

The Church Vs. the Churches 4 – Bible Authority

INTRODUCTION:

1. As we continue our study of the churches of today versus the church of the Bible, I want us to consider various churches' views of Bible authority.
 - A. I want to do this because God expects us to grow and be able to spot what is counterfeit, or false, when it comes to matter of the faith (Heb. 5:12-14 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”).
 - B. I have found in this study that a church's view of authority is often like a counterfeit bill in that it looks almost like the real thing...but that there is something different, not quite right. And, that deviation is what causes all the problem, that makes it counterfeit, and that must be rejected!
 - C. It is important to realize that even if a church claims to accept the Bible's authority over its doctrine and practice, it doesn't mean these will fully align with the Bible's teaching.
2. What I want to do today is to consider the expressed views of Bible authority from today's churches and compare these to the Bible, which is what the true N.T. church must follow and teach.

BODY:

I. Catholic View: The scriptures are a profitable, but not sufficient rule of faith

A. Catholic doctrine:

1. “Many claim that 2 Timothy 3:16–17 claims Scripture is sufficient as a rule of faith. But an examination of the verse in context shows that it doesn't claim that at all; it only claims Scripture is “profitable” (Greek: ophelimos) that is, helpful. Many things can be profitable for moving one toward a goal, without being sufficient in getting one to the goal. Notice that the passage nowhere even hints that Scripture is “sufficient”—which is, of course, exactly what Protestants think the passage means.” (www.catholic.com/tract/whats-your-authority)
2. From this quote we learn that the Catholic Church believes the scriptures are *profitable*, but *not sufficient* (not enough), to lead Christian in their service to Christ. It believes that further teaching is needed, which generally comes in the form of Church tradition, or the *oral teachings of the Church*, which was also pointed out in this article.

B. Bible:

1. First, are we to understand that being *profitable* is somehow less than being *sufficient*?
 - a. Would you rather have a profitable business, or a sufficient business?
 - b. Would you rather have a useful/helpful employee, or a sufficient one?
 - c. At the very least they would be equal.
2. Second, consider the text (2 Tim. 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” – ESV).
 - a. The inspired scripture is *profitable* to **instruct, reprove/convict, correct, and train us in righteousness**.
 - b. Its **purpose** in doing these is to make us **complete, capable, proficient (BDAG) for every good work**.
 - c. In what area of the Christian life is the Scriptures **insufficient**?
3. The N.T. church teaches that the word is profitable, or fully useful, for guiding Christians to serve God faithfully and proficiently.

II. Methodist View: Scriptures are the *primary source of authority* for Christian doctrine

A. Doctrine:

1. **Book of discipline: Theological Guidelines: Scripture** – “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine...While we acknowledge the primacy of Scripture in theological reflection, our attempts to grasp its meaning always **involve tradition, experience, and reason**. Like

Scripture, these may become creative vehicles of the Holy Spirit as they function within the Church. They quicken our faith, open our eyes to the wonder of God's love, and clarify our understanding." (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/theological-guidelines-scripture>)

2. From this we learn that though the Methodist Church holds Scripture to be the *primary*, or *chief* authority, it shares some **with church tradition, experience, and human reason**.

B. **Bible:** The Bible is not the *primary* source of authority, but the *only* source of authority.

1. Jesus gave us only two choices about authority for one's actions—one's authority is either from God or from men.
 - a. Matt. 21:24-26 – "But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: ²⁵ The baptism of John—where was it from? **From heaven or from men?**" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, '**From heaven,**' **He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'**" ²⁶ But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet."
 - i. The Pharisees understood the issue—if from God, obey—if from men, reject it!
 - ii. Tradition, experience, or reason are all things that come from men, and thus have no authoritative role in determining a church's doctrine or practice.
 - b. The question was and continues to be the origin, whether it comes from God or man!
2. The true N.T. church understands that...
 - a. Bible authority trumps *tradition* (Matthew 15:3,6,9 – "He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?... ⁶...Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition... ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."").
 - b. Bible authority is to control our *experiences*.
 - i. Everything we *do* must be done according to the authority of Christ and His word (Col. 3:17 – "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."").
 - ii. Acting in Christ's name means doing what His law teaches (Matt. 7:21-23 – "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied **in Your name**, cast out demons **in Your name**, and done many wonders **in Your name?**' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice **lawlessness!**'").
 - iii. All our experiences must be governed and interpreted in light of God's word, or Bible authority!
 - c. Bible authority will judge human *reason*.
 - i. Human wisdom cannot bring us to salvation (1 Cor. 1:21 – "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."").
 - ii. God's word is designed to bring every thought and reasoning of man under the control of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5 – "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ").
3. The N.T. church rejects the doctrine that tradition, experience, and reason have any authority in the area of church doctrine and practice.

III. Presbyterian View: Scriptures are the primary, but flawed, source of authority

A. Doctrine:

1. "In matters of faith, life, and salvation, Scripture takes precedence over all other authorities. However, the precedence of Scripture does not call for the disregard of other authorities...such sources...include church councils, laws and decrees; ancient and modern

theologians and thinkers in general; and various forms of knowledge and experience.”
(www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/_resolutions/scripture-use.pdf)

2. “Presbyterians have always had a very strong doctrine of biblical authority, but historically most have shied away from calling that doctrine inerrancy. Inerrancy is a word that points to complete factual accuracy...Believing in the inerrancy of Scripture commits us to the factual accuracy of individual texts, while believing in the authority of Scripture presses us to know the message of Scripture as a whole.” (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/dont-believe/>)
3. What these quotes teach us:
 - a. Like Methodist, Presbyterians believe the scriptures to be the primary, but not the only authority in religion. This has been answered already.
 - b. Presbyterians hold the message of the Scriptures *as a whole* to be true, while rejecting that every verse, or text is necessarily true.
 - c. They reject the inerrancy of the Bible.

B. Bible:

1. The Bible claims that the words of God, Jesus, and His apostles are **true**.
 - a. God’s (John 17:17 – “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”)
 - b. Jesus’ (John 8:31-32 – “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If **you continue in My word**, then you are truly disciples of Mine;³² and **you will know the truth**, and **the truth** will make you free.”).
 - c. Paul, an apostle claimed to “speak the words of truth and reason” (Acts 26:25) and also stating that he spoke “...not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*” (1 Cor. 2:13 – NASB).
2. If passages of the N.T. spoken by God, Christ, and His apostles through the Spirit are, as Presbyterians claim, not true, then...
 - a. We can’t know **the truth** as Jesus promised.
 - b. We can know whether the whole of the Scripture’s message is true, *if its parts are false!*
 - c. This doctrine gives man authority over the Scriptures to decide what is true and, therefore, authoritative, rather than placing man under the Scriptures’ authority!
3. The true Church of the N.T. accepts all of God’s word is true, as did the holy men of old who declared, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psa. 119:160).

CONCLUSION:

1. As you can see, today’s churches’ views of the Bible’s authority over the church doctrine and practice deviates much from the Bible’s teaching and what the N.T. church must accept and apply.
2. Though prominent churches accept differing views of the Bible’s authority, the N.T. church believes and applies the truth that...
 - A. The Bible is the only source of authority in determining doctrine and practice.
 - B. Human tradition, experience, and reason have no authoritative role in determining the church’s doctrine and practice.
 - C. The Bible’s authority over our doctrine and practice is absolute, seeing it is the perfect, inerrant revelation of God’s truth for us to live by and serve Him.
3. Don’t be led astray by counterfeit religion. Instead submit to the authority of Christ revealed in its completeness in the Bible and N.T. of God!
4. If you have followed the authority of man, been subject to the powers of this world by living in sin and rebellion to God, why not come to Him in F-C-R-B that you might be raised to a new life and new hope of salvation through Christ?