

God Has Spoken
Session 3
Preaching and the Church: Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills

“The Bible is God preaching.” – J.I. Packer

I. God Has Spoken

A. There is an impulse in God to be known and he reveals himself through speech.

1. **Genesis 1:1-3** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. [3] And *God said*, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
2. **Genesis 1:26-31** Then *God said*, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] And God blessed them. And *God said to them*, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” [29] And *God said*, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. [30] And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. [31] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Cf., **Gen. 2:7** then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.)
3. **Gen. 12:1-3** Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
4. **Exodus 3:4** When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”
5. **Exodus 4:21-23** And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. [22] Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, [23] and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.” (N.B. the other plagues and the announcement of “Thus says the LORD.”)

6. **Isaiah** (36x “Thus says the Lord”)
 7. **Jeremiah** (150x)
 8. **Ezekiel** (126x)
- B. That God speaks sets him apart from idols
1. **Psalms 115:1-5** Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! [2] Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” [3] Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. [4] Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. [5] They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (Cf., **Isaiah 40:5** “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”)
 2. **Isaiah 41:21-24** Set forth your case, says the LORD; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. [22] Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. [23] Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. [24] Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you. (Cf., **Isa. 48:11** “Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”)
- C. God has spoken (finally) in his Son
1. **Hebrews 1:1-2** “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”
 2. The Apostolic witness (who and what was the content of their sermons and writings?)

II. The Inspiration of Scripture

- A. To say that the Scriptures are “inspired” is to say that they are “God-breathed” – that is, a product of God’s Spirit.
- B. Consider how the NT authors understood the OT
 1. Jesus affirmed the entire Old Testament as the Word of God (**Matt. 4:4-10; 5:19-20; 19:4-6; 26:31, 52-54; Luke 4:16-21; 16:17; 18:31-33; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-47; John 10:34-35**), even as he came to fulfill it (**Matt. 5:17-18; 26:24; John 5:46**).
 2. **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, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 3. **2 Pet. 1:19-21** “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were *carried along by the Holy Spirit*.”

- C. Consider how the NT authors understood the apostolic letters
1. **1 Cor. 2:12-13** “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but *taught by the Spirit*, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”
 2. **2 Pet. 3:15-16** “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other *Scriptures*.” (Cf., how Paul quotes **Luke 10:7** in **1 Tim. 5:18** For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “*The laborer deserves his wages.*”)

III. The Inerrancy of Scripture

- A. The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture does not contain any errors. What it affirms is always true. It is without error.
1. The doctrine of inerrancy deals with the issues of truthfulness and falsehood in the language of Scripture.
 2. Inerrancy is another way of saying that the Bible is always true and always tells the truth about everything it talks about.
 - a. Not mere “opinion”
 - b. The role of “hermeneutics” or biblical interpretation (separate issue)
 3. There are no errors in Scripture because there can be no errors in Divine speech.
 - a. “Error arises from two sources: deceit and ignorance. Deceit is intentional error, lying. Ignorance may lead to unintentional error. But God does not lie (Num. 23:19; 2 Tim. 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and he is ignorant of nothing (Ps. 33:13-15; Heb. 4:12-13). If Scripture is his Word, therefore, it contains no errors. It is inerrant.” (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 169)
 - b. The Bible is inerrant because it is *infallible* (i.e., incapable of erring)
- B. Some current challenges to inerrancy
1. Objection #1: The Bible is only authoritative for “faith and practice”
 2. Response: The Bible itself does not make any restrictions on the kinds of subjects to which it speaks truthfully.
 - a. **2 Tim. 3:16** “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...”
 - b. **Ps. 12:6** “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”
 - c. **Ps. 119:96** “I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.”
 - d. **Prov. 30:5** “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

3. Objection #2: There are some clear errors in the Bible.
4. Response: Difficult texts are not the same as erroneous texts.
 - a. There are hard to understand texts (cf. **2 Pet. 3:15-16** “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are *hard to understand*, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”)
 - b. There are really no “new” problem texts: take heart from church history!
- C. Problems with denying inerrancy
 1. The moral problem: may we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters also?
 2. Can we trust God in anything He says?
 3. We essentially make our human minds a higher standard of truth than God’s Word itself.

IV. The Authority of Scripture

- A. Definition: “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word in Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73).
- B. All the words in Scripture are God’s words.
 1. This is what the Bible claims for itself
 - a. Note the use in the Old Testament of the phrase “Thus says the Lord” (Cf., “Thus says the king,” an edict that could not be challenged or questioned, but simply had to be obeyed.)
 - b. When a prophet spoke in this way every word he spoke had to come from God, or he would be a false prophet (Cf., Num. 22:38; Deut. 18:18-20; Jer. 1:9; 14:14; 23:16-22; 29:31-32; Ezek. 2:7; 13:1-16).
 - c. God is said to speak “through” the prophet (1 Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25; Jer. 37:2; Zech. 7:7, 12). Therefore, what the prophet says, God says (1 Kings 13:21-26; 1 Kings 21:19 with 2 Kings 9:25-26; Hag. 1:12).
 - d. The New Testament indicates that the whole Old Testament is made up of God’s words (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; cf. Matt. 1:22; 4:4; Luke 24:25,27,44; Acts 1:16; 2:16-17; John 5:45-47; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 1:1-2; 6-7).
 - e. The New Testament indicates that it is Scripture in the same sense as the Old Testament (John 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:2; Rev. 22:18-19).
 2. We are convinced of the Bible’s claims to be God’s words as we read the Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit).
 3. The authority of Scripture follows from the inspiration of Scripture.

- C. To disbelieve or disobey any word in Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

V. **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

- A. Definition: "The Sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly" (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 58).
- B. Practical application of the sufficiency of Scripture for preaching
 1. Sermons full of the Word of God are enough (even if lacking in powerful illustrations and soaring rhetoric)
 2. Sermons full of the Word of God will always be relevant

VI. **Two Reasons Why Preaching is Devalued in Our Day**

- A. We are taught to be suspicious of any speaker who speaks in a position of power.
 1. Real abuses have helped create this suspicion.
 2. The response has often been "weak" preaching (but not weak in the Pauline **1 Cor. 2:1-5** sense: "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God").
- B. The separating of God's dynamic action through the Spirit from the speech acts communicated by the words of Scripture. That is, not identifying the sermon with the word of God.
 1. [Jesus tells the seventy before he sends them out] **Luke 10:16** "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."
 2. [Jesus tells the twelve] **John 13:20** "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
 3. **Titus 1:1-3** "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word *through the preaching* with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior"
 4. **1 Thess. 2:13** "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you *heard from us*, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, *the word of God*, which is at work in you believers."

VII. God Has Spoken, Therefore We Preach

- A. **2 Cor. 4:13** (quoting Ps. 116:10) “Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we also speak”
- B. “Once we are persuaded that God has spoken . . . then we too must speak. A compulsion rests upon us. Nothing and nobody will be able to silence us” (John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 96).
- C. We listen to sermons first and foremost to hear from God.