

THE ORIGINAL "AUTOGRAPHS" AND "PRESERVATION"

Today the Church is being expected to believe in the "**inspiration**" without believing in the "**preservation**" of the Scriptures. We are being asked to believe in the inspiration of the "originals" without believing in the preservation of the **text** of the Scriptures. It is a statement of unbelief when we say that we only believe that the original autographs were inspired. What we really are saying is that we do not believe that we have the infallible Word of God on this planet, or at least in our hands, at this moment. Let us consider that statement scripturally:

¹⁴But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; ¹⁵And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim.3:14-17).

Here God tells us His purposes in giving us the Scriptures: "... for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Do we actually believe that God allowed them to become lost, altered, or corrupted after giving them? If so, how could He use them to accomplish these purposes?

Now we know that we do not have an original Bible manuscript today. The real question is has God preserved His Word – *the original text* – although not the original piece of paper, rock or vellum on which it may have been written?

The observant reader will note that in the above cited verses given through Paul to Timothy no reference is being made with regard to the "ORIGINAL" Scriptures. Look at verse 15. Paul says to Timothy, "from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation." Paul is obviously not speaking of the "ORIGINAL" New Testament Scripture. Second Timothy was penned about A.D. 65. Further, Timothy was old enough to join Paul and Silas c.53 A.D. (Acts 16:1-4). Thus, **when Timothy was a child, there was no New Testament collection of Scripture anywhere**. Nor was Paul speaking of the "ORIGINALS" of the Old Testament for there was not an original Old Testament piece of paper or vellum extant at that time. Wrestle with this! Come to grips with it! These are the verses upon which many of us base our faith and say we believe in the "ORIGINALS". Yet these very verses are *not* speaking of the original manuscripts!

But are the copies inspired? The Bible itself clearly teaches that faithful **copies** of the originals **are** also **inspired**. The word "Scripture" in II Timothy 3:16-17 is translated from the Greek word "graphé" (graphḗ). Graphé occurs 51 times in the Greek New Testament and at every occurrence it means "Scripture" – in fact, it usually refers to the Old Testament text.

A perusal of the N.T. reveals that the Lord Jesus read from the "graphé" in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luk.4:21) as did Paul in the synagogue at Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). The Ethiopian eunuch, returning home from worshipping at Jerusalem, was riding in his chariot and reading a passage of graphé (Acts 8:32-33). These were not the autographs that they were reading; they were copies – moreover, copies of copies! Yet the Word of God calls them graphé – and every graphé is "given by inspiration of God" (II Tim.3:16). Thus, the Holy Writ has testified and that testimony is that faithful copies of the originals are themselves inspired. Selah!

Therefore, it all comes down to a promise given by God – that He would preserve the text which He gave us. Timothy never saw an original when he was a child of either the Old or New Testament, yet in verse 16 God says that what Timothy learned as a child was given by inspiration of God and **is** profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Now if God were talking about something which had been lost and/or is no longer true and accurate, why did He give verse 17?

WHAT DOES GOD HIMSELF PROMISE CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES?

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." (Mark 13:31)

"But the word of the Lord endureth forever." (I Pet.1:25, a direct quote of Isaiah 40:8.)

"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shall keep them, O Lord, **thou shall preserve them from this generation forever.**" (Psa.12:6, 7)

God did not promise that the original piece of paper and rock would exist forever or that He merely gave the originals free from error. He said **He would preserve His Word – the text – forever!** These promises demand that we still have them on planet earth. Christian, do you believe Him?

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words ... of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

Why this verse if God has not preserved His Word?

".. for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (Psalm 138:2)

Look at that! God says He has magnified His Word above His name! That is incredible for supposedly THE name was so sacred to the Jews that they did not even pronounce it.

Thus, on the basis of God's many promises I declare and proclaim to you that we have in our hands the absolutely infallible, inerrant Living Word of Almighty God – that God has promised to keep His Word as revealed through these Scriptures. But there is more!

"... the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48)

Are we to believe that God will judge us by something which He meticulously gave us and then lost along the way? Would it be just and fair of God to judge us with these words if they are no longer trustworthy – to hold us accountable when our guide is not itself 100 percent reliable?

Jesus said not "one jot or one tittle" shall change in the Word of God (Mat.5:18). Specifically, He was speaking of the Old Testament. We are being taught today that the Old Testament is full of contradictions, scribal errors, etc., but Jesus said that it was unerring – even to the smallest detail. And He was not referring to the originals, but to copies of copies of copies. If God has only promised the "ORIGINALS" to be pure then Jesus erred in His assessment of the Scriptures. Should Jesus' statements concerning the Scriptures be inaccurate, He is not all knowing – neither Lord nor God.

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5:39-40)

The ultimate purpose of the Scriptures is to lead us to Christ – and then to guide our lives. If the Scriptures are not accurate, if they have been changed or altered, if they have been lost so that we no longer have the Words of God, how can we truly come to Christ for they are the Holy Spirit's implement to testify of the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, we have scripturally demonstrated that **faith in the preservation of the text is a basic Bible doctrine.** Furthermore, the context of these many promises is not that God's Word is to be preserved in a jar somewhere in a cave or desert, lost for centuries waiting to be found and **restored** to the believing remnant of the Church. The context in II Timothy 3:16-17 is clear that the inspired Word was given by God as a deposit to the Body of Christ "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Therefore, for God to accomplish this stated purpose for His having given us His Word – it must remain accessible to the disciples of the Lord, Christ Jesus!

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