

# “Drowning in a Sea of Opinions”

(selected Scriptures)

## Introduction

➤ Almost every year, for decades now, I preach what I call a “state of the church address” on Fourth of July weekend. What started out as a typical Fourth of July “holiday sermon” grew into unique annual sermon series. For every year I preach on a topic that I feel represents a prevalent issue or threat facing the church. In past years, I have preached on topics such as humanism, Mormonism, evolution, the “seeker movement,” abortion, racism, universalism, unbiblical sayings, the “emergent church”, and submission to government.

This year there is no shortage of topics from which to choose (in fact, I have been doing this long enough that people are recommending topics for me to preach on). Such topics include virtual (meta/online) church, “Critical Race Theory”, politics/elections, “Black Lives Matter”, and even mask/vaccine mandates, and more.

These are not (meant to be) political rants, “pet-peeve”, or soapbox sermons. Nor are they a time for me to share my personal opinions or feelings on the things that are going on in the world. Rather, this is an opportunity for us to look into God’s Word in order to find instruction (wisdom) and direction (guidance) as to how we are to live in the culture and time in which we live.

➤ Satan’s primary weapon is deception. He is therefore no doubt deliriously happy with the relative and subjective truth peddled within our society. Satan loves to counterfeit God’s truth, deceiving and confusing people away from the truth.

**Gen 3:1-4** ~ “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,<sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

**John 8:44** ~ “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

**2 Cor 11:13-14** ~ “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

**Rev 12:9** ~ “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world ...”

➤ We are truly living in unprecedented times. While we cannot accurately say that “this is the worst the world has ever been”, we can accurately state that the world has never been like it is today. For example, never-before-in-the-history-of-the-world has there been the ability to communicate so easily, instantaneously, and globally. The combination of television, the internet, social media, and mobile devices has created a world in which almost everyone can express opinion and read of the opinions of others around the world (which often, quickly, devolves into a mind-numbing and/or hostile debate).

Today we are inundated with information, but we are starving for truth. Through the many various media outlets available to us today, there is no shortage of opinions and beliefs being declared. And, often, these subjective (impassioned) opinions are presented as objective (indisputable) facts. Our society has even embraced the slogan “That’s my truth!” (supposedly allowing for everyone to have their own truth). But opinions are not truth, and feelings are not facts. In the midst of it all, we are awash in presumed truths that actually contradict each other (even our so-called “experts” adamantly disagree with one another, with extreme/conflicting views!). Even so-called “scientific/medical fact” can be nothing more than idolatry or false religion disguised in intellectual verbiage.

- Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to know what we should believe – about almost anything. This is what has led me to preaching this morning on the Word of God. For we must know, even if everything else in the world is confusing or deceptive, we can always know (and be assured of) the fact that God’s Word is absolutely and eternally true. May this serve as an anchor to our souls, as we navigate the treacherous waters of this culture and our own lives.
- I want to highlight six vital and unwavering characteristics of the Word of God. These come from the “internal evidence” of God’s Word and find their origin in the very nature of God Himself. It is important to note that each of these truths overlap and support one another, as they are distinct but inseparable.

### Six vital and unwavering characteristics of the Word of God:

#### 1. The veracity of God’s Word.

- As God is perfect (Matt.5:48), His Word is perfect. Since God does not change (Mal.3:6; Num.23:19), His Word does not change. Because God is all-knowing (omniscient) His Word is always true, and because God is all-powerful (omnipotent) His Word never fails.

**Ps 19:7-9** ~ “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup>the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup>the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.” (Ps.119:142, 151, 160)

- In order to understand the absolute perfection of God’s Word, it can be helpful to describe this characteristic in three important ways:

#### **Inerrancy = without error**

The inerrancy of Scripture means that the Bible – in the original manuscripts (not bad copies or translations) – contains no errors or inaccuracies. This doctrine is based on the understanding that God is the divine author of Scripture (2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:20-21). Since God does not lie (Tit.1:2) and cannot lie (Heb.6:18) – and since He is never ignorant, surprised, fickle, uncertain, mistaken, deceptive, or deceived – His Word is absolutely and eternally perfect.

#### **Infallibility = without failing**

The doctrine of the infallibility of the Word of God dovetails the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Word of God. Since God does not (cannot) lie, since God knows everything, and since God is unchanging, His Word will never fail. This means, among other things, that all of God’s promises will come true (will be fulfilled) – whether a promise of blessing or a promise of judgment. God will never forget nor forsake His Word. He is never guessing nor guessing. His sovereign will is fixed, and His Word is unailing.

#### **Unity = without contradiction**

The Bible is known as the “canon” (meaning standard or rule) of Scripture, in that it is the complete (“closed”) and supreme (“sola”/ “suprema”) written revelation of God. This means that all of Scripture – all sixty-six books (thirty-nine in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New Testament) – is equally inspired of God, and therefore without contradiction. As the infallible rule of faith and practice, Scripture never contradicts itself [in fact, called “the analogy of faith”, we know that Scripture actually (first and foremost) interprets Scripture]. All apparent or alleged contradictions are merely paradoxes, variations, allegories, or mysteries. Scripture simply cannot contradict, or conflict with, itself because God (its divine author) omniscient, immutable, and holy (i.e., He knows everything (never ignorant nor mistaken), He never changes, and He never lies nor deceives. God’s Word may indeed confound us, but it never contradicts itself.

The New Testament does not contradict the Old Testament, and the teaching of Christ is not in conflict with the teachings of the Old Testament prophets. The New Testament represents God's progressive revelation – the continuation of God's redemptive plan for mankind (i.e., the Messiah who is to come → the Messiah who has come → the Messiah who is to come again). As Jesus Himself said:

**Matt 5:17** ~ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill [plēroō] them.”

**Heb 1:1-2** ~ “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

✓ Illust: I once read a helpful illustration of a string that runs through every book, every chapter and verse, of the Bible. If you pull one book of the shelf, the others follow with it.

➤ One of the greatest evidences, witnesses, of the veracity of Scripture is Jesus Christ – the incarnate Son of God. He consistently, unapologetically, and unambiguously declared Scripture to be the Word of God. Jesus rebuked those who did not believe Scripture (Matt.21:42; 22:29), He constantly taught from the Scripture (Mk.14:49), and He affirmed the authority of Scripture (Matt.4:4, 7, 10).

Jesus always referred to Old Testament prophecies and stories as true. He often quoted Scripture and drew on the stories of Noah (Matt.24:37-38), Moses (Jn.5:45-47), David (Lk.20:42), Elijah (Lk.4:25-26), Elisha (Lk.4:27), Isaiah (Matt.13:14), Daniel (Matt.24:15-16), Solomon (Matt.12:42), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt.22:32).

In fact, Jesus' most often asked question was “Have you not read?” (see Matt.12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31). He expected His disciples to know and believe the Word of God, and often chided them for their lack of understanding of God's Word.

**Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-45** ~ “And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ <sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ... <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ ... <sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”

Luke 16:22-31 ~ “... The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup>and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ... <sup>27</sup>And [the rich man] said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him [Lazarus] to my father's house – <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers – so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup>But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup>And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup>He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

**John 17:17** ~ “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

➤ Truth is not subjective. Truth is neither objective nor universal when we quantify it with “my truth” or “your truth.” Truth cannot have errors; truth cannot be deceptive; truth cannot contradict itself. As Christians, we believe in and attest to the fact that the Bible is God's absolute, objective truth for all people for all times.

## 2. The clarity of God's Word.

➤ By God's sovereign design, the Bible is able to be understood by those who possess the indwelling presence of God's Spirit. This is not, however, to suggest that everything in the Bible is easily understood. There are many difficult truths within the pages of Scripture, and many of them are ultimately confounding to us. Even Peter acknowledged, in Scripture, that there are difficult things to understand:

**2 Peter 3:16-17** ~ "as [Paul] 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"

➤ The clarity (or perspicuity) of God Word refers to the fact that the Bible is basically clear – not mystical (esoteric) or completely metaphorical. That is, the Bible is not to be interpreted by looking for hidden messages or some "bible code." For the most part, allegorical language is clearly identified as such in Scripture. For example, when we read in Scripture (Jn.21:11) that the disciple caught "153" fish, that simply indicates the number of fish that they caught (not referring prophetically to the year 153A.D., or to chapter 15:3 of some book in the Bible, or to the number of people Peter would personally evangelize).

➤ This also teaches that the Bible does not mean "whatever you want it to mean." While a verse/passage of Scripture may have more than one application, it only has one correct interpretation. Many people will say that to claim "one interpretation" of Scripture is arrogant. True arrogance, however, is thinking your truth, or cultural truth, is on par with the truth of God. When we add our own subjective feelings and thoughts into the Word of God, we only pervert and prostitute it for our own benefit. There has to be only one interpretation otherwise the authoritative Word of God would be "up for grabs." It is our responsibility as Christians to rightly divide the Word of Truth. To study to find out what God meant when He said, "Thus saith the Lord."

➤ To put it simply, the central message of the Bible is concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God – God's redemptive plan for mankind (i.e., the Messiah who is to come → the Messiah who has come → the Messiah who is to come again). Everything in God's Word finds its ultimate expression and fulfillment in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**John 5:39** ~ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (see Lk.4:21)

**John 15:26** ~ "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."

**John 16:13-14** ~ "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

**1 Cor 15:3-5** ~ "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"

➤ The Bible is not some esoteric or academic book. It is God's revelation to all mankind; not just for the intellectual or "spiritual" elite. Therefore, we interpret the Bible essentially like we would any other important document – through the literal, contextual, grammatical, and historical method of interpretation, and applied under the guidance (illumination) of the Holy Spirit.

While we cannot fully understand all the depths of God's knowledge and wisdom – our finite brains simply cannot fully comprehend the infinite mind of God – we must understand that God wants us to know His Word, and follow His will for our lives.

✓ Illust: I think Mark Twain was on to something when he said: “It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do understand.”

**John 5:39-40** ~ “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup>yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”

### 3. The authority of God's Word.

➤ The authority of God's Word comes from the authority of God. For the Bible is not a human product or invention. We therefore do not have the right to make the Bible say whatever we *want* it to say. As God's authoritative Word, Scripture does not need to be “politically correct”, or conform the worldly philosophies, or religious ideologies. We must submit to the truth of God's Word, God's Word does not submit to us (i.e., our wants, opinions, egos, paradigms).

Scripture comes from God as His Spirit worked through (“superintended”) human authors, according to their individual personalities and literary styles, to compose and record His inspired Word.

**2 Peter 1:20-21** ~ “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>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.”

➤ The Bible is not man's thoughts on religion or on God. The Bible represents the very Word of God, and therefore carries the divine weight of the authority of God. It does not need to appeal to any (human) authority, for it represents the authority of God.

**2 Tim 3:14-17** ~ “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings [*hieros grammā*], which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture [*pas graphē*] is breathed out by God [*theopneustos*] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

➤ The apostle Paul referred to Scripture as being “*breathed out by God*” (2Tim.3:16). That Greek word (*theopneustos*) can literally be translated “God-breathed” or more figuratively understood as “God inspired.” The Bible's self-claim is that God's Word is God-inspired. This refers to the fact that Scripture (God's Word) is literally the exhalation of God. In other words, the apostle Paul is asserting that “all Scripture” is from God and as such is a divine (as opposed to human) product. The Bible does not simply contain the words of God. It is the divinely inspired Word of God.

Since every word of Scripture is God-breathed the whole of Scripture is the very Word of the living God. No other book is able to truthfully claim this attribute of divine inspiration. For no other book, document, or writing – no matter how precious or sacred – has been divinely inspired by the breath of God! Scripture repeatedly makes the claim that it is of God and from God, and that its origin is divine rather than human. Thus, the writers of Scripture were God's divine means – His instrument – of presenting His Word to His people. The moment “pen hit parchment” the Scriptures were the very literal, divinely inspired, Word of God. It is breathed out in its entirety by God, divinely preserved, and, therefore, trustworthy.

➤ As the written Word of God, the Bible carries the same authority as the spoken word of God. His Word is not to be ignored nor defied, and ultimately His Word always prevails.

**Gen 1:3** ~ “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

**Ps 33:6-9** ~ “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. <sup>7</sup>He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. <sup>8</sup>Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! <sup>9</sup>For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”

#### 4. The efficacy of God's Word.

➤ God's Word is not inactive or dead. The Bible is not like any other book. For, as we have seen, the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word. As God's Word, the Bible is working to – and never fails to – accomplish God's purposes.

**Heb 4:12** ~ “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

**Isa 55:10-11** ~ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

➤ It is through His Word that God instructs, encourages, comforts, convicts, saves, and sanctifies, and it is through God's Word that He judges and condemns. There is nothing – absolutely nothing – that stands in the way of God accomplishing His sovereign purpose, by His Spirit, through His Word. Whether it is accepted or rejected, believed or disbelieved, obeyed or ignored, God's Word is effective.

✓ Illust: John Calvin comments on Hebrews 4:12-13, “God never speaks in vain; he draws some to salvation, others he drives to ruin.”

✓ Illust: The Puritans used to say, “The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay.”

**Ps 119:105** ~ “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

**2 Peter 1:21** ~ “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.”

**1 Cor 2:13** ~ “And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

**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.”

**2 Tim 3:16-17** ~ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable [*ōphelimos*] for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

**John 16:13-14** ~ “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

**John 17:17** ~ “Sanctify [*hagiazō*] them in the truth; your word is truth.”

➤ Whether a person recognizes it or not, God's Word is always at work – saving and sanctifying some, judging and condemning others. God's Word is not dead, nor is it stagnant.

**Isa 46:8-11** ~ “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, <sup>9</sup>remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, <sup>10</sup>declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ <sup>11</sup>calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.”

## 5. The sufficiency of God's Word.

➤ God has not withheld anything we need to live a godly life and to follow His will. His Word, the Bible, does not need additional (or new) revelations, nor augmented by secular psychology or worldly philosophies. The Bible is all we need to equip us for a life of faith and service.

**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, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete [*artios*], equipped [*exartizō*] for every good work.”

2 Tim 3:17 ~ “that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.” (NET)

2 Tim 3:17 ~ “so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (NIV)

**2 Peter 1:2-3** ~ “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. <sup>3</sup>His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence”

➤ God's Word is the supreme authority in all matters to which it speaks and is sufficient for life, conduct, and practice. The sufficiency of Scripture is under attack today, and all too often from supposed Christian leaders and preachers. In many churches today, management techniques, pragmatism, entertainment, extra-biblical revelations, mysticism, and secular psychological are put on par with Scripture, or used as a means of making up for what Scripture lacks – but Scripture is not insufficient (in some churches, the Bible is tragically absent from all services and ministries).

Scripture is the sufficient authority for all things pertaining to faith and godliness, it is never inadequate, irrelevant, or antiquated. Scripture declares its own sufficiency:

**Ps 19:7-9** ~ “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup>the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup>the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.”

## 6. The eternity of God's Word.

➤ As God is eternal, so His Word is eternal (see Jn.1:1-2). It does not change, and it will never die. Even if every Bible on earth was destroyed, God's Word would remain. God will always ensure that His Word remains. Although many have tried to eradicate the Word of God, and many more will continue to try, God's Word is indestructible and immortal.

**Ps 119:89** ~ “Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

✓ Illust: “After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally” (C.H. Spurgeon; *The Treasury of David*, Ps.119:89).

➤ This truth is proclaimed throughout Scripture, affirmed by the New Testament apostles and even Christ Himself:

**Luke 16:17** ~ “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”

**Luke 21:33** ~ “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

**1 Peter 1:23-25** ~ “since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup>for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” [vs.24-25 quoted from Isaiah 40:6, 8, 9]

➤The Word of God is indestructible, incorruptible, and eternal. These verses intensify the idea of the prominence and permanence of God’s Word by contrasting it with perishable things of this world – even creation. Here we see the Word of God superior to creation, His divine Word more permanent than heaven and earth.

✓Illust: “God’s Word is an anvil; and many broken hammers lay all around it.”

## Conclusion

➤In the introductory pages of one of my study Bibles is this great declaration:

“This book contains: the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here heaven is open, and the gates of hell are disclosed.

Christ is the grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, health to the soul, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you here in this life, will be opened at the judgment, and is established forever.

It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its contents” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*; “Introduction”).