



# THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

JOEL STEPHEN WILLIAMS

The term “infallibility,” when applied to the Scriptures, can be understood in a variety of ways. The most common and widely accepted definitions are that the Scriptures are “non-deceiving” and “non-failing” (Harry Boer, “The Infallibility of the Bible and Higher Criticism,” *Reformed Journal* 26, 1976, p. 9). The infallibility of the Scriptures means that its teachings “completely fulfil the Spirit’s purpose” for inspiring, authorizing, and giving us these teachings, that is, it is “wholly adequate unto the intent and purpose for which it is given” (Ibid.).

Stephen Davis defines infallibility to mean that “the Bible is fully trustworthy and never misleads us on matters that are crucially relevant to Christian faith and practice” (*The Debate About the Bible*, Westminster, 1977, p. 118). The infallibility of the Bible characterizes the reliability of the Scriptures and our conviction that in the biblical witness we can hear the voice of God, which we must obey, since it is normative for us (G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, Eerdmans, 1975, pp. 23, 265).

The primary purpose of Scripture is the moral and spiritual redemption of mankind, and Scripture is perfectly suited for this purpose as God’s inspired, authoritative, and infallible guide for our salvation. Paul reminded Timothy “how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith

in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17). What are some implications of the fact that Scripture is infallible?

Since the Scriptures are infallible, we need to read and study the Bible more. There is a difference in reading about the Bible and reading the Bible itself. There is nothing wrong with reading good books and articles about the Scriptures, but nothing can replace reading the Bible itself. Follow a regular reading plan where you read from your Bible every day. Notice how Paul describes the value of the Scriptures: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

Since the Scriptures are infallible, we need more Bible preaching. Preachers would do well to make most of their sermons expository instead of topical sermons on subjects of their own choosing, cultural sermons built around the secular calendar, and anthropocentric sermons aimed at self-fulfillment and receiving material blessings. Expository preaching carefully explains a text and applies it. The theme and content of the sermon come from the text, not from a story, the preacher’s pet hobby,

or the latest best-selling book. If we truly believe God is speaking to us through the Scriptures, we should listen carefully to what is said in the biblical text.

Since the Scriptures are infallible, we must believe and obey the biblical message. Paul praised the church in Thessalonica for doing this: “We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word” (1 Thess. 2:13). One time a woman in a crowd shouted out to Jesus, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!” (Luke 11:27). He responded, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!” (Luke 11:28; cf. 1 John 2:3-6).

Many people have written recently about the growing scandal of biblical illiteracy in our culture. Others tell of the same problem in the church. Why is this a problem? It is a problem, because the Bible contains the words of life (John 6:68). The Scriptures are like a treasure hidden in a field or a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-46).

T. B. Maston said, “The Bible is the most important possession of the Christian churches, far more important than all of their buildings, institutions, and endowments” (*Biblical Ethics*, World, 1967, p. v). So let us devote ourselves to reading, studying, and obeying God’s infallible word.