible is infallible

When we say that the Bible is infallible, we mean that Scripture is entirely trustworthy – it always makes good on all its claims, never fails its intended purpose and will never lead astray. In other words, since the historicity and prophecies of the Bible have never been proven false, Scripture can be safely relied on to be trustworthy and sure. God's Word is infallible simply because it can be relied upon.

More importantly, God's Word is affirmed to be infallible because God Himself is infallible. The Bible says that God **IS** truth (John 14:6) - not that He *has* the truth, but He *personifies* truth. Thus, He is the ultimate standard of truth. Therefore, the infallibility of Scripture is simply the infallibility of God speaking. What is written in Scripture is to be received as the infallible Word of the infallible God, and to assert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is just to confess faith in the divine origin of the Bible and the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God.

WE BELIEVE that the Bible is inerrant

Whereas infallibility concerns the reliability of the Bible's authority, inerrancy describes its nature. By inerrancy, we refer to the Bible being "without error." Inerrancy, therefore, refers to a central and crucial characteristic or property of the Bible – namely, its utter truthfulness.

Inerrancy of Scripture implies that there are no errors in the Bible, whether it be theological, moral, scientific, or philosophical. The basis for the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is found in the nature of God. We believe that God is truth (John 14:6), He does not lie (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29), and He is omniscient or all-knowing (Is. 46:9-10). All three of these are necessary. If God can lie, then Scripture

may not be inerrant and may contain falsehoods. If God does not lie, but is not omniscient, then He may not be intentionally lying but He does not know everything, so He may utter falsehoods. So if Scripture is the Spirit-inspired words of God (as discussed in the first article of this series), and God is truth and omniscient, then all of Scripture must be absolute truth. When interpreted correctly, in accordance with its literary genre and its literary sense, God's Word is free from all error. Such is the unanimous confession of the Psalmist, the prophets, the Lord Jesus and the apostles.

There are many people, even some Christians, who deny the inerrancy of Scripture. However, there are several dangers that arise as a result of denying inerrancy. First, we make God a liar. If there are errors in the original manuscripts that were breathed out by God, one of two things must be true: either God purposely lied or He mistakenly lied. This indicates that God is capable of making errors or of producing errors.

Second, if we deny inerrancy we lose trust in God. If there are errors in Scripture, even if in the smallest detail, and these were placed there intentionally by God, how do we know that He did not lie in other matters? When we lose trust in the Scriptures, we lose trust in God Himself and we may consequently lose our desire to be obedient to Him.

Third, if we deny the clear testimony of Scripture that it is inerrant, we make our minds a higher standard of Truth than the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible appeal to our feelings or our reason for its authority or inerrancy. We must submit to the Word, for it will not submit to us.

Fourth, if we deny inerrancy, and indicate that certain details, truths or sections of Scripture are incorrect, we cannot consistently argue that all the doctrines contained in the Bible are correct. Admitting error in any of these areas allows for the possibility that there may be error in doctrine as well.

Ultimately, inerrancy is true because perfection is consistent with God's character and because He has told us it is true. We must be careful with any objections to this doctrine, for if we indicate that we believe there are errors with the original manuscripts, we strike at the very character of God. The Bible is inerrant because it was breathed out by an inerrant God. Because of this we can have full confidence, today and always, that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact, reality and the will of God.

Belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture is essential to conserving the doctrine of biblical authority; for statements that are not absolutely true and reliable could not be absolutely authoritative. In the next article, we will conclude this series with an examination of the efficacy and power of Scripture in producing faith, obedience and transformation.

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