

# What is the Word of God?

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**1Pe 1:23-25** “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

I'm amazed at the difficulties which Christians have in defining exactly what the word of God is. This difficulty is the root cause of many heresies and troubles within the churches of our age. If you do not know what the word of God is, how can you possibly understand what it says? If you cannot identify “the spirit of truth” from “the spirit of error” (1Jn. 4: 6) how can you possibly have a foundation for the knowledge of anything? Knowledge is based upon truth, and the truth is what God is, and what God speaks.

## ***Do You Know?***

You may find in this study that you are one of the Christians which I am speaking about who have difficulties in their definition of what the word of God is. Do not think yourself to be perfect in this respect. Such thinking is a form of self-deception, or even Satanic deception. Do you really know what the word of God is? Can you prove it?

When Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden his approach was to confuse them as to what was the word of God. They clearly knew what the word of God was, and what the word of God said; but when this talking serpent came along and started speaking lies, they immediately lost their true definition of what the word of God is. His question was, “Yea, hath God said?” (Gen. 3: 1). That Eve immediately lost her true definition of the word of God, is clear by what she says in verse three “But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” Notice how she now misquotes God's word. God had not said: “neither shall ye touch it”. But Eve was now totally confused as to what constituted the word of God; so confused, in fact, that she actually changed what He had spoken. This is not only the origin of sin, but it is the origin of all false belief systems. When people no longer know what God's word is, they no longer believe what God's word says.

This form of deception, as you can see, is as old as mankind. What I am talking about in this paper is nothing new. Throughout history, people have been deceived regarding “what is the word of God?” I know that you do not consider yourself to be in that category, but I would not be so sure if I were you. Perhaps

you call yourself a Biblicist. I use that term myself. Perhaps you have the reformation motto stamped on your forehead: "Sola Scriptura". I use that watch phrase myself. Perhaps you have a book that you read, and on it's cover, stamped in gold leaf are the words "Holy Bible". I have and use one of those myself. Let me tell you without any uncertainty that these things do not mean that you know what the word of God is, or that you understand what the word of God says.

I feel like I have to expound upon this a little before we proceed. If I do not press this issue, you will read on pretending that none of this applies to you. You would be making a grave error if you think that. That's what Eve thought too. A correct understanding of what the word of God was, and what it meant didn't concern her at all either. For some reason she didn't think this applied to her, and you probably don't think that you have deficient views of God's word either. After all you are a Christian, you believe the historic confessions of faith, you read, study and love the Bible. You believe, like I do, in the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. So you exempt yourself. How could you, of all people, not know what the word of God is? That's exactly what Eve did also. Had she considered carefully what the word of God was, she would not have done what the Serpent suggested, and thus violated what the word of God says. If you know what the word of God is, you will be in a position to do what the word of God says. But if you do not know what it is, you will always exalt your own thoughts, and do what is right in your own eyes (Deut 12: 8; Judges 17: 6; Judges 21: 25; Prov. 3: 7; Prov. 12: 15; Prov. 16: 2; Prov. 21: 2; Prov. 30: 12; Isa. 5: 21). This, however, is not what Christians should ever do. But sadly it is what countless millions have done and do even today. You could be doing it now, just like Eve, and not even realize it.

We are not like the people of the world, and we do not process the word of the Lord like the people of the world do. They ignore it completely, pretending that it does not even exist at all. Some Christians pay lip service to it, and pretend that they know what it is, but really they are just as much in the dark as was Eve, and as is the world today. This should not be. We are supposed to be able to identify it, and hide it in our hearts **THAT WE MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST GOD** (Ps. 119: 11; Ps. 37: 31). Eve obviously did not do this. Had she properly identified the word of God, she would have hid it in her heart, and she would not have sinned. Beware, and be very careful. You are not better than Eve, when she came directly from the hand of God. If she could so quickly lose sight of what the word of God was, then you are more apt to do the same thing, because you live in a world where men love darkness rather than light (Jn. 3: 19). You live in a world of sin. You are surrounded by evil. She was surrounded by good. She lived in a world that God said was "very good" (Gen. 1: 31). You live in world that God says is very evil (Gal. 1: 4).

This tendency toward darkness is the entire thrust of our age, and Christians are not exempt from these attitudes or heresies. In fact, Satan loves to have

Christians running around with deficient views of God's word. He is the master at using the word of God in twisted and perverted ways. Every deficiency of knowledge springs from him. All men, who were originally created in the image of God, have personally sinned and bought into the devil's faulty definitions of God's word. Christians are not exempt from this form of Satanic temptation. Christ Himself was thus tempted by Satan in the wilderness. "And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matt. 4: 6). Notice how Lucifer quoted and used the written Scriptures. This should not be just a casual observation that you mentally acknowledge. It should be something that rivets your attention on the fact that Satan could be doing that very thing right now, to you. If he could do this with Christ, he can do it with you, because the servant is never greater than his master. Satan's faulty use of the word springs from his faulty definition of it. To him, the word of God is something to be used to further his own selfish and wicked purposes. He can lead Christians to do the same thing, so that they ignore what the word really is, and they make it to be what they want it to be, so that they can do or believe what they want, and not what it really says.

This is a serious problem. Let me give you just one simple example. I was teaching a class one time and after the class a student came to me and said "Pastor Earl, I agree with everything you said, except for that part about election. I believe that "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" so it is obvious that man has a free-will." I'm sure that you have heard similar types of common but faulty definitions. I pointed out that 2Pet. 3: 9, says nothing about mans free will, and that it is talking about God's free will. "God is not willing". How can you confuse God's will with mans will? I asked. And after a short discussion it became clear that this person was trying to use the Bible to justify his own repugnancy toward the Bible doctrine of Sovereign Election, and his own personal belief in the free will of man. Such twisting of the Scriptures is exactly what Satan always does. People can quote the Bible and be following Satan's will completely. They quote the Scriptures to justify their own sinful beliefs and practices. Following Satan's twisted hermeneutics they cannot have the true knowledge of God's word. So they mix it all up, twist it to fortify their own persuasions, and could care less about really learning what it is and how it works to change us and our faulty thinking. Don't tell me that this does not happen. I know it happens. I see it happening all the time. I fight this godless tendency all the time in my own life. I war against it. It happens repeatedly, and in every church that I have ever been in. Men love darkness rather than light, and everyone naturally gravitates toward it...professing Christians included. We should always be on the lookout for this evil way of thinking, and should repent of it immediately and constantly.

But notice how Christ answered Satan. Based on the true definition and understanding of what the word of God really is, He silenced the Devil and caused him to flee from His presence. "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of

God“ (Matt. 4: 4). “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God“ (Matt. 4: 7). “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4: 10). “Then the devil leaveth him” (Matt. 4: 11). It is no wonder that God tells every believer to “resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4: 7). Jesus set the example for us in this matter. You are not resisting him if you’re thinking just like he thinks, and if you use the Scriptures the same way that he uses them. The Devil is only and always a liar (Jn 8: 44). The truth is not in him, or anyone who thinks like he thinks (1Jn. 2: 4).

## ***The King James Bible is not The Word Of God!***

There is a shameful movement that has been going on in fundamentalist churches and schools for quite some time. It is the King James Only movement. I say that it is shameful, because it shows the world just how ignorant Christians really are about this thing called “The Word of God”. We are supposed to identify the Word of God (Deut. 18: 22; Col. 3: 16; 2Thess. 3: 1), and we are supposed to declare it to the world (Acts 8: 4, 25; Acts 15: 35; 1Thess. 1: 8; Titus 1: 3). Since these things are true, then we had better be able to correctly identify what the word of God is. I can say unequivocally that the King James Bible is not the Word of God. If you are a King James Only person, you might think that I’m blaspheming when I say that the King James Bible is not the word of the Lord. I don’t really care what you think, if you believe such nonsense. Your viewpoints and thoughts have been tainted, and since you cannot recognize the truth from error, I do not wish to receive anything you might have to say, and I do not care about anything you may think. I am here to prove to you, that it is you who are blaspheming, not only the Bible, but you are blaspheming God Himself.

Everyone who knows me, knows that I preach exclusively out of the King James Bible. I do not do this because I want people to think that it is the inspired, inerrant, infallible and Divinely preserved autograph (original manuscripts) of the Scriptures. It is none of those things. It cannot be any of those things, and I am prepared to prove to you why it can’t be any of those things. I preach out of the King James, because I happen to like it very much. I have memorized large portions of it. I think it has a sort of awe inspiring sound to it. It represents the epitome of the English language, even though it is now archaic. It is beautiful in a way that most modern versions are not. It contains some verses which other translators have eliminated for various reasons. I happen to think that some of those verses should be included, however when I’m preaching or teaching, I always point out that they are excluded in some Bibles, and I tell why they have been eliminated, and I speak honestly about the disputed verses and do not pretend that it is some sort of Satanic conspiracy. Everything said in the disputed verse can be found somewhere else in the text anyway. I think that the scholars who translated it were experts in Hebrew and Greek, and I am not. The King James version has a lot of good points and that’s why I choose to use it. But I will never say, or imply that it is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, Divinely

preserved autograph of the Scriptures. It is not any of these things. So why on earth would I tell people, or even hint that it is any of these things? It is not. It cannot be.

I recently received a phone call from a Woman whom I do not know, and whom I have never spoken to before. She began by asking me, "what time is the Bible study that I am teaching at Second Baptist Church in South Hadley Massachusetts?" I told her, and then she immediately asked me: "what version of the Bible do we use in our church?" I explained to her that we have NIV Bibles in our pews, and that our main pastor usually uses that Bible when he preaches, but that I use the King James version. She immediately proceeded to jump down my throat. Her sermon tirade came out instantly. "Why would you ever belong to a church that did not use the real word of God?" and she explained that the NIV has 2200 errors in it, and the King James is the true word of God, and that if God has not perfectly preserved His True Words in the King James version of the Bible, that there is no word of God, and our faith is false, The only true Bible is based upon the received text, and without the King James Bible Christianity would be a sham. The people who wrote the NIV are going to hell. She went on and on, and as soon as she began speaking God revealed to me that she was an evil unbelieving spirit, and He told me to ask her, Why do you study the writings of Peter Ruckman? Which I immediately asked her. And she said, "How do you know that I have been studying Peter Ruckman's books? And I told her I knew that because I have the gift of discerning of spirits, and God revealed to me exactly what kind of spirit she was and who she was blindly following. I told her that all things are "naked and opened before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4: 13), and the reason that is true is because "The word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4: 12). While she was busy telling me about her false understanding of what the word of God is, I demonstrated in an instant, in fact and in act, that the word of God is "alive" and "powerful" and is fully capable of "discerning the thoughts and intents" of her heart. You see, she believes in a dead book, I believe in a "living and powerful" word. I proved the difference not by arguing with her, but by showing her. To argue with her would have been futile, but to discern her soul, and expose her, demonstrated the real word of God at work. I did not talk about it. I showed it. The word of God is "alive and powerful" (Heb. 4: 12). And because it is alive, it has living functions and actions (1Thess. 1: 5; 1Thess. 2: 13; Rom. 1: 16; 2Cor. 10: 4; James 1: 18; Jer. 23: 29; Isa. 55: 11; Ps. 119: 130). None of these verses portray the Bible as anything less than a "living" word of God.

Now I tell you this story, not to convince you of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but to convince you that the word of God, is not a dead book, printed with ink on India paper, but it is a living organism. It is has always been alive, and no man, including Peter Ruckman can ever change that. No Bible printed on paper qualifies as the living and true word of God. We know for a fact that the original autographs of the Scriptures no longer exist. God made sure of that, because

men would be worshipping them the same as this woman was worshipping the King James Bible. God wants us to get our knowledge from Him in ways other than worshipping very old books. While her Trinity consists of The Father, The Son and The King James Bible, my Trinity consists of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. And it is the Holy Spirit who breathed the Word of God originally, who made it alive, who perfectly inspired it in all its parts, and who makes it alive in peoples hearts and lives even to this day. "The letter killeth (all print versions), but the Spirit giveth life (the living word of God)" (2Cor. 3: 6). Mistaking a mere book for the living word of God, is a serious doctrinal flaw, that causes false worship and it can be damning to souls. Something dead can never produce life. God uses written words by enlivening them. But millions have read the Bible and remained dead in trespasses and sins.

Jesus, knowing the hearts of all men, made many poignant statements about the Pharisee's use of the Scriptures. They read and studied their books, which were meticulously copied by the scribes, and because those books contained no life, they remained dead toward God, and children of the Devil. "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (Jn. 5: 37-39). These Bible experts had not "heard His voice at any time" including when they were reading their Bibles. They absolutely did not "have His word abiding in them". And Jesus says : "Him ye believe not". It's no wonder why He told them to "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life". Christ is clearly telling these people that searching the Scriptures may cause you to "think" that you have eternal life, but in reality they cannot produce eternal life. Words printed in ink are just that...words printed in ink. The word of God, on the other hand is alive. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19: 7-8). The proof is in the pudding. They remained dead in trespasses and sins, because while reading a book called the Bible, they found no life for their souls. "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (Jn. 5: 46-47). The word of God is only communication from God when it is believed and received through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it* (Heb. 4: 2). God plainly tells men to "receive the engrafted word", because only that can save souls. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1: 21-22). Hearing the word of God without doing it is a form of self-deception. "But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it! (Lk. 11: 28)." The Bible has no power to save apart from it's living reception in the heart. It has to be "engrafted". It has to cleanse our hearts (Jn. 15: 3), and it has to "grow and multiply" (Acts 12: 24). It has to "effectually work in us" (1Thess. 2: 13). Words on a page do none of those things. All of these actions

of the true word prove that it is living. Living means that it is activated by the Holy Spirit who is its author and sole applier.

While it is true that any version of the Bible can contain words from God, and can transmit God's word to us, it is not true that any version is in fact the word of God. The word of God is the 66 books of the Bible in their original languages. Versions, and translations are but books written and penned by mere men. We call them the Bible, and we refer to them as the word of God, but such unqualified references are really not entirely correct. The word "Bible" is not even a Biblical word. You can read the various versions, including the King James, and remain dead in trespasses and sins, because they are not alive. If the versions were the word of God, they would do what the word of God does. God's word creates. When God speaks, stuff happens. God's word re-creates. You can study versions, and go to hell, because in themselves they have no salvific power. The ink on pages is not magical. Nor is it powerful when the same penned words are quoted, as if they were some form of magical incantation. The Bible is powerless to do anything without the Holy Spirit. 1Pet. 1: 23-25 is very clear: the real word of God, the living word, regenerates the heart. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you". The real word is "incorruptible". That means it cannot decay. Put a King James Bible out in the weather and see if it can decay. Bugs will eat it and it will rot away, because it is corruptible. Every other version is just as corruptible as the King James. They are paper and ink. There is nothing permanent about that. But the word of the Lord is permanent. The word of God is incorruptible. Even the Baptist and Westminster confessions agree that the real word of God is the original manuscripts in the original languages, and never a mere translation or humanly contrived book. "Paragraph 8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them" (London Baptist Confession 1689 Chapter 1). We do not appeal to the translations, because the translations are not in fact the "authentic" words of God. Translations are not Scripture. Translations are not inspired. Translations are not inerrant. Translations are not alive. But translations do have definite value.

Professor John Frame sees value in all versions of the Bible. "And when a translation conveys biblical meaning of any kind, it communicates the autographic text of Scripture. To the extent that it conveys biblical meaning, it should be received as God's personal words to us" (John Frame, Classroom lectures on Theology Summer 2009). Frame goes on to cite the use of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament Scriptures by Christ and the Apostles. He says: "Jesus and the apostles

often refer to the LXX translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Again, Scripture never suggests that such use of a translation presents a difficulty. Rather, insofar as the citation reproduces the meaning of the autographic text, it reproduces the meaning, and therefore the authority, of the original. As I also pointed out in the previous chapter, when New Testament writers quote the LXX, it is not their intention to grant authority to the LXX as a translation, but to use the LXX as a vehicle by which to quote the autographic text” (ibid.).

I repeat the quote: “And when a translation conveys biblical meaning of any kind, it communicates the autographic text of Scripture. To the extent that it conveys biblical meaning, it should be received as God’s personal words to us”. This is so different from saying that a translation is the word of God, that it almost seems foreign to our way of thinking. It sounds like an utterance from outer space, and not an utterance from a leading reformed Theologian. That’s because we have been lied to once again by that old whispering Serpent. He has told us that the word of God is a book which we have on our coffee table, or on the back of our pews at church. According to him, the Scripture is a leather-bound volume printed in ink on paper, with the words HOLY BIBLE stamped in Gold leaf on the spine. It is no such thing. Now this is not to say that books cannot convey God’s message, and therefore convey God’s word. They can do that, if the Holy Spirit chooses to use those words to convey His truths to our hearts and minds. He can use any version which He pleases to use, but technically they are just that...they are versions, not the original. They are translations, not autographs. They are men’s writings, opinions, judgments and decisions about how certain words should be brought from one language into another. That’s why every version differs from every other version. Has God overseen the translation process?...Absolutely. That’s why any version can convey the word of God, if God wants to convey His message through it. Has God preserved His word? ...Absolutely, and He did not do it in Elizabethan English! He does it in the hearts of His people. If the King James Bible is the inspired word of God, what did people have prior to 1611? Did God’s word not exist in 1450? Or 1275? I don’t think that anybody, including Peter Ruckman would say that. That notion is ludicrous and blasphemous.

## ***What about Preaching?***

**Act 15:35** Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

**1Co 1:18** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

**1Co 1:21** For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

**1Co 2:4-5** And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's



wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

**Tit 1:3** But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

The same concepts are true with respect to preaching the word of God as are true regarding the written word. When the Holy Spirit chooses to convey His message to someone's heart, He can use any preacher, anywhere, anytime, preaching from any version, which He chooses to use. The Reformed tradition has often emphasized "the centrality of preaching." The Second Helvetic Confession, in fact, says in a heading of a section of chapter 1, "**The Preaching of the Word of God Is the Word of God.**" That section reads,

"Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good" (ibid.).

Don't miss this. The Second Helvetic Confession acknowledges that the preaching of the word of God Is the Word of God. Frame says "The biblical revelation loses none of its power, truth, or authority from being on the lips of a fallible, even wicked, human being. When a preacher speaks the word truly, it is just as true, and just as authoritative, as if it were found on the pages of Scripture itself. It is therefore a means God uses to bring the true word of God to his people, just as he uses copies, translations, and editions. Insofar as the preacher brings the true word to us, the autographic text is on his lips, just as surely as it was on the lips of Jesus or Paul. If we rebel against the word of God we hear on Sunday morning, it is no excuse to say "it came from a fallible man." God uses the fallible man to bring his word to us, and we must respect it" (ibid). This concept recognizes the living quality of God's word and it therefore offers a completely different definition of the word of God, then saying that a translation "is an inspired, inerrant, infallible and Divinely preserved autograph".

Consider this statement by Frame: "When these (preachers) communicate effectively the meaning of Scripture, we hear Scripture. In that sense, "the preaching of the word of God is the word of God." Preachers sometimes get it wrong, but when they get it right, the word of God is on their lips, as surely as it was on the lips of Jesus and Paul. When we hear such messages, we hear the autographic text of Scripture... and when a translation conveys biblical meaning of any kind, it communicates the autographic text of Scripture. To the extent that

it conveys biblical meaning, it should be received as God's personal words to us".

## ***The Word Written on The Heart***

**2Co 3:2-3** "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart".

**Jer 31:33** But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**Heb 8:10** For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

**Heb 10:16** This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

**Psa 40:8** I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

**Psa 37:30-31** The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

There is a sense in which the whole story and progress of God's revelation of Himself, is Him writing His word on mans heart. This is what His covenant of redemption is all about. He shall be our God, and we shall be His people. The means whereby He would accomplish this is by putting His living Word into our hearts. So He sent the Living Word, Jesus Christ, the embodiment of truth, the Son of God and God the Son, to make an atonement so that the word enfleshed (Jesus) might become the word in flesh (in us). God enfleshed His word (incarnation) in order to in flesh His word (regeneration) in our hearts.

I am not making this up. This is the eternal purpose of God in a nutshell. The reason Christ came was to redeem the people of God, and having redeemed them by the blood of His cross, He regenerates them and gives them new hearts (Deut. 20: 6; Jer. 32: 40; Ezek. 11: 19; Ezek. 36: 26-27; James 1: 18, 21; 1Pet. 1: 23). This is how God writes His word upon our hearts. This is the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3: 6). This is the work of the word of God. (1Pet. 1: 23).

## ***Transmission***

The whole emphasis which I've taken thus far has been to point out that the true word of God is alive and powerful, not dead and powerless. There are many more words which God has spoken, than just those recorded in the Scriptures. But we accept the inspired Scriptures as the inerrant and infallible word of God. It seems to me, however, that we need to speak a little more about transmission. When we speak about God conveying His word by preaching we are talking about transmission. When we talk about Him writing His words we are talking about transmission. It seem that this matter of transmission is where all the errors in the doctrine of Scripture seem to creep in. Everybody will agree that the original autographs are without error and are infallibly inspired. Almost all Christians agree to the absolute and perfect inspiration of the Scriptures, and that it extends even to every jot and tittle. But when we start talking about copies of copies, and translations of copies, and versions of translations then we come to wildly different conclusions.

“Scripture contains a doctrine of Scripture. It teaches us that God’s personal words often come to us through written words, indeed that written words are of major importance. They have the same authority as the divine voice itself. And God himself has ordained that these written words serve as the constitution of his church” (John Frame, Class Lectures, Theology Summer 2009, Doctrine of the Word of God, section 33 “The Transmission of Scripture”). I have quoted Dr Frame extensively, because I feel that he has a very good grasp of the whole process from inspiration > to transmission > to application. I believe that God did things the way that He wanted to do them throughout the entire process.

Paul indicates that both his spoken words and his written words have equal authority. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2Thess. 2: 15). This is a notion I have never heard explained by any pastor or teacher that I have ever sat under. I’m puzzled that no one has ever thought it worth mentioning that Paul’s spoken words, his teachings, are of equal inspiration and authority as the words which he wrote in his epistles. But we have no record of all his spoken words, which were passed down by tradition. Why not? If God was concerned to preserve the truth, why would He only preserve the written truths? And does this statement by Paul add validity to the notion that God’s word is still communicated orally as well as in written form? I feel that it does have something to say on this point. In any case the issues involved in transmission need to be carefully considered.

Frame sees the problem as one of sovereignty. According to him the word is sovereign. “Man may try to add to the word, subtract from it, ignore it, misuse it, or hide it, but they can never be sovereign over it. It will always be God’s word, and its very permanence is a sign of that: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever” (Isa. 40:7)” (ibid.).

Frame has very good logic and consistency at this point.

“Common sense tells us that the content of any book consists of what the author wrote and nothing else. If I write my own ideas in the margin of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, that does not make those ideas part of his book. Similarly, when Thomas Jefferson edited out many passages of the Bible that displeased him, he did not reduce the content of the Bible. The Bible is what God gave to us, not what God gave minus Jefferson’s omissions. The Bible is God’s own written word, without addition or subtraction.

Scripture itself is concerned that we follow what it says, not what someone adds to it, not a truncated version that emerged from human subtractions. So God says in Deut. 4:2:

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

And,

Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. (Deut. 12:32)

In Deuteronomy, the reference is specifically to the law of God given to Moses. But Prov. 30:5-6 presents this as a general principle, applicable to all of God’s words,

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Very near the end of the New Testament, we read this:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.” (Ibid).

So it appears that there are inscriptional curses in the Bible, pertaining to faulty transmission. This is something Frame discusses in more detail.

“These passages reflect the “inscriptional curses” that were found in the ancient suzerainty treaties to which I referred Chapter 17 and elsewhere. Those treaties were the words of the Great King, and it was important that the words of the Great King not be confused with any other words. The presence of such curses in the Bible is consistent with our earlier-stated view that Scripture is very much like a suzerainty treaty between God and his people.

This principle is important to the sufficiency of Scripture, which we considered in Chapter 32. Recall my references there to Isa. 29:13-14 and Mark 7:8. Jesus cited Isaiah 29:13-14 to show that the Pharisees were making their tradition as authoritative as Scripture, in effect adding to God’s word. He also charges them in Matt. 23:23 with neglecting “the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness,” in effect subtracting from God’s word.

Of course, there are various ways of adding to and subtracting from God's word. Jesus does not tell us in Mark 7:8 that the Pharisees literally crossed out passages in Scripture, or that they wrote their traditions into the margins. But in effect they lived by a distorted canon, one that was a combination of God's word and their own ideas.

Even more obviously, though, it would have been wrong for someone to have literally crossed words out of the definitive manuscript of the law of Moses that resided in the holiest part of the temple, denying the authority of those words. And it would have been just as bad to add one's own thoughts to that document and claim they were God's (Deut. 18:20).

So the inscriptional curse passages do distinguish between the original manuscripts of Scripture and the copies, and they forbid any copying that changes the original text.

This is not to say, however, that copies are always worse than the originals. When the copy agrees with the original, without any additions or subtractions, then it is just as true as the original, indeed just as authoritative. This observation should help us to see that what is at issue is not primarily the autographic document, but the autographic text. The text is a linguistic object that can be found in any number of physical media. If I type out Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on my computer and then print it out five times, there is an original autograph and five copies, but only one text. That same text could be reproduced on clay tablets, or papyrus, or paper, or digital media. Provided there is no change, all these copies present a single text.

Similarly with Scripture. By divine inspiration its text is found in the autograph, and when the copy is perfect the text is found in the copy as well. It is, therefore, not important whether or not the autographic document is preserved. It is important that the autographic text be available to us, even though that text may be found only in copies ("apographa") of the original" (ibid).

## ***Preservation***

All this talk about transmission brings us to discuss preservation. Has God preserved His word? I realize that many people might be confused by the concept that the translations are not the inspired, inerrant, infallible preserved autographs of Scripture. How can we be sure that what we are reading, when we are reading it, or what we are hearing when we hear it, is in fact the truth? That is a good question, not without its difficulties. We have to accept certain things based upon the confidence of faith. I'm not talking about blind faith here, I'm talking about trust in the Living God. God uses and blesses His word as He has preserved it, and as He makes it available to His people. His oversight includes all the steps in the process from inspiration > to transmission > to application in our hearts and lives.

He has chosen to bring the living and true word to us using His own means and not ours. If I were in charge and if I were God, I would simply directly manipulate the receptors and chemicals, the neurons and synapses of the human brain, and I would plant my word there, without any need for autographs, copies, translations, versions, preachers, reading, writing, hearing, studying, praying or any such thing. That way I'd be sure that everybody got it right. But guess what? I'm not God, and you're not God, and God did not do what we would have done. Why not?

I firmly believe that He did not do it our way, because His way is infinitely better. But how can it be better if it leaves open the possibility for additions, omissions, interpretations, human corrections, human arguments, false teachings, obscure conceptualizations etc? I will quote Frame one more time:

“In fact, the biblical text has been far better preserved than any other ancient document. There are far more ancient manuscripts of Scripture and Scripture portions than of the religions of Greece, Egypt, and Babylon, more than manuscripts of the Greek philosophers and poets. The manuscripts we have of Scripture are closer to the time of their original writing. And they are of higher quality. The variations among different manuscripts and manuscript families are many, but minor. They consist mainly of spelling differences, word substitutions, and minor grammatical differences that make little difference as to the meaning of the passage. So the Westminster Confession of Faith rightly speaks of the “singular care and providence” (1.8) by which God has preserved the biblical text.

...A similar question is this: why did God choose not to give us perfect copies, insuring the perfect preservation of the autographic text, though not of the autographic manuscripts? If having an inerrant Bible is so important, why didn't God determine to make all copies of Scripture inerrant?

We should understand, first, what such divine providence would entail. It would mean that if you sat down to write a copy Gen. 1, you could not fail to produce a perfect replica of it. God would prevent any lapses of memory as you glance between the original and your copy-page. He would prevent on the spot any sinful inclination you might have toward distorting the text in any way. All of that is, of course, possible for God to do. But it suggests a picture of his providence rather at odds from his usual ways of working among us.

More seriously, though, we need to consider this question from a larger perspective. Recall the second list of events that I presented at the beginning of this chapter: copying, textual criticism, translation, teaching, and so on, right down to understanding and assurance. These are all steps on the way for us to receive edification from Scripture. God intends that we will receive such edification, so he provides all these operations. But note that in each of those operations we may ask why God did not institute perfection. After all, he might have provided, not only perfect copies, but also perfect textual criticism, perfect translations, perfect teaching and so on. Indeed, he might have guaranteed that all our attempts to understand might be perfectly successful. He might even have determined to skip the steps between inspiring the Scripture and giving us understanding of it. For why should we go through the whole process of copying,

translating, and teaching, if God is able to give us an immediate understanding of his word? Why should God institute such a process? Why should he not rather give each of us an immediate, intuitive, understanding of his revelation, so that we could magically understand it all, with a glance at the Hebrew or Greek text? For that matter, why did God even bother to place his revelation in a book? Why didn't he simply reveal it immediately to every human being?

God has not given us a clear answer to any of these questions. But they are all similar. If it seems unlikely that God would provide an inerrant book, but consign the publication of it to fallible copyists, then is it not equally unlikely that he would turn the work of translation, teaching, and theology over to fallible human beings? And if it seems likely that God would provide infallible copies of Scripture, then it is equally likely that God would provide perfect translations and so on. If we think that God would probably not provide a perfect translation, then it is equally unlikely that he would provide us with perfect copies.

The question then becomes, why did God inspire an inerrant word, then consign that word to a fallible process of distribution and appropriation? That way of putting it may suggest an answer. I think that most likely God wanted us to appropriate his personal words in a communal way. Had he given us perfect copies, perfect translations, and so on, each individual could have come to an understanding of Scripture without help from anyone else. He could have gone to the bookstore and bought for himself a perfect translation of Scripture, taught it to himself, and gained thereby a perfect understanding. But that was not God's intention. He wanted the church to gather around the word together. He wanted each individual to benefit from the gifts of others in the body. Some would be gifted in languages; they would translate. Others would be gifted to teach, and they would instruct. Some would teach by words, others more by the example of their lives. Everyone would contribute something to the "edifying of the body," building up one another. Each individual would rely on the gifts of others. Listening for God's word would draw the body together.

Granted, the communal process of assimilating the word often works in the opposite way. Churches are divided over Bible translations, interpretations, theological understanding, etc. Sin always messes things up. But at its best, the process of learning God's word together is, even now, a precious one. It leads us, not only to love God, but also to love one another, to honor one another's gifts, to grow in relationships as well as knowledge.

God may have other reasons for his decision to give us fallible copies of an infallible book. But certainly he has made that decision for his own reasons, and we would be unwise for us to second guess him" (ibid).

I think Frame's conclusion here is absolutely right on target. It is a beautiful and wonderful thing how God has preserved and transmitted His word in the way that He has chosen to do it. I'm not telling you to not read and study your Bible. If that's what you have gotten out of this study, you have completely missed the point. I'm telling you just the opposite of that. You should read and study your Bible, no matter what translation you are using. God can teach you His word, and make it live in your heart. I am not telling you that it's ok to read and study a

cultic bible like the Watchtower mistranslation. You should always use a recognized translation like the King James, the Revised Standard or the English Standard Version. But I'm telling you not to worry too much about the faithfulness of the version, concentrate instead on the faithfulness of God. It is His word you are after, and it is only He who can deliver it to you by the Holy Spirit. He is not the author of confusion, and He will not confuse you. Confusion comes from Satan and human reasoning in isolation from God's truth. I'm also telling you not to be a Biblio-idolater. Do not worship the King James or any other translation. They are books, and they will only properly serve their function, if they are treated as books, which can contain and deliver the words of God, when God uses their words for His appointed purposes.

## ***Sola Scriptura and The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy***

People think that Sola Scriptura means "The Bible Alone" but that is not what it means. It means "The Scriptures Alone". There is a difference, and the difference is of vital importance. People never seem to see eye to eye about the Bible, and that is partly because of the human elements involved in its transmission and its interpretation. The Calvinist's don't see the Arminian's interpretations, and the Arminians don't see the Calvinist's. The dispensationalist's don't see the covenant theologian's viewpoint, and they in turn don't see the 7 or 8 different dispensations. The Premillennialist can't comprehend the Amillennial position, and the fundamentalist can't comprehend the neo-evangelical's. The Catholics can't comprehend the protestants, and the Baptist can't see the viewpoint of the paedobaptists. On and on it goes. There is no end to differences and opinions about the Bible. What people usually define as the Bible is really one of many hundreds of different translations. There are as many different versions of the Bible as there are people, because it means something different to each person. That's because the Bible on your coffee table is not the Word of God. The Bible in your bookcase is not the Scriptures. At the very best, the Bible, as we have it, in versions and translations, is a feeble representation of God's true and living word. It stands in the place of the word of God, as the best that we have, but it will never be the original autographs. God did not want us to have them.

Much has been said about the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy of 1978. I have only one problem with this statement. Generally speaking I think it is quite good except for one little careless statement that was included. I agree with everything that it says about the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are in fact the inerrant and infallible, written words of God. You will note the following in paragraph X. "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully



represent the original". It may not seem like I'm saying what this statement says, because my language is a bit more radical. Essentially I am in complete agreement with the Chicago Statement. I believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of the word of God. But pay particular attention to this one important sentence. "Copies and Translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original". I do not agree with this sentence at all. It contradicts the rest of the well thought out statements of inerrancy. The whole question seems to be one of the extent to which the translation is faithful to the original. This is where all the problems arise, not just in the Chicago Statement, but in practical implementation in God's churches. This is where every theological and doctrinal error springs from. None of the versions are 100% faithful to the original. And this is why I do not agree with this one statement. I agree with everything else, but this should have been left out, and I'll show you why.

"Copies and Translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original". Let's think about this statement for a second.

Is the translation faithful to the individual "words"? If it is, then it will read something like an interlinear Bible, where each word is translated, and nothing extra has been supplied. There are no words that are not found in the original. There are the same number of words in both the original and the translation. Have you ever read one of these interlinear Bibles? They are very difficult to understand, and they are poor reading, and in some places they barely make sense, because Hebrew and Greek grammar cannot be translated word for word. Some single words in the original require multiple words in the translated language.

Or, is the translation faithful to the original "thoughts"? This is quite different than faithfulness to individual words. Here we would have no word for word equivalency at all. This concept allows for any method of presentation that gets the thought across, including paraphrasing, and drama versions. But who can really say what the original writer was thinking? I have a very difficult time getting my readers to understand what I am thinking. I am constantly misunderstood, even though I explain and re-explain things over and over. Imagine if my writing was being translated into Chinese, and the translator had to decide what words to use to express my thoughts and be "faithful to the original"? What if four different Chinese words could be used for one of my English words? and what if they were all equally valid? Which one would he have to choose to be faithful to the original? If this is problem exists with my writings, which are uninspired, how can we expect it to be any different with the inspired writings of Scripture? I don't know what Moses was thinking and trying to say? Or Paul, or anybody else. We are not mind readers, and translators aren't mind readers either. They may want you to think that they know what Peter was thinking when he wrote something, but they cannot in fact determine original thoughts. We know that they said exactly what they were supposed to say,

because they wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But can we all grasp the thoughts behind the words? I seriously doubt that. Translating original thoughts is an impossibility.

Or is the translation supposed to be faithful to the original “grammar”? This is a whole different problem. Greek, for instance, has verb structures which we do not have in English. They also have male and female pronouns which have to be distinguished. Then there is the plural and singular pronouns and nouns. It goes on and on. A grammatical translation would read probably something like Kenneth Wuest’s Translation. It is certainly radically different than the King James or the ESV. Sometimes Wuest uses 5 or 6 English words to express the grammatical form of a single Greek word.

Then there is the question of who decides “the extent” to which a particular translation is faithful to the original? If we are going to talk about extent, then we have to have some way of measuring it. The word **extent** implies volume, amounts or quantity. Who decides the extent? And how exactly do they decide it? Is there a committee or group of textual critics, technical experts or scholars, who tell us this translation is 30% more faithful to the original than this one? Or this version over here is 76.35% more faithful to the book of John, but it is only 48% faithful to the book of Romans? In order to know the extent of faithfulness, we have to have a measuring stick or thermometer, which properly calibrates and indicates the extent of agreement, or the extent of disagreement. And because of the above mentioned questions about words? Or thoughts? Or grammar? We need to somehow measure the extent of these regarding faithfulness to the original. Is the NIV 60% faithful to the thoughts, 45% faithful to the words, and 75% faithful to the grammar? Or is it only 20% faithful to the thoughts, 60% faithful to the words and 19% faithful to the grammar? How can we know the various extents? But the real question is: Why shouldn’t we expect to use a version which is 100% faithful to the original in everything? How can we call it the word of God if it is not 100% faithful to the original? Are uneducated people, like me, supposed to determine **extent** when we are reading it? Are there some kind of warning labels that are going to be put on Bibles, similar to the surgeon general’s warnings on cigarettes? **WARNING! THIS BIBLE MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH BECAUSE IT IS LESS THAN 100% FAITHFUL TO THE ORIGINAL.** Which Bible will not have this label? Who can produce a perfect translation? These simple observations should show you the complexity and weakness in this sentence by the Chicago Committee. Nobody is able to determine the extent to which translations are more faithful or less a faithful to the original. This is a completely subjective statement, and in actuality it is meaningless. It does not state anything that is true, or that can be implemented to assure readers of faithful translations. Frankly, to me, this Chicago Statement on Inerrancy is fine, except for this one ridiculous and meaningless sentence in it. If the extent of faithfulness to the original cannot be demonstrated or proved, then how can we say that any translations are in fact the Word of God? This statement is bogus.

There are no translations 100% faithful to the originals, and that means there are no translations which are in fact the word of God. All reputable translations, however, contain the word of God. There is a world of difference between these two things. If the Bible version that you use is the word of God, then you have no need of anything else in order to study it and learn its meaning. If your version is the inerrant and infallible word of God, then it is 100% self-authenticating. This is the actual position of the King James Only crowd. But, if the Bible version that you are using, contains the word of God, then you will need tools, study aids, and assistance to find out what the original says. This is why we have Bible dictionaries, commentaries, doctrinal statements, lexicons, grammars, pastors, teachers and a whole host of other study aides. They assist us in ascertaining what the real word of God is, and what it means.

Of course the King James Only crowd doesn't have to worry about any of this, because in their minds, they don't have a translation. They have the original. How convenient is that? Because they think they have the actual, infallible word of God, they don't go to college and learn Greek and Hebrew. They require none of that. They have the original. Indeed, this solves all the problems. No wonder so many weak minded pastors and churches have jumped on this bandwagon. Ruckman actually believes that the King James Bible is better than the original because it includes additional revelation, not contained in the original. How can a translation be better than the original if the original is perfect? This position is absurd and blasphemous. What he is saying is that the King James translators improved the word of God! That concept is preposterous.

One pastor, I recently heard, said that "he doesn't even have a commentary. He would not own one. They are of the devil, because they talk about Greek and Hebrew word meanings. That is a tool of Satan, he said, to get you to disbelieve in the inerrant and infallible King James Version". God help us if these are the kinds of pastors fundamentalism is now producing. Another pastor from Texas has a sermon on his website titled "Why Bible Colleges are of the Devil?" Come on. This is the height of absurdity. You don't have to worry about faithfulness to the original, when you have the original! Listen people. I'm not making this stuff up. I'm talking about two real fundamental Baptist pastors. I'll give you their names on request. One of them pastors a mega-church, one of the first mega-churches in the country. There are hundreds, or even thousands, more like them. God help these churches pastored by these imbeciles. They must really be a bunch of spiritual pygmies. It's for certain, they cannot be getting any real food for their souls. Most of these kinds of churches can never get beyond the simple plan of salvation, and a bunch of legalisms for separated Christians to observe. Such blasphemous adoration for a book, and such mindless exaltation of ignorance, will never be blessed of God. It is a shameful spot on the image of Christianity.

Now back to a word about Sola Scriptura. This notion of the Scriptures alone, came about because people need something to test doctrines by, and establish principles of truth by. We use the Scriptures for those purposes. The confessions say that the Scriptures are “the sole rule for faith and practice”. This means that if somebody comes along with a new faith or a new practice, we are supposed to use the scriptures to prove or disprove his doctrine. Thus the word of God, the inscripturated revelation from God, the completed canon of Scripture, eliminates all heresies, and establishes all truth. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters. By Scripture alone, we establish and maintain all true doctrines and practices. This is a vital and essential concept. We test all things by the Scriptures, because they are the written mind of God. We prove things by the Scriptures. We establish things with the Scriptures. Scriptures have precedence over everything else. There are no new scriptures being written. They are the final authority, because they are the only written revelation that God has given. This does not mean that the Scriptures are the only revelation of God. They are not. God has revealed himself in nature, in man’s God-like image, in History, in His gifts etc. God will always be the self-revealing God. It’s part of His nature to reveal Himself. Every revelation of God is perfect and serves it’s own special purposes. But no revelation ever has, or ever will contradict or replace the Scriptures. God is always non-contradictory. That’s why we can know the truth, and the truth can set us free (Jn. 8: 32).

## ***Conclusion***

The word of God, is the most important thing in the world. I love it deeply and truly, because it has taught me everything I need to know about everything which God wants me to know. When I teach or preach I refer to God’s word constantly. I have no authority to say anything without the word of God. And with the word of God, I have complete authority to say everything that He says. My purpose in this study was not to denigrate the word of God, but to exalt it. If you did not get that point, then you misread everything I have written, and perhaps you need to reread all that I have said. We need to be able to define the word of God, and expose false views, like the King James Only heresy. We need to realize that God’s word is alive and not dead, and that it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1: 16).

Right views of God’s word, go hand in hand with right views of God. We will never think right about what He says, if we have deficient views about who He is. This is why Theology usually starts with God and the Scriptures. These go together, and really cannot be separated. God is His word. Jesus is even called “the Word” (logos). A Sovereign Lord, invests sovereign authority in His Words. So that He is the author and finisher of our faith, and not we ourselves (Heb. 12: 2). He is the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, meaning that He is everything in between as well. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1: 8, 11, 17; 2: 8; 21: 6; 22: 13; Isa. 41: 4; 44: 6; 48: 12). By identifying Himself with the

alphabetic symbols, He is saying that He is the sum and substance of all that those symbols represent. He is the sum and substance of all truth. He is the sum and the substance of all writing. He has communicated Himself to man alphabetically. And that is a most marvelous revelation indeed. It is a miracle. Don't ever diminish it. Don't ever disparage it. It is the Word of God. It is alive.