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*LOGOS AND LEADERSHIP: HOW INERRANCY
IMPACTS A PASTOR'S AUTHORITY*

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*LOGOS AND LEADERSHIP: HOW INERRANCY
IMPACTS A PASTOR'S AUTHORITY*

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To Nancy, who has graciously shared me with congregations and classrooms for the entirety of our marriage. Your consistent, loving sacrifice enables me to pursue God's divine calling on my life.

To our children, Logan, Kylie, and Jaden, who have given me a glimpse of the Heavenly Father's relationship to his children. What joy you bring to my heart! May each of you come to a personal knowledge of Christ as Savior and Lord.

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PREFACE

Any achievement that I am able to reach in the ministry or in the classroom would not be possible without the loving support of many throughout the course of my life. First, I would like to recognize the vital role that my parents have played in my spiritual development. Having been raised in a Christian home, I learned early in life to respect the Lord, his Word, and his church. My father, Dola Rader, led me to the Lord when I was 9 years old, and for that I am eternally grateful. My mother, Patricia Rader, instilled within me a passion to always strive for my very best. Also, my brother, Timothy Rader, has been a lifelong friend and source of wisdom that has enabled me to survive and thrive through the many ups and downs of life. Time will not permit me to thank all of the many, many members of my extended family who continually bless me and encourage me in my life and in my service to the Lord.

Second, I would like to thank several congregations for their contributions to my Christian life. My spiritual journey began at Northside Baptist Church in Winchester, Kentucky, where I accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and was baptized. It was at Central Baptist Church in Winchester, Kentucky, where I later surrendered to God's call on my life to preach. I am forever grateful to Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in Boston, Kentucky, for providing me my first opportunity to pastor a church. Their patience and support allowed me to gain both valuable ministry experience and lifelong friends at the same time. Lastly, I would like to thank the saints of Ephesus Baptist Church in Winchester, Kentucky, where I currently serve as pastor. I am grateful to lead such a church that loves the Lord, their pastor, and one another. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this Doctor of Ministry degree. It is my earnest prayer that you will greatly benefit from the knowledge that I gain in this academic pursuit.

Third, I would be remiss without recognizing the valuable role that the faculty and staff of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have played in my growth as a Christian and as a preacher. Both Dr. Bill Cook and Dr. T. J. Betts have modeled the importance of being both theologically accurate and spiritually attuned as a pastor. Dr. Robert Vogel has shared his wealth of experience and insight regarding various methods and models of expository preaching. Dr. Hershael York has been a constant mentor, both challenging and encouraging me to study God's Word and to accurately and effectively deliver his truth to the church. Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., has courageously taken a stand for the inerrancy of the Bible and has thus provided great sources of information and direction for this thesis.

I am grateful to Mrs. Kelli Stevenson for providing editorial assistance throughout this thesis. Your countless hours of service have proven helpful, and your encouragement has been a tremendous blessing! Thank you for your invaluable help.

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Most importantly, I am indebted to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have been saved and called into the ministry only by his grace. Proclaiming his inerrant Word to his beloved church is a tremendous joy and responsibility. May he be glorified in my life, my academics, and my service to him.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The subject of pastoral authority invokes several responses, many of which can undermine a pastor's confidence to lead the local church. First, modern culture holds an increasing hostility towards any form of authority, particularly one promoting an ideology based upon absolute truth.¹ As society claims to move toward increased tolerance it appears, ironically, to be growing increasingly intolerant of the concept of religious authority. Attempts to advocate moral accountability based upon the Bible are often viewed with suspicion and disdain. In the face of such cultural hostility, how can a pastor lead with confidence?

Second, the concept of authority in the church is often a great source of confusion. What exactly is the role of the pastor/elder? Several forms of church government exist and within each congregation there are varied nuances regarding pastoral authority. In some instances the pastor and/or the congregation view the pastor as the supreme decision maker in the church, whereas in other situations he is viewed as an employee of the congregation. With such confusion within today's church, where does a pastor find the boldness to lead effectively?

Another factor affecting pastoral leadership is personal hesitancy. Every man of God must recognize that he possesses a sin nature that can easily lead him astray. With this knowledge a pastor can become paralyzed in regards to his decision making. Shepherding the Lord's flock is a tremendous responsibility that no one should take

¹Ted Cabal, "An Introduction to Postmodernity: Where Are We, How Did We Get Here, and Can We Get Home?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 4.

lightly. Guarding against the selfish tendencies of the flesh can rattle the confidence of any pastor in terms of his leadership. Combine this with the introverted personalities of some ministers and it is easy to see how a pastor can lack the confidence he needs to effectively lead a church. How can a pastor overcome such personal hesitancy and lead with confidence?

Any discussion on authority in the church would be incomplete without also acknowledging that Jesus Christ is ultimately the Lord of the church. He, after all, has declared himself the builder and owner of the church (Matt 16:18). Later in the New Testament, Paul describes the church as the body of Christ with Jesus as the head (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18). Since Jesus is Lord of the church where does the idea of pastoral authority originate? Is it wrong for a pastor to view himself as an authoritative leader of his congregation when the Bible clearly indicates that Jesus is the head?

Ultimately, Christ's authoritative Word supplies the pastor with the confidence he needs to effectively lead. Christians worship a God who has graciously revealed himself in the pages of Scripture. Since God is true and trustworthy, his Word must be viewed as inerrant. Within this inerrant Word God reveals his divine plan to call certain men to pastor his flock and to proclaim his message. A pastor's theological understanding of God and his Word can provide the assurance needed to lead a church in spite of the social skepticism, ecclesiastical confusion, and personal hesitations that often undermine his confidence.

Familiarity with the Literature

Works abound on the topic of inerrancy. Likewise, much has been written on the subject of pastoral leadership, including preaching and various other pastoral ministries. The following is a sample of such writings.

One of the more recent treatments on the topic of inerrancy is *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* from the *Counterpoints: Bible and Theology* series.² A collection of five essays on the subject from authors with diverging opinions on inerrancy, the compilation proves helpful in framing the argument. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., argues for the classical position in his essay “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks.” If this is so, then the ramifications for abandoning this doctrine would prove to be disastrous for the church. On the other hand, pastors who hold to inerrancy can lead with the confidence that God’s Word provides since it is fully trustworthy and is the final authority on matters of doctrine and practice.

No attempt to define and understand conservative, evangelical doctrine would be complete without consulting Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*.³ In this substantial work Grudem addresses various issues pertaining to our understanding of the person and work of God. He begins by focusing on the doctrine of Scripture, for without the Bible it would be impossible to know God in the fullness by which he has revealed himself. Grudem devotes seven chapters to the doctrine of the Word of God, of which he allocates an entire chapter to the subject of inerrancy. He defines inerrancy, addresses the various challenges to this doctrine, and then discusses the problems that result from denying the inerrancy of the Bible.

John MacArthur and the faculty of The Master’s Seminary wrote *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* to challenge today’s generation of preachers to remain faithful to the text.⁴ Preaching is the pastor’s most essential responsibility in terms of leading the church, making it critical that God’s Word be communicated as accurately as possible.

²J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, eds., *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

⁴John MacArthur, Jr. and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

MacArthur has a powerful argument linking the doctrine of inerrancy to the model of expository preaching in chapter 2. In answer to questions regarding proper sermon form, he sees expository preaching as “exegetical preaching and not so much the homiletical form of the message.”⁵ He believes that those with a view of inerrancy should logically and philosophically be led to preach expository sermons.

R. Albert Mohler’s *He Is Not Silent* is a brief, yet powerful, look at the nature of preaching in the postmodern era.⁶ He successfully identifies how postmodern beliefs have damaged the ministry of the Word in today’s churches. This work serves as both an exhortation and a source of encouragement to preachers to stand faithfully upon the authority of God’s Word and to preach with the assurance that God will glorify himself through the proclamation of the gospel. Chapter 5 deals with the subject of the preacher’s authority and purpose. He cautions pastors against the temptation to lean upon their own authority and instead to rely upon the authority that is inherent from the Bible.

Preaching with Bold Assurance by Hershael York and Bert Decker deals with both the philosophy and practice of expository preaching.⁷ Chapter 3, “The Commitments Expositors Must Make,” is particularly insightful. Regarding the commitment to authorial intent York and Decker state, “The preacher will experience the greatest anointing of the Holy Spirit and the greatest effectiveness possible when he places himself squarely within the confines of the biblical author’s intent.”⁸ This work also emphasizes the communication model in which the words of God are faithfully

⁵MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Preaching*, 22.

⁶R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

⁷Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

delivered to the church through preaching. York and Decker write, “Our goal, therefore, is to preach so that our listeners hear and perceive the same message that God originally gave.”⁹ If a preacher holds to inerrancy and preaches in an expository manner grounded in authorial intent, he can have confidence that his sermons will bear the highest degree of authority.

The topic of authority is also emphasized in *Anointed Expository Preaching* by Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford.¹⁰ As the title states, the authors advocate the expository model of preaching. Preaching in this manner, they argue, will bring about the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 2, “The Preacher and the Word of God,” addresses the preacher’s view of scripture. The Olfords believe that the preacher must make a foundational commitment to the inerrancy of the Bible. By exegeting 2 Timothy 3:16-17, they demonstrate how the faithful preaching of God’s word bestows a greater degree of authority to the preacher’s message. The pastor, therefore, is truly dependent upon the power of God’s Word and God’s Spirit to be effective in ministry.

Fred Craddock’s *As One without Authority* laments the state of preaching in modern culture.¹¹ Rather than advocating an expository model, Craddock recommends an inductive approach to preaching, allowing listeners to form their own conclusions regarding the application of the text instead of being told authoritatively by the preacher. Craddock correctly identifies a lack of authority in the pulpit today. His prescription to this problem, however, is flawed. The authority should never be abdicated to the pew, nor is it to be found inherent to the preacher himself. A commitment to inerrancy and expository preaching are the sole means of restoring authority to the pulpit today.

⁹York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 138.

¹⁰Stephen F. Olford with David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1998).

¹¹Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001).

David Buttrick also addresses this perceived demise of authority in *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*.¹² He argues against the traditional view that Scripture bears God's authority. "Jesus Christ crucified," he writes, "is authority in the church."¹³ Ironically, he uses several Scripture references to support this view. He defines preaching as "mediation"¹⁴ and suggests a "double hermeneutic" where the preacher interprets both the text and modern culture.¹⁵ Similar to Craddock, Buttrick places greater authority in the pew than in Scripture when he writes, "The texts we study are not locked up tight in a vault labeled 'Original Meaning,' but articulate differently as the situation of the being-saved community is reshaped."¹⁶ The problem with this approach, however, is the loss of an objective source of truth. The message of the gospel is at danger of being compromised if authority were to rest in cultural shifts rather than being fixed in God-breathed Scripture.

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever provides tools to assess the current spiritual health of a local congregation along with guidelines to achieve and maintain spiritual effectiveness.¹⁷ The first and most important mark, according to Dever, is expository preaching. In his opinion this sets the stage for the remaining marks. Another important mark for the purpose of this thesis is biblical church leadership. Dever points to Christ as the model for the servant-leadership role of the pastor/elder. The chapter on church discipline also demonstrates how the church should be submissive to the inerrant Word of God.

¹²David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

¹³Ibid., 246.

¹⁴Ibid., 250.

¹⁵Ibid., 258.

¹⁶Ibid., 259.

¹⁷Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004).

Thom Rainer's *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* seeks to understand how best to reach the growing unchurched population.¹⁸ Rainer interviewed over 350 newly committed church members to find out what led them to join a particular local church. One of the dominant answers given dealt with the topic of biblical preaching and doctrine. Rather than being hindrances to reaching the unchurched, a commitment to biblical authority and exposition serve as valuable tools to connecting the unchurched to a local congregation. This research provides solid implications to leading and preaching under the Bible's full authority.

Void in the Literature

A wealth of information exists on the two subjects of inerrancy and pastoral leadership. What is missing, however, is how these two intersect. What are the practical implications for inerrancy upon leadership in the church? How might ministries such as preaching, counseling, church discipline, and spiritual comforting be affected? If the Bible is truly God's revelation then pastors who hold to such beliefs and submit to scriptural authority should be endowed with greater confidence to lead in their ministry settings. The void in the literature is how inerrancy practically affects the pastor's confidence to lead his congregation.

Statement and Explanation of Thesis

The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to lead with authority in the local church setting. God's Word is fully trustworthy and sufficient to support leadership despite the various challenges pastors face. Ministers must realize that their authority to lead is solely dependent upon the authority of God, who has revealed his will for the church in his inerrant Word. As a pastor leads with this conviction, he can be certain that

¹⁸Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

he stands upon the authority of the Bible, boldly calling the church to submit to God's Word in both the public setting of preaching and in the personal setting of pastoral ministry. This in turn could have far-reaching effects upon today's churches as Christians seek to advance God's kingdom.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL CONNECTION OF SPIRITUAL
LEADERSHIP AND GOD’S WORD

Introduction

The Bible establishes a clear connection between authoritative, spiritual leadership and submission to God’s revealed Word. In both the Old and New Testaments, the call to lead God’s people always directly connects to God’s Word. Divinely appointed offices of leadership were charged with receiving, transmitting, preserving and submitting to God’s revelation. The Bible provides examples of men successfully discharging leadership as well as those who failed due to neglecting God’s Word. Once this biblical connection is established, it will be argued that pastors cannot effectively lead local congregations without developing a theology of the Word and then leading according to this conviction. The doctrine of inerrancy provides the most effective link to spiritual leadership and leading with God’s authority.

Old Testament Leadership and God’s Word

From the early stages of God’s relationship to his people, it became evident that those whom he appointed to lead were to do so in accordance with what he had spoken. God ordained human authorities to represent his authority on Earth by submitting to and enforcing his instructions.¹ The three primary offices of leadership responsible for this in the Old Testament were prophets, priests, and kings.² Each office

¹Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 138.

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 624.

had a specific function regarding God's revealed Word. When God called someone to fulfill a leadership role in the OT it was always in conjunction with his Word. This pattern demonstrates that God is concerned with preserving his covenant with his people by providing trustworthy, authoritative revelation.³ Spiritual leadership that pleases God is impossible apart from his Word. Those prophets, priests, and kings who were faithful regarding the Word of God, found greater degrees of success in God's eyes than those who departed from his Word.

The Office of Prophet

Prophets primarily led God's people by receiving revelation and proclaiming his Word. Edward Young defines an OT prophet as a leader "raised up of God, in whose mouth God's word had been placed, and who uttered that word."⁴ Merrill sees prophets as "men and women raised up individually by God and called and empowered by him to communicate his purposes to the theocratic community."⁵ As such, prophets received their authority to lead by virtue of the message they received from God. The office of prophet was a divine institution, a gift from God to his people to ensure that they knew his will and conformed to his desires.

Deuteronomy 18:9-22 provides the most comprehensive description of the prophetic responsibility. This passage is set within the context of God's design for human authority.⁶ As part of God's preparation of Israel to enter into the Promised Land, he warns them of the spiritual practices of the pagan nations. After forbidding child

³Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 138.

⁴Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets: An Authoritative Interpretation of the Institution of the Prophets* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 13.

⁵Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 270.

⁶Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 138.

sacrifice, divination, witchcraft, and necromancy, Moses informs the people that God will “raise up a prophet like me from among you, from your own countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deut 18:15).⁷ Moses views himself as a prophet and believes that the prophetic role will continue beyond his time as leader in Israel, with the expectation that they would heed the authoritative prophetic word.⁸

The source of the prophet’s authority is found in verse 18 when the Lord states, “I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.” God charged these servants to both receive and transmit his Word to his people.⁹ Since the prophet’s words are indeed God’s, the Lord goes on to say, “It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him” (Deut 18:19). Hence, the words of the prophet will carry the authority of God so long as the prophet does not deviate from the message God has given him. Disobeying the words of the faithful prophet was akin to disobeying God himself.¹⁰

The Office of Priest

Priests played another crucial role in representing God’s authority to his people via his Word.¹¹ Their responsibilities included the preservation and instruction of the Law as well as promoting fellowship with God by means of sacrifice.¹² The priesthood involved a deep knowledge of the Law and its strict cultic rituals to ensure the holiness of

⁷All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 624.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 273.

¹¹Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 138.

¹²Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, 20.

God's people.¹³ Priests educated the people in matters of ritual cleanness and proper sacrifice (Ezek 44:23) and explained the Law at the prescribed religious festivals (Deut 31:9-13). God established the Aaronic priesthood to be the guardians and instructors of his revealed Law. They had the power to declare someone within or outside the sacred fellowship of God's people.¹⁴ Priests, therefore, could not effectively lead with authority devoid of a thorough knowledge and a submission to God's written Law.

Several biblical texts shed light on this connection of God's Word to the authoritative role of priests. One is found in Leviticus chapter 10 where God struck Aaron's sons dead for offering strange fire. God reminds Aaron of the priestly responsibility to both exemplify holiness and to "teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses" (Lev 10:11). To fulfill this obligation of faithfully preserving God's Law, many priests later took up the scribal task of copying biblical manuscripts.¹⁵

Prior to his passing, Moses pronounced a blessing upon each of the tribes of Israel. In blessing Levi he wrote, "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel" (Deut 33:10). God gave this instruction as the primary means of preserving his covenant expectations for his people.¹⁶ This role comes to light later in the OT during Jehoshaphat's reign. The king dispersed priests and Levites throughout the land of Judah with the book of the Law in order to instruct the people (2 Chr 17:7-9) and to judge disputes in accordance to God's revealed Word (2 Chr 19:8-11).

¹³T. J. Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest: A Custodian of Tora* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 6.

¹⁴Ibid., 7.

¹⁵Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 161.

¹⁶Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 439.

An important example of a priest leading by the instruction of God's Word is Ezra in Nehemiah 8:1-13.¹⁷ Here, the post-exilic community gathered for the stated purpose of hearing God's Law read and explained. Ezra, the priest, fulfilled the role of leadership by teaching God's revealed Word to the congregation. His positioning on the platform and the posture of the people both indicate the inherent authority given to a man who stands as God's mouthpiece, expounding his holy Word.

The Office of King

In terms of authoritative figures in the Old Testament, the office of king is perhaps the most recognizable. He ruled God's people as his official representative.¹⁸ As such, kings upheld a system of government based on God's revealed instructions. The king deserved honor for his role in enforcing God's Laws in regards to maintaining domestic justice and establishing an effective military force.¹⁹ Rather than replacing the theocracy, the king served as the earthly head of God's theocratic kingdom.²⁰ As God's representative, he carried God's authority.

God was already preparing his people for the institution of kingship prior to the establishment of the monarchy. In patriarchal times God told Abraham that kings would "come forth from you" (Gen 17:6). In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 guidelines are found for the proper selection and expectation of kings.²¹ Here, God declared that the king would be a man of his personal choice (Deut 17:15), thus lending his divine endorsement to the

¹⁷Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 133-34.

¹⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 624.

¹⁹Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 138.

²⁰Ibid., 220.

²¹Ibid.

institution.²² His Word contained the restrictions that were to be placed upon the monarchy once it was established.

God's Word also played a crucial role in the king's leadership duties. He was to make a personal copy of the Law under the watchful care of the Levitical priests, the sanctioned custodians of the Law (Deut 17:18). God then commanded the king to keep this copy of the Law with him and to "read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes" (Deut 17:19). Since he reigned as God's representative on Earth, the king had to rule with an understanding of and submission to God's revealed Word.²³ Obedience to what God had spoken guaranteed his authority.

Following the death of Moses, Joshua became the next leader of Israel. While not reigning as a king, per se, Joshua was still the divinely appointed leader of Israel at that time and was thus obligated to model the principle of obedience to God's Law for the people. God commanded Joshua three times to be bold and courageous in this divine calling to lead his people (Josh 1:6, 7, 9), and directed him to find this courage in his Word. Success required submitting to the Law of Moses (1:7). Speaking and meditating upon this Law "day and night" ensured continued obedience and success (1:8). This example proves that constant attention to God's Word leads to higher degrees of obedience both by leadership and those under their authority.²⁴

This pattern of dependence upon Scripture for leadership success continued throughout the period of Judges. Israel's greatest political moments came as the result of her leaders' obedience to God's Word. The book's ending foreshadows the upcoming

²²Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 265.

²³Ibid., 267.

²⁴Dale Ralph Davis, *No Falling Words: Expositions of the Book of Joshua* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 19.

monarchy and the spiritual expectations that God would place upon kings to enforce his Law (Judg 17:6; 21:25).

In the days of Samuel, Israel demanded a monarchy be established. The people's concern, however, was more politically motivated than spiritual (1 Sam 8:4-22). Israel viewed kingship as more permanent and more conducive to military success than the spiritual leadership provided by God through judges.²⁵ After King Saul's failures to lead in obedience to his Word (1 Sam 13:8-14; 15:17-23), God sent Samuel to anoint David as the next king. David then became the standard by which all other kings were measured in the OT. The Bible labels eight of Judah's subsequent kings as "good" because they followed in David's pattern of leading in obedience to God's Word.²⁶ Kings such as Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17:3-9), Hezekiah (2 Chr 29-31), and Josiah (2 Chr 34-35) wielded their God-given authority to enact extensive spiritual reform when the nation had wandered from obedience to God's Word. Throughout this period, the Lord's blessings flowed upon the people when the king observed his commandments, whereas retribution poured out upon the nation when the king deviated from the Law and led the people to do likewise.²⁷

As punishment for spiritual apostasy, God ordained the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians and later the Southern Kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians. During this Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezekiel lamented the failure of Judah's leaders to guide the nation to faithfully obey God's Word. In Ezekiel 22:23-31, he explicitly correlates the punishment Judah is enduring to the ungodly leadership of the prophets (25, 28), the priests (26), and the princes (27). All three divinely-appointed

²⁵Hill and Walton, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 220.

²⁶Ibid., 235.

²⁷Ibid., 237.

institutions failed to consistently lead in conjunction with God's revelation. This failure proved disastrous for both those in authority and for those whom they led.

New Testament Leadership and God's Word

The spiritual inconsistencies of the prophets, priests, and kings in the Old Testament created a longing for an even greater authority in the New Testament, one that would prove faithful in his obedience to God's revealed Word. As God in the flesh, Jesus perfectly fulfilled God's intentions for prophets, priests, and kings.²⁸ Jesus then prepared his apostles for his departure by passing the mantle of spiritual leadership to them. The apostles became primarily responsible for receiving, proclaiming, preserving and leading by the authority of God's Word. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, NT authors also introduced the office of elder/pastor/ overseer as those responsible for carrying on the leadership of the Lord's church until he returns. This leadership, as every previous biblical office, is to be performed in submission to revealed Scripture. These NT examples provide confidence to those required to lead in submission to God's Word today.

Jesus and God's Word

Any study of spiritual leadership from the Bible would be incomplete without looking at the leadership characteristics of Christ. As the Son of God, Jesus possesses attributes impossible for any mortal to duplicate. His treatment of Scripture, however, is exemplary for anyone charged with the task of leading God's people. The Son of God exhibits confidence in the written Word of God. Today's leaders should therefore follow suit.

²⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 624.

God commissioned Jesus, as the Messiah, for the task of leadership.²⁹ Much like those preceding Him, Jesus led in accordance to the principles of Scripture. As such, Calvin saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the OT offices.³⁰ In his *Institutes*, he points to the meaning of “Christ” or “Messiah” as anointed one, following in the footsteps of those prophets, priests, and kings of the OT who were anointed with oil at the outset of their given ministries.³¹ The way in which Jesus followed the pattern of His predecessors should be examined. He, however, succeeded where they wavered in their responsibilities to lead from God’s Word.

In his life and ministry, Christ perfectly fulfilled the prophet’s responsibility of receiving and proclaiming God’s revelation. The Apostle Peter saw Jesus as the Prophet of whom Moses had earlier written (Acts 3:22-23). As with all three offices, Jesus, as God’s Son, was the perfect embodiment of God’s expectation for his prophets. Rather than simply receiving revelation from God, Jesus himself was the Word made flesh (John 1:1-18) and the ultimate revelation of the Father (Heb 1:1-3). In Jesus, God tangibly revealed himself to humanity.³² Like OT prophets, Jesus faithfully proclaimed the message which he had been entrusted (Mark 1:14-15). His willingness to declare the truth, regardless of who may be offended, displayed his confidence in God’s Word, making him an exemplary model for those discharged with speaking the Word today.

Through his work of intercession and reconciliation, Jesus also fulfilled the office of priest. Hebrews 8:1-6 indicates that Jesus’ priestly ministry is better than the

²⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 781.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.15.2, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 495.

³²Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 258.

priests of the Old Covenant. His intercession for God's people is perfect since he himself is at the right hand of the Father (Rom 8:34). As both the sinless priest and the substitutionary sacrifice, he offered a more satisfactory atonement.³³

Yet, the priestly responsibility of preservation and instruction of the Law may be overlooked in Jesus' leadership. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expressed his desire to preserve God's Word, declaring, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:17-18). He warned those who annulled the commandments and taught others likewise that they would be considered least in the kingdom, whereas those who kept the Law and taught others to do the same would be called great (Matt 5:19). Jesus therefore emphasized that teachers will be held accountable for their faithfulness in living and teaching God's Word.³⁴

The Sermon on the Mount also shows Jesus fulfilling the priestly responsibility of instruction in the Law. The recurring refrain, "You have heard that it was said, but I say to you," appears six times throughout Matthew 5. Jesus demonstrated his authoritative position to rightly interpret Scripture for God's people and to demand their obedience to its teachings.³⁵

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer also connects his understanding of the priesthood with his reliance upon God's Word. In John 17:17, he prays that the Father will sanctify his people in the truth, which is his Word. It was the responsibility of the priest to lead God's people by sanctifying them in holiness according to the Law's prescription. In

³³Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 665-66.

³⁴Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 105.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 106.

order for a priest to perform this obligation, he himself must first be consecrated. Here, Jesus indicated that it is his sanctification that enables his disciples to likewise be sanctified in truth (17:19). Through this prayer, Jesus communicates the necessity of God's Word to make one holy, set apart by God to serve his people.³⁶

Jesus' kingly leadership in accordance to God's Word is also found in the Gospels. In the OT, God called kings first to submit to his authority and then to lead his people to obey his Law as well. The king had the power to enact sweeping spiritual reform by demanding reverence to Scripture. Jesus displayed an intentional desire to fulfill what was written about him concerning his role as Messiah, thus displaying his submission to Scripture even as the rightful king of Israel was expected.

At the outset of his ministry, Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Being declared the Son of God at his baptism, the Spirit then led him into the wilderness to initiate an attack on the enemy.³⁷ Satan began by tempting Jesus to exercise his authority contrary to God's will for him in that moment.³⁸ By quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," Jesus demonstrated his dependence upon Scripture to rightfully rule as Messiah. He refused to use his power to fulfill his own desires, choosing rather to utilize this authority in full submission to God's Word.³⁹ Jesus quoted Scripture in his defense against Satan's temptations, displaying an internalized familiarity with God's Word that was also expected of OT kings (Deut 17:18-20).

³⁶George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) 300-301.

³⁷Robert H. Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 105.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 106.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 107.

Jesus also intentionally fulfilled his role as suffering servant. He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the crowds crying, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD, even the King of Israel” (John 12:13). He chose to ride upon a donkey, as was prophesied of him in Zechariah 9:9. At the moment of his sacrificial death upon the cross, the inscription, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (John 19:28) bore witness to his fulfillment of Scripture. Following his resurrection, Jesus criticized the disciples on the Emmaus road for their ignorance of all the prophets had spoken. He began to instruct them from God’s Word how it was necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory (Luke 24:25-27). As Jesus taught them these things, he looked to God’s Word for direction as to how he was to live and reign as God’s anointed King.

Kings also enacted justice and punished those who refused to submit to God’s Word. While on trial, Jesus declared, “Nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64). Jesus positively affirmed his title of Messiah and the role he would play on Judgment Day.⁴⁰ This is prophesied in Revelation 19:11-16 where Christ returns on a white horse, judging and waging war with many diadems upon his head, and a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth in order to rule the nations and enact the fierce wrath of God. John identifies him as the “Word of God” (Rev 19:13) having the name “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” written upon his robe and thigh (19:16). As the Messiah, Jesus will reign as the embodiment of God’s Word, a king in full submission to Scripture who will also guide his people to live in accordance with the Word and punishing those who refuse.

⁴⁰Stein, *Jesus the Messiah*, 227.

The Apostles and God's Word

Prior to his departure, Jesus prepared his apostles to take up his mantle of leadership by relying upon the Word of God. He instructed them to continue the tasks of prophet, priest, and king in lesser degrees, subservient to him. Like Jesus, they were to receive revelation and declare this truth to the church. They were to preserve God's Word and to instruct the church in its true meaning, and to submit to God's revelation, leading those in their charge to apply this truth in their daily living. The connection of spiritual leadership and the Word of God remained throughout the apostolic era.

In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus predicted the Holy Spirit's coming and the impact this would have upon the apostles. He explained that the Spirit would teach them "all things" and bring to remembrance "all that I said to you" (John 14:26). This divine ministry aided their ability to recall the teachings and events of Jesus' life and to understand their significance.⁴¹ Later he would state that the Spirit would guide them "into all truth" (John 16:13). Beasley-Murray writes, "The task of the Paraclete will be to lead them that they may comprehend the depths and heights of the revelation as yet unperceived by them. It is explicitly stated that the revelation mediated by the Paraclete will not be his own, but one that he will receive."⁴² The Spirit would thus relay the truth to the disciples in a way that they could impart the message to the church.

Following the Ascension of Christ, the apostles began their leadership assignment in the book of Acts by leading in submission to the Word of God. They carefully fulfilled what had been written in Scripture (Acts 1:15-26). On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached with boldness as the Spirit empowered him to expound upon God's Word and to call the audience to submit to the truth (Acts 2:14-42). The apostles' doctrine then became the focal point of study for the early church as they relayed all that

⁴¹Beasley-Murray, *John*, 261.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 283.

Christ had taught them.⁴³ The apostles gave priority to the ministry of the Word in Acts 6:1-6. While recognizing the importance of meeting physical needs, this episode also highlights the necessity for church leaders to study and teach God's Word.⁴⁴ The apostles continued the familiar pattern of leading God's people with authority by depending upon his revelation.

Elder/Overseer/Pastor and God's Word

The New Testament epistles introduce God's desired model for spiritual leadership in the church era. The apostolic office was unique to those men who were witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As such, their leadership function was strictly foundational for the church and unrepeatable.⁴⁵ This led to establishing an ongoing office of authority for the church, one that would fulfill the leadership functions of proclaiming, instructing, and governing God's people in accordance to his revealed Word. While today's leaders do not carry the same inherent authority as the apostles, the church nevertheless finds direction in the New Testament for spiritual leadership.⁴⁶ This model, given under inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the apostles to the churches of their time, is still applicable to modern churches.⁴⁷

The New Testament uses three terms, *πρεσβύτερος*, *ἐπίσκοπος*, and *ποιμήν*, to delineate the primary office responsible for spiritual leadership within churches.⁴⁸ In

⁴³John Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 119.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 180-81.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁶Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 222.

⁴⁷Andreas J. Kostenberger, "Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 10.

⁴⁸Benjamin L. Merkle, "Hierarchy in the Church? Instruction from the Pastoral Epistles Concerning Elders and Overseers," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 32-43.

simplest terms, these words can best be translated as “elder,”⁴⁹ “overseer,”⁵⁰ and “pastor”⁵¹ respectively. Of these terms, “elder” and “overseer” appear most frequently in the New Testament.⁵² The noun form for “pastor” appears only once (Eph 4:11), whereas the verb form is used more often.⁵³ “Pastor” may also be interpreted as “shepherd,” which is an appropriate description of the person(s) charged with feeding the flock of God and fighting off the enemy.⁵⁴ Among Southern Baptist churches, the word “pastor” is used most frequently to denote the office of spiritual leadership.⁵⁵ Therefore, “pastor” will be used more often in this paper, although “elder” and “overseer” may also be used interchangeably depending upon the Scripture references or sources being cited.

New Testament references to elder appointments reveal the pastoral office’s necessity. At the completion of his first missionary journey, Paul made it a point to ensure that elders were appointed in “every” church (Acts 14:23). The apostles wisely established spiritual leadership during their absence from these early churches.⁵⁶ Paul reminded Titus of his commission to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). The fact that Paul began his correspondence with this admonition is evidence to the importance of having established spiritual leadership in every church.⁵⁷

⁴⁹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “πρεσβύτερος.”

⁵⁰Ibid., s.v. “ἐπίσκοπος.”

⁵¹Ibid., s.v. “ποιμήν.”

⁵²Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 229.

⁵³Merkle, “Hierarchy in the Church?” 32.

⁵⁴Ray Van Neste, “The Message of Titus: An Overview,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 22.

⁵⁵Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 229.

⁵⁶Polhill, *Acts*, 319.

⁵⁷Van Neste, “The Message of Titus,” 19.

Two texts in particular outline the qualifications for an elder/overseer. First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 both begin by focusing on the character of the man qualified for the task. Both passages also specify the elder's responsibility to teach God's Word.⁵⁸ More was required of the candidates than teaching solely by their lifestyle. "Fruitful verbal communication of the gospel and biblical doctrine" was also expected.⁵⁹ The elder candidate must be convinced of sound doctrine while possessing a divinely-equipped aptitude for teaching and reproof.⁶⁰

In summation, Stott views a commitment to the Word of God and a commitment to the people of God as the two primary ministerial responsibilities.⁶¹ Many NT passages link the office of spiritual leadership to the proclamation, defense, and teaching of God's Word (Acts 20:17-35; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2, 5:17; 2 Tim 1:13-14; Heb 13:7). This same inseparable connection was established in the OT. In many ways the elders/overseers/pastors of the NT could be viewed as a continuation of the ministries of the prophets, priests, and kings of the OT. While the terminology has changed, the obligation to proclaim the Word (2 Tim 4:2), guard the deposit (1 Tim 6:20), and exercise oversight (1 Pet 5:2) remains consistent. God's leaders have always been entrusted to lead from his Word.⁶² In doing so, spiritual leaders can be assured that they are leading with the authority that comes from God himself (Titus 2:15).⁶³ The Lord Jesus, therefore,

⁵⁸Van Neste, "The Message of Titus," 21.

⁵⁹Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 24.

⁶⁰Van Neste, "The Message of Titus," 21.

⁶¹John R. W. Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time: The Message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 68-69.

⁶²Rinne, *Church Elders*, 46.

⁶³Van Neste, "The Message of Titus," 22.

ministers to his church through the faithful preaching and teaching of his Word by his appointed pastors.⁶⁴

Spiritual Leadership and Scriptural Convictions

With the biblical evidence of leading from God’s Word firmly established, today’s leaders must possess a settled conviction regarding the nature of the Bible. Both Old and New Testament leaders have set the precedent of fully trusting in the faithfulness of the Word of God and leading with confidence in its inherent authority. Since the mantle of spiritual leadership has passed to the current generation, the debate over biblical inerrancy continues to wage. What does it mean to say the Bible is inerrant, and is this position defensible? Is this issue even relevant for modern churches and their leaders? The answers to these questions will determine whether today’s spiritual leaders will follow the lasting legacies of their biblical predecessors and lead God’s people with the boldness that comes from trusting in the inerrant Word of God.

A Definition of Inerrancy

While an exhaustive study of the doctrine of inerrancy is beyond the scope of this work, briefly defining the term “inerrancy” is vital. Divergent meanings to the term today make it essential for evangelicals to articulate what they mean when using this word.⁶⁵ Erickson provides a snapshot of the various ways in which the doctrine of inerrancy is held today.⁶⁶

Some oppose the usefulness of the term “inerrancy,” arguing that it is “too precise and that in ordinary usage it denotes a kind of absolute scientific precision that we

⁶⁴Rinne, *Church Elders*, 48.

⁶⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 264.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 248-50.

do not want to claim for Scripture.”⁶⁷ Scholars such as Henry,⁶⁸ Grudem,⁶⁹ and Geisler and Roach,⁷⁰ however, favor maintaining the term. Henry correctly states that proposed terms such as “profitability” and “infallibility” must also be qualified.⁷¹ According to Grudem, “It should also be noted that no other single word has been proposed which says as clearly what we want to affirm when we wish to talk about total truthfulness in language.”⁷² Finally, Geisler and Roach note that inerrancy simply means “without error” and state, “there is nothing bad or technical about that phrase.”⁷³ Arguments against the usefulness of the term ultimately prove invalid.

Erickson gives this short definition: “Inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings.”⁷⁴ He later provides this more detailed definition: “The Bible, when correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all that it affirms.”⁷⁵ Grudem adds another dimension with this definition, “The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”⁷⁶ This statement highlights the belief that the original autographs were inerrant. Some argue

⁶⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 95.

⁶⁸Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 4:177-78.

⁶⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 95.

⁷⁰Geisler, Norman L. and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 319-22.

⁷¹Henry, *God Revelation and Authority*, 4:177-78.

⁷²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 95.

⁷³Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 320.

⁷⁴Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 246.

⁷⁵Ibid., 259.

⁷⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 90.

against this view since the autographs are no longer extant.⁷⁷ A study of textual variants in the existing manuscripts, however, shows that 99 percent of the words match up perfectly, giving certainty to what was written in the autographs.⁷⁸ The doctrine of inerrancy should therefore extend not only to the original autographs, but also to existing copies, to the extent of their accuracy.⁷⁹

The most comprehensive definition of inerrancy to date is the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy developed in 1978 by the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). This document, consisting of an introductory statement, a short definition of the doctrine, and a set of nineteen articles of affirmation and denial, may be found in its entirety in Carl Henry's, *God, Revelation and Authority*.⁸⁰ The ICBI's aim was to answer the challenges to the doctrine of inerrancy in its day by creating a definitive evangelical statement.⁸¹ In spite of the constant challenges to the doctrine today, the Chicago Statement remains as a relevant and consistent definition of inerrancy. For practical purposes, and as a display of personal affirmation, the Chicago Statement will serve as the definitive definition of inerrancy for the remainder of this thesis.

A Defense of Inerrancy

With a working definition of the doctrine in place, a brief consideration of the arguments in favor of inerrancy is necessary. To state that pastors can find confidence to lead based upon an indefensible doctrine would prove foolish. The primary defense for

⁷⁷R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 47.

⁷⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 96.

⁷⁹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 265.

⁸⁰Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4:211-19.

⁸¹Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 35.

inerrancy is biblical, namely, what the Bible says regarding its own trustworthiness. The way NT writers speak of events from the OT as factual reveals their belief in the total truthfulness of Scripture.⁸² DeYoung states, “Nowhere do Jesus or the apostles ever treat the Old Testament as human reflections on the divine. It is instead the voice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:25; Heb 3:7) and God’s own breath (2 Tim 3:16).”⁸³ He later writes of Jesus, “He believed the Bible was all true, all edifying, all important, and all about him. He believed absolutely that the Bible was from God and was absolutely free from error...It is impossible to revere the Scriptures more deeply or affirm them more completely than Jesus did.”⁸⁴

Several Scripture passages attest to the perfection of God’s Word.⁸⁵ Second Peter 1:21 reads, “For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” This verse reveals the divine origin of the words spoken by the prophets. According to verse 20, the context of this statement includes both the spoken word and the written Scriptures.⁸⁶ This verse also supports the doctrine of inspiration, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Peter’s view that the OT Scriptures are the very words of God is noteworthy. This thought process should include the inspiration of the entire NT as well. Therefore, all of Scripture should rightly be viewed as the authoritative, infallible, and inerrant Word of God.⁸⁷

⁸²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 93.

⁸³Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2014), 64.

⁸⁴Ibid., 109-10.

⁸⁵Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 37.

⁸⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 324.

⁸⁷Ibid.

Another verse attesting to the inerrancy of the Bible is 2 Timothy 3:16. Here Paul declares that all Scripture is θεόπνευστος, literally, God-breathed.⁸⁸ This statement summarizes how the OT, and eventually the Gospels and the Epistles, were viewed by the early church.⁸⁹ Hence the Bible affirms that its very words are indeed the words of God himself, carrying his authority and reflecting his character.⁹⁰ Paul also links Scripture's divine origin with its profitability. God has supplied a trustworthy Word which must be applied in the local church.

This discussion of the inspiration of Scripture leads to the theological argument for the doctrine of inerrancy. Inerrancy should be seen as the completion of the doctrine of Scripture, as well as a corollary of the doctrine of inspiration.⁹¹ Inspiration can be defined as “a supernatural influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation.”⁹² In Mohler's view believing in the doctrine of inspiration should require one to hold to the doctrine of inerrancy.⁹³ Those opposed to inerrancy will often have issues with the doctrine of inspiration as well.⁹⁴ If the Bible is presumed to be the Word of God, to say that the Bible contains errors is an attack on the very character of God. This would indicate that God is either not telling the truth, not aware of the truth, or incapable of ensuring that the truth be correctly transmitted through human authors. Any of these claims should be viewed as heretical. In reference to John 17:17, Grudem states

⁸⁸R. Kent Hughes, *1&2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 238.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 39.

⁹¹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 246-47.

⁹²Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4:129.

⁹³Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 58.

⁹⁴Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4:194.

the issue well when he writes, “The Bible is God’s Word, and God’s Word is the ultimate definition of what is true and what is not true: God’s Word is itself *truth*.”⁹⁵ For those charged with leading God’s people, confidence in the Bible should be rooted in confidence in God himself.⁹⁶

The historical argument for inerrancy is also important. While not as binding as the biblical and theological arguments, it is interesting to note the church’s long history of holding to inerrancy. Prominent theologians such as Augustine and Luther wrote about the complete truthfulness of the Bible.⁹⁷ The Reformers also took their stand upon the authority and trustworthiness of God’s Word.⁹⁸ Indeed Protestants and Catholics alike have a history of holding to biblical inerrancy.⁹⁹ Even those opposed to full inerrancy such as the Hanson brothers, who rejected the doctrine of divine inspiration,¹⁰⁰ and Peter Enns¹⁰¹ recognize the long-standing tradition of the doctrine of inerrancy as the dominant belief in the church. Verbal-plenary inspiration was the prevailing view in evangelical Christianity until the twentieth century, when many denominations began to compromise their belief in this essential doctrine.¹⁰² Mohler states, “The rejection of inerrancy is a modern development in the church, brought about by the rejection of specific biblical texts as inspired and authoritative and by the rejection of the very idea of divine inspiration.”¹⁰³ Even though modern church leaders who hold

⁹⁵Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 83.

⁹⁶Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 43.

⁹⁷Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 251-52.

⁹⁸Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 29.

⁹⁹Henry, *God Revelation and Authority*, 4:167.

¹⁰⁰Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 41.

¹⁰¹Peter Enns, “Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does,” in *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 84.

¹⁰²Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4:160-61.

¹⁰³Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 42.

to the doctrine of inerrancy may think themselves in the minority, they should be comforted knowing that this was not always the case within orthodox Christianity.

A Dependence upon Inerrancy

Some may question the relevance of defending the doctrine of inerrancy so vigorously, given that this issue has proven divisive in evangelicalism over the past several decades. The heart of the matter, though, is authority. If the Bible is not completely accurate where can one turn for knowledge of the truth? If some parts of the Bible are true while others are not, how does one know for certain which parts are trustworthy?¹⁰⁴ If the Bible is inaccurate in peripheral matters then what other major doctrines may also be false?¹⁰⁵ For the Christian faith to survive, a dependable, trustworthy source of guidance is needed, and that source is the Bible.¹⁰⁶ In the absence of a divine source of authority, the human mind, a depraved and unreliable guide, will become that authority.¹⁰⁷ According to Mohler, “In the wake of that recognition, the church is left with the task of determining which texts, if any, are true and trustworthy and authoritative – and to what extent. The consequences of that confusion would be disastrous to the church and to individual Christians.”¹⁰⁸ If, on the other hand, Christians held to the classical belief on inerrancy articulated in the phrase, “When the Bible speaks, God speaks,” then the Bible could universally be viewed as authoritative.¹⁰⁹ As such, the

¹⁰⁴Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 171.

¹⁰⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 253-54.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁰⁷Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), xix.

¹⁰⁸Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks,” 46.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

authority of the Bible is the authority of God, and to disobey the Bible is to disobey God.¹¹⁰

In the battle for inerrancy, important doctrinal matters are at stake. It is through the Bible that a more accurate knowledge of God is gained. An errant Bible would mean that the church's knowledge of God's nature and purposes may also be inaccurate.¹¹¹ If certain areas of the Bible were determined to be untrue, there would be no certainty regarding the doctrine of God. An errant Bible thus places the entire Christian faith on shaky ground, rendering man the sole arbiter of which parts of the Bible must be regarded and which parts can be discarded. Those parts which are deemed personally offensive are usually the ones removed.¹¹² At the very heart of the Christian faith is a belief in the atonement of Christ as articulated in the Bible. Christ's redemption is only properly understood by his revelation. The sufficiency of his redemption is assured by the sufficiency of his revelation. They stand or fall together.¹¹³ One's certainty of salvation is dependent upon the certainty of Scripture. As the church clings to and proclaims the gospel, the inerrancy of all Scripture provides cohesion and clarity to its core doctrines.¹¹⁴

The issue of inerrancy affects both the doctrinal and practical concerns of the church. Scripture's faithfulness is necessary for the health of the church, a reality that drove the ICBI to develop the Chicago Statement.¹¹⁵ When confronted by practical issues such as doctrine, worship, and polity, the church can either turn to tradition and

¹¹⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

¹¹¹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 246.

¹¹²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 100.

¹¹³DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*, 52.

¹¹⁴Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 30-31.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 43.

pragmatism for answers, or to the inerrant, authoritative Word of God.¹¹⁶ Even though the NT allows some flexibility regarding polity, the inerrancy of Scripture establishes a common plumb line for doctrine and decision-making within the local church. Doctrinal accountability becomes the dual-responsibility of leadership and laity alike.¹¹⁷ Pastors must call church members to submit to the authoritative Word of God, and congregations must demand that their pastors preach and lead in accordance with this same authoritative Word. In this way, inerrancy becomes essential for establishing an objective source of authority. Healthy churches are those in which elders and congregation both have the same understanding of the nature of Scripture.¹¹⁸ If this joint understanding includes the doctrine of inerrancy, then both pastors and congregations find greater confidence to perform the ministries into which they are called.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has established the biblical connection between spiritual leadership and God's Word. In both the Old and New Testaments, the call to lead God's people has always involved a dependence upon God's revealed Word. Prophets, priests, kings, apostles, and now pastors, would be unable to perform their tasks faithfully without total submission to the Word of God. Once this connection is established, it becomes critical for modern pastors to develop a settled conviction regarding the truthfulness of the Bible. With a firm belief in the doctrine of inerrancy, God's Word can bestow confidence for ministry due to its divine dependability.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶Dever, *The Church*, xiv.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁸Ibid., xxv.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 157.

¹²⁰Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4:170.

Second Timothy 3:16-4:5 links the doctrine of Scripture with practical ministry. After telling Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed, Paul explains its usefulness for ministry. The Bible's divine origin becomes the grounds for young Timothy's confidence to lead with authority.¹²¹ He is to preach, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience because all Scripture is fully trustworthy. DeYoung summarizes this when he writes, "Counselors can counsel meaningfully because Scripture is sufficient. Bible study leaders can lead confidently because Scripture is clear. Preachers can preach with boldness because their biblical text is authoritative. And evangelists can evangelize with urgency because Scripture is necessary."¹²² With the foundational matter of the Bible's faithfulness established, the remainder of this work will now focus on the practical benefits for pastors holding to the doctrine of inerrancy. A pastor may confidently fulfill his calling to preach and minister with boldness because of the dependability of God's inerrant, authoritative Word.

¹²¹Hughes, *1&2 Timothy and Titus*, 238.

¹²²DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*, 90.

CHAPTER 3

EMBOLDENED IN THE PUBLIC SETTING: THE IMPACT OF INERRANCY ON THE PREACHING MINISTRY

Introduction

Pastors are expected to perform many functions in the local church, but none are more important than preaching. Mohler argues this point when he writes, “This is not to say that there are not other issues, that there are not other responsibilities, or that there are not even other priorities; but there is one central, non-negotiable, immovable, essential priority, and that is the preaching of the Word of God.”¹ The apostles themselves established this precedent within the early church (Acts 6:1-4). A biblical understanding of the Word, the pastoral office, and preaching itself demands this to be the case.

Paul fervently pressed the importance of the preaching ministry upon Timothy when he wrote, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word” (2 Tim 4:1-2a). This imperative follows immediately after Paul’s declaration that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16). The apostle thus links the practice of preaching to the theology of the Word.² Pastors and churches must therefore consider how one’s view of Scripture affects the preaching ministry. The doctrine of inerrancy impacts the definition,

¹R. Albert Mohler, “The Primacy of Preaching,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Orlando, FL: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 16.

²Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 1.

theology, authority, and methodology of preaching and thus emboldens pastors to preach God's Word with confidence.

Inerrancy and the Definition of Preaching

Establishing a definition of preaching is necessary for understanding how inerrancy impacts the pulpit ministry. Greidanus indicates that the New Testament uses 33 different verbs that can be translated as “preaching.”³ He states, “Consequently, preaching can be seen as an activity with many facets – facets which are highlighted by such New Testament words as *proclaiming, announcing good news, witnessing, teaching, prophesying, and exhorting.*”⁴ In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul uses the imperative form of the verb κηρύσσω. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines this as making an announcement or a public declaration, or to proclaim aloud any message of divine origin.⁵ Immediate context dictates that Paul has this sense in mind as he charged Timothy. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states, “If the sending entails restriction, it also confers authority. Those who are sent proclaim what they are commissioned to proclaim (Mt. 10:27). They do not report their own experiences but declare the acts and will of him who sends them.”⁶

Modern definitions of preaching typically assume an understanding of the Bible's nature. Dever makes this point forcefully when he writes, “Anything that is *not* rooted in and tethered tightly to God's Word is not preaching at all. It's just a speech.”⁷

³Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 6.

⁴Ibid., 7.

⁵Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “κηρύσσω.”

⁶Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged in one vol., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 434.

⁷Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 36.

Definitions of preaching can be simple, such as Piper’s statement, “Preaching is the heralding of the good news by a messenger sent by God.”⁸ Vines and Shaddix define preaching as, “The oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response.”⁹ Anyabwile’s definition of preaching is “God speaking in the power of His Spirit about His Son from His word through a man.”¹⁰ He goes on to state, “True preaching comes, ‘from His word.’ That is, true preaching happens when the biblical text dominates, drives, delimits what the preacher speaks.”¹¹ The Bible’s necessity is a common thread running throughout these definitions. A preacher’s theology of the Word, therefore, has a foundational impact on how he defines preaching.

Paul commanded Timothy to “Preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2a) and by implication of his sober charge, commands every pastor to do the same. Simply preaching “words” is insufficient. Neither is it “a word” among many that is to be heralded. Preaching must be proclamation of the “God-breathed” Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16), the inerrant Word that has its source in the God who is incapable of speaking untruth (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). Preaching, therefore, cannot be defined without the Bible, and a belief in inerrancy impacts the pastor’s and congregation’s understandings of Christian preaching. Inerrancy thus leads the preacher to believe he is heralding a trustworthy, authoritative, and powerful Word from God every time he proclaims a sermon grounded in Scripture.

⁸John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 27.

⁹Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 27.

¹⁰Thabiti Anyabwile, *How Do You Define Preaching?* 4, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabitianyabwile/2012/12/03/how-do-you-define-preaching-4/>.

¹¹Ibid.

Inerrancy and the Theology of Preaching

Inerrancy also impacts the theology of preaching, determining why preaching is so crucial to the Christian faith. Dever writes, “Theology affects practice. We all know that’s true. The ideas we hold in our minds, the things we take to be *true*, always affect the way we act and live.”¹² This is especially true in preaching. A theology of preaching rests upon a theology of the Word.¹³ One’s beliefs regarding the Bible will greatly influence his/her beliefs about preaching the Bible. By its very nature preaching is a theological undertaking; speaking to people on behalf of God. Hughes argues, “The authority that you attach to Scripture will determine the weight and prominence that you give Scripture in your preaching.”¹⁴

A diminished view of Scripture, unfortunately, has led to a decline in modern preaching. Robinson makes this connection when he writes, “More important, perhaps, is that some ministers in the pulpit feel robbed of an authoritative message. Much modern theology offers them little more than holy hunches, and they suspect that the sophisticates in the pew place more faith in science texts than in preaching texts.”¹⁵ Boice echoes this in saying, “The answer is that the current decline in preaching is due, not to external causes, but to a prior decline in a belief in the Bible as the authoritative and inerrant Word of God on the part of the church’s theologians, seminary professors, and those ministers who are trained by them.” He goes on to write, “Quite simply, it is a loss of confidence in the existence of a sure Word from God. Here the matter of inerrancy and

¹²Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 35.

¹³Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 92.

¹⁴Kent Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 46.

¹⁵Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 18.

authority go together.”¹⁶ According to these authors, a belief in an errant Bible inevitably leads to less confidence and authority in the pulpit.

On the other hand, confidence in the inerrancy of Scripture’s entirety is an essential component to effective Christian preaching. Doubting the trustworthiness of any part of the Bible should cause a lack of confidence in all other parts, including those dealing with salvation.¹⁷ In comparison, a high view of Scripture leads to a high view of preaching. Indeed, preaching flourishes most when the Bible is viewed as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.¹⁸

Peter Adam offers a succinct yet helpful theology of preaching summarized in these three statements: “God has spoken. It is written. Preach the Word.”¹⁹ The doctrine of inerrancy has a fundamental impact on each of these aspects. Discrediting the Bible’s truthfulness, however, will negatively impact one’s theology of preaching.

God Has Spoken

One of the essential beliefs of the Christian faith is that God has chosen to reveal himself.²⁰ This becomes evident from the very first chapter of the Bible in which Genesis 1:3 states, “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” This statement reveals that God speaks. This attribute sets God apart from the pagan deities in the days of Ancient Israel.²¹ While other gods were known by their visible idols, God was revealing himself and his intentions to his people through words. The OT contains

¹⁶James Montgomery Boice, *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1979), 125.

¹⁷Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 52.

¹⁸Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 40.

¹⁹Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 37.

²⁰Ibid., 25.

²¹Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 13.

variations of the phrase, “The LORD said,” at least 3,808 times.²² The fact that God speaks is of primary importance to understanding the nature of the Bible and of Christian preaching.

God’s revelation provides the foundation for his covenant with his people. Dever states, “The fundamental basis of any person’s relationship with God is that we hear His Word and respond to it.”²³ Some might argue that God’s transcendence and holiness would prevent him from speaking to sinful creatures. God’s revelation of himself to Adam and Eve, however, continued even after the Fall.²⁴ His transcendence over his creation does not nullify his power and ability to communicate with mankind.²⁵ Arguments have also been made that God’s chief means of revelation is by deeds rather than words, yet it becomes apparent that revelation without verbal interpretation is incomplete.²⁶ Biblical events such as the Exodus from Egypt and the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ are dependent upon verbal revelation to explain the full significance of what God has done in order to initiate a relationship with his people.

By his creative work God has established himself as the sovereign authority over all of creation. He has laid rightful claim over the entire universe.²⁷ Since mankind is dependent upon God for its very existence, all people should rightfully submit to God’s authority. Therefore, what God has spoken should be both trusted and obeyed. Unfortunately, mankind’s depravity becomes an issue in this regard. Adam sums this up

²²R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “A Theology of Preaching,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 15.

²³Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 19.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 21.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁷Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” 15.

well when he writes, “People prefer a God who does not speak because he makes less clear demands, asks no questions, makes no promises, and threatens no punishment.” He goes on to say, “The postmodern move against meaning in words, and against words themselves, is part of an attempt to create not only a world without God but a universe without meaning.”²⁸ The problem then becomes rebellion against God’s Word. If he indeed has spoken, then rejecting his Word becomes tantamount to rejecting God himself.²⁹ Preaching, by its very definition, is dependent upon God’s revelation through his words. Adam rightfully states, “If God is dumb, we may speak, but we cannot speak God’s words, for there are none to speak.”³⁰

Once one accepts that God has spoken, the issue then becomes man’s worthiness to speak on his behalf. What right does anyone have to declare God’s word? The Bible affirms that mankind is made in God’s image, endowing humanity with the ability to communicate like its Creator (Gen 1:27). God’s speaking and mankind’s ability to understand what has been spoken becomes the basis for man’s speaking on God’s behalf.³¹ While God perhaps could have chosen other media by which to reveal himself to his people, in his sovereign wisdom he has chosen human vessels and the act of preaching.³²

The power of preaching rests upon God’s divine Word. In Genesis he said, “Let there be light,” and it happened. Through the Prophet Isaiah he said, “So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it”

²⁸Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 23-24.

²⁹Ibid., 24.

³⁰Ibid., 25.

³¹Ibid., 15.

³²Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” 16.

(Isa 55:11). In Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14), God indicated that his preached Word has the power to bring the dead to life. Preaching, therefore, is a matter of spiritual life and death, and God’s Word alone has the power to bring about this spiritual transformation.³³

It Is Written

Psalm 19 teaches that God reveals himself through both general and special revelation. The works of creation declare the existence and power of God, yet it is his written Word that accurately conveys his redemptive plan for humanity. The term “inscripturation” describes the belief that God’s Word has been faithfully preserved in Scripture so that future generations would have access to the truth.³⁴ Biblical authors wrote for both contemporary and future audiences. This inscripturation is vital to preaching because it ensures the Bible’s accuracy and authority for today. Through faithful preaching of the biblical text, God reapplies the redemptive purpose of His Word to modern audiences.³⁵

Peter makes clear that the Scriptures are God’s Word in written form (2 Pet 1:19-21). By using the term *graphe*, he indicates that divine inspiration is not limited to spoken revelation, but must also include everything written by the Spirit’s guidance.³⁶ DeYoung states, “All of this matters because it means the authority of God’s word resides in the written text – the words, the sentences, the paragraphs – of Scripture, not

³³Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 31.

³⁴Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 27.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 101.

³⁶Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2014), 35.

merely in our existential experience of the truth in our hearts.”³⁷ This provides a crucial, objective source of truth for humanity.³⁸

The purpose of God’s written Word is to convey His plan of redemption throughout the ages. As such, the progressive nature of revelation is evident in Scripture. Clowney writes, “It was given progressively, for the process of revelation accompanies the process of redemption. Since redemption does not proceed uniformly but in epochs determined by God’s acts, so revelation has an epochal structure, manifested and marked in the canonical Scriptures.”³⁹ The modern preacher must therefore bear in mind the redemptive purpose of Scripture and communicate this purpose in every sermon.

Preach the Word

God desires his inspired Word to be accurately transmitted to each generation and this is accomplished through biblical preaching. Paul’s charge to Timothy to “Preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2) reveals the importance of proclaiming the biblical text. The Bible alone provides the necessary interpretation of God’s redemptive acts in history. It must therefore serve as the source for all preaching.⁴⁰

Preachers must understand the divine necessity of their calling. God provides mankind with an accurate and authoritative message in his Word, and this message must be faithfully proclaimed. Adam argues, “That is to say, preaching depends not only on having a God-given source, the Bible, but also a God-given commission to preach, teach and explain it to people and to encourage and urge them to respond.”⁴¹ The call to preach

³⁷DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*, 35-36.

³⁸Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 14.

³⁹Ibid., 15.

⁴⁰Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 13.

⁴¹Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 37.

is not a suggested vehicle to articulate the truth, but a divine command.⁴² In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul uses the imperative verb κήρυξον, commanding Timothy to proclaim God’s Word. The force of this command is intensified beforehand in verse 1 as Paul states, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom.” Regarding this charge, Hughes writes, “The charge could not be more solemn. Paul has invoked here what is in fact an eternal, unchangeable reality – the actual presence of God the Father and his Son Christ Jesus.”⁴³ He later states, “Paul’s charge – so solemn in the presence of God, so jolting, so charged – certainly activated the current of Timothy’s soul, as it must ours because Jesus is also present with us, and his judgment and appearing and kingdom are coming.”⁴⁴

God’s mandate to preach his Word has been in place since the Old Testament. The Lord revealed his Law to Moses and charged him with its proclamation to his people. Moses recorded this Law in written form for the purpose of its continued exposition, application and exhortation.⁴⁵ Later prophets, such as Jeremiah (Jer 20:9) and Ezekiel (Ezek 2:8-3:4), understood the heavy burden of preaching the message God had given them. Regarding the commission to proclaim the Word in the OT, Adam writes, “It is worth emphasizing the common elements that we are discovering in the Old Testament ministry of the Word. These include the acceptance of the written or spoken Word as coming from God, the role of ‘Scripture’, the place of public reading and explanation, encouragement to the right response, and the effect of the ministry on the people.”⁴⁶

⁴²Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” 13.

⁴³R. Kent Hughes, *1&2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 238.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁵Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 40.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 41.

The New Testament also provides examples of obedience to the command to preach the Word. Jesus began his ministry preaching a gospel of repentance and faith (Mark 1:14-15). He later charged the Twelve with this same task of preaching the Word (Mark 3:14-15). In both instances Mark uses a form of the verb κηρύσσω to describe their activity. Preaching, however, was not a ministry exclusive to Jesus and the Apostles. “Their ministry,” explains Adam, “had as one of its aims a proliferation of the ministry of the Word in all the churches.”⁴⁷ This was accomplished by elders appointed to carry the mantle of preaching to successive generations.

Paul’s charge to Timothy is rooted in the conviction that God’s revelation is faithful, authoritative and powerful (2 Tim 3:16-4:5). The command to preach must be understood in conjunction with Scripture’s origin. Adam expresses this by saying, “There is often a direct link between a theology of Scripture and a theology of preaching because both depend on a prior theology of revelation.”⁴⁸ If God has indeed spoken, and if his Word has been written, then the preacher has no alternative than to herald the divine message of truth which he has graciously received. The solemn charge not to wrangle about words (2 Tim 2:14) contrasts with this imperative to preach the Word. Mere words are not enough to affect the spiritual transformation that God desires in the hearts and lives of mankind. The God-breathed Word is required. Preachers must therefore be diligent to present themselves as approved workmen who are not ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). In this way, theology has a direct impact on the practice of preaching, namely in the methods employed to study and to proclaim God’s Word.

⁴⁷Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 51.

⁴⁸Ibid., 92.

Inerrancy and the Authority of Preaching

Every church needs a leader, and that person should be the pastor.⁴⁹ Even when multiple staff members or a plurality of elders is present, the man behind the pulpit is ultimately viewed as the leader.⁵⁰ As the story of Samuel's calling demonstrates, spiritual authority is not dependent upon age or title, but upon faithfulness to proclaim the Lord's revealed message (1 Sam 3:15-21). The doctrine of inerrancy, then, grants authority to the preacher, provided he faithfully proclaims God's Word.

Awareness of Authority

The concept of authority in the local church can be confusing. Some view it in terms of either ecclesiastical ordination, a subjective sense of calling, or the result of educational qualifications.⁵¹ Mohler cautions against these false ideas of professional, positional, and personal authority in the church.⁵² Leadership, instead, should be viewed in conjunction with the preaching of God's Word. The OT and NT both set the precedence of spiritual leadership anchored to the authority of God's revealed Word. Quicke writes, "Whoever God calls to be a servant of the Word, speaking Scripture truth on his behalf, is also called to be a leader." He also states, "Bluntly, you cannot proclaim God's Word without leading his people."⁵³ Moses, Jesus, and the Early Church are examples of this leading and preaching combination.⁵⁴ Churches today are harmed by the

⁴⁹John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 121-22.

⁵⁰Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 44.

⁵¹Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 24.

⁵²Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 80-81.

⁵³Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 48.

⁵⁴Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 48-51.

attempted separation of the two, and the only hope for church revitalization is a return to the biblical understanding of preaching and leadership.⁵⁵

The inherent authority of God's Word is the source for all pastoral authority, particularly in preaching. The doctrine of revelation grants an authority to the Word that can never be taken away.⁵⁶ According to Grudem, "The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."⁵⁷ He later writes, "Only the written words of Scripture can give this kind of authority to preaching."⁵⁸ When the Bible is accurately proclaimed, the act of preaching itself can be identified as the Word of God.⁵⁹ "Preaching is not finally a matter of giving a few thoughts here and there *about* God or the Bible," writes Dever, "It is the proclamation of an authoritative message from the throne room of heaven itself: *Be reconciled to God through Jesus!*"⁶⁰ The sermon as a monologue, rather than a dialogue, is an accurate and effective symbol of what is taking place in preaching God's Word.⁶¹

This philosophy of preaching leaves no room for human pride, however. Leadership power resides within the text rather than the preacher.⁶² This requires a combination of both authority and humility.⁶³ Since the authority lies within Scripture,

⁵⁵Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 24.

⁵⁶Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 57.

⁵⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁹Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 120.

⁶⁰Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 33.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶²Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 55.

⁶³Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 58.

pastors must continually place themselves under the Word of God. True Christian preaching demonstrates this type of submission to the congregation. Rinne states, “After all, elders bear authority over Jesus’s church only to the extent that they teach, obey, and enforce Jesus’s Word.”⁶⁴

Embracing the authority of Scripture enables the preacher to preach with confidence. The minister only needs to focus on faithfulness to the text, allowing God’s authority to flow through him. Craddock is correct in stating that a loss of convictions hinders a pastor’s credibility with his audience.⁶⁵ The remedy for this problem, however, is to reaffirm the doctrine of inerrancy. Burge argues, “The preacher of God’s Word can have full confidence when he accurately preaches the Bible that he conveys God’s authority to his audience because Scripture is inspired and inerrant.”⁶⁶ Mohler correlates the absence of authority in much modern preaching with a lack of confidence in the authority of Scripture.⁶⁷ He opines, “If you are not confident that God speaks as you rightly read and explain the Word of God, then you should quit.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, something powerful happens when the preacher embraces a high view of Scripture. York and Decker state, “If a preacher mounts the pulpit with a conviction of the truth and sufficiency of the Word of God, his preaching will be marked by passion and power.”⁶⁹ Confidence in God’s Word thus lends boldness to the messenger via the authoritative message he has received.

⁶⁴Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 81.

⁶⁵Craddock, *Preaching*, 24.

⁶⁶Ken Burge, “Patterning Your Preaching with God’s Authority,” *Preaching* (April 24, 2010), 2.

⁶⁷Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 72.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁹Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 19.

Application and Authority

Pastoral authority granted by virtue of inerrant Scripture enhances the thrust of sermon application. Preaching should include both the explanation and application of the biblical text. Chapell argues, “Application is as necessary for sound exposition as is explication. In fact, the real meaning of a text remains hidden until we discern how its truths affect our lives.”⁷⁰ Kaiser agrees when he writes, “We cannot be acquitted as scholarly exegetes until we have led the Church to understand how to respond to the very words that we have analyzed most critically and carefully.”⁷¹ Borrowing from Stott’s terminology, application involves building a bridge from the ancient text to the modern audience.⁷²

The goal of preaching, therefore, is not simply to impart information but to affect transformation. Preachers must continually ask how their sermon will transform the hearers’ lives.⁷³ Paul states, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col 1:28). Stott affirms this when he writes, “Instead, it is our responsibility to teach them with clarity and conviction the plain truths of Scripture, in order to help them develop a Christian mind, and to encourage them to think with it about the great problems of the day, and so to grow into maturity in Christ.”⁷⁴ The aim of preaching, then, is to conform hearers into the image of Christ.

Application is authoritative only when it is grounded in authorial intent.⁷⁵ The preacher is granted authority to demand a response from the congregation if he is faithful

⁷⁰Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 84.

⁷¹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 247.

⁷²Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 137-44.

⁷³York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 25.

⁷⁴Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 173.

⁷⁵Burge, “Patterning Your Preaching with God’s Authority,” 6.

to the text. Robinson argues, however, that more heresy takes place in the application of the sermon than in its exegesis.⁷⁶ Careful thought must be given to how the text was meant to be applied. Johnson states, “Application that does not emerge from the purpose for which God himself gave his Word will, in the end, lack credibility and power to motivate hearers who hunger for the truth and mercy that is found nowhere but in Jesus.”⁷⁷

Applying the Scriptures requires the preacher to issue forth commands from the text, and the authority to do so resides solely in the God-breathed Word. This is not an inherent authority but one that is assigned.⁷⁸ God’s will for the people is expressed through the words of the preacher as he holds fast to the Word of God.⁷⁹ By staying true to the text, the pastor can expect God to move because His Word is powerful. God created the universe by His Word, and He saves, recreates, and transforms by this same authoritative Word.⁸⁰ “We will know power has returned to the pulpit,” writes Craddock, “when and where preaching effects transformation in the lives of people and in the structures of society.”⁸¹ This type of transformation will not come, however, apart from the bold application of the authoritative Word of God.

⁷⁶Haddon Robinson, “The Heresy of Application,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today’s Communicators*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 306.

⁷⁷Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 14.

⁷⁸R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “As One with Authority,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 96.

⁷⁹Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership*, 73.

⁸⁰Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 105.

⁸¹Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 19-20.

Anointing and Authority

Authority for preaching also comes via the Holy Spirit's anointing. This power must be seen in conjunction with Scripture since the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical texts. The connection between the Word and the Spirit is inseparable.⁸² In the words of Adam, "The Scripture itself is a product of the Spirit, and when the Spirit works in the preacher and in the hearers, the words of God are mediated and bear fruit in the lives of those who hear."⁸³ As the Spirit inspired the prophets and apostles to write the Scripture, he instilled authority in their words. While modern preachers are neither prophets nor apostles in the truest sense, the Spirit still works in an authoritative fashion through the faithful preaching of his Word.⁸⁴ The Spirit's role has changed from one of granting new revelation to the illumination and application of existing Scripture.⁸⁵ The Word activates the Spirit, and the Spirit authenticates His Word.⁸⁶

The Holy Spirit's effect on preaching begins prior to the delivery of the sermon and continues afterward. "The Spirit of God," according to Heisler, "molds and makes the preacher long before the preacher molds and makes a sermon. The Spirit of God continues to mold and make the preacher long after the sermon is delivered."⁸⁷ He instills a confidence and boldness in the preacher as he trusts in the revealed Word.⁸⁸ His supernatural power is necessary from the early stages of preparation, throughout and

⁸²Hughes, "Anatomy of Exposition," 48.

⁸³Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 118.

⁸⁴Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 113.

⁸⁵Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1998), 20.

⁸⁶Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 62.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 56.

beyond proclamation.⁸⁹ The preacher should therefore seek the Spirit's direction, whether preparing a sermon or planning an entire series.⁹⁰

The anointing of the Holy Spirit in preaching need not appear random. His power is intricately connected with the Word. York and Decker argue, "But we are confident in observing that the more a man of God gives himself to this sacred task – the more committed he is to an accurate exposition of the text and a passionate presentation of the sermon – the more frequently and dynamically the Holy Spirit seems to work through him."⁹¹ Dependence upon the authorial intent of the text grants the pastor the power he desires to preach effectively.⁹² Heisler states, "Our power is clear: the Spirit of God, empowering the preacher of God, to boldly proclaim the Word of God."⁹³ He later writes, "I think the closer my sermon reflects the text I am preaching, the more freedom and power the Spirit gives me in the pulpit. The further I get away from the Spirit-intended meaning of the text, the less power and authority the Spirit gives to my message because I am giving him less and less to witness to."⁹⁴

The Spirit's power is necessary for preaching because it is the Spirit alone who changes hearts. No amount of human skill or persuasiveness can substitute for his anointing.⁹⁵ Preaching contrary to the intended meaning of the text invites the Spirit's displeasure rather than his blessing.⁹⁶ Mohler argues, on the other hand, "When you are

⁸⁹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 235.

⁹⁰Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 90.

⁹¹York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 8.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 29.

⁹³Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 73.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 76-77.

⁹⁵York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 33.

⁹⁶Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 99.

preaching and teaching the inerrant, Spirit-inspired Word of God with authority, the Holy Spirit communicates the Word through your preaching and into the hearts of the congregation.”⁹⁷ Faithful exposition of the text is the key to unleashing the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in preaching.⁹⁸

Abdication of Authority

Any discussion of authority in modern culture, including the pastorate, is often viewed with suspicion. Clergy no longer enjoy the social prestige they once possessed.⁹⁹ Craddock asserts traditional institutions, religious or otherwise, are being called into question.¹⁰⁰ This view impacts both the role of the preacher and the text he preaches as Scripture is no longer viewed as authoritative.¹⁰¹ Pastors must decide how to respond to this modern dilemma. Mohler laments those who abdicate authority in the face of such pressure when he writes, “Instead, there is resignation in the face of an anti-authoritarian age. We dare not speak with authority, it is argued, because people simply will not accept it.”¹⁰²

One such proponent of this philosophy is Craddock, who advocates the inductive model of preaching. Rather than adhering to traditional methods of preaching that rely upon the authority of Scripture, Craddock suggests a more open approach to proclamation which allows the listener to determine the meaning and application of the biblical text. Modern preachers, he argues, struggle with tentativeness and uncertainty in the pulpit because of changing times. The solution, according to Craddock, is increased

⁹⁷Mohler, “As One with Authority,” 95.

⁹⁸Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” 48.

⁹⁹Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 116.

¹⁰⁰Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 5.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 14.

¹⁰²Mohler “As One with Authority,” 92.

flexibility in style and manner of preaching.¹⁰³ Speaking of younger ministers, he writes, “Their predecessors ascended the pulpit to speak of the eternal certainties, truths etched forever in the granite of absolute reality, matters framed for proclamation, not for discussion. But where have all the absolutes gone?”¹⁰⁴ Craddock, it seems, allows culture to transform preaching rather than vice versa. He himself indicates, “When a person preaches, the method of communication, the movement of the sermon, reflects the hermeneutical principles, the view of the authority of scripture, church, and clergy, and especially one’s doctrine of humanity.”¹⁰⁵ The New Homiletic’s philosophy of preaching, therefore, reveals a lack of trust in the nature, power, and trustworthiness of God’s Word.

Mohler argues against such an abdication of authority in preaching. He writes, “The word ‘authority’ is rooted with the word ‘author,’ but an anti-authoritarian hermeneutic even denies that God is the author of Scripture. A mode of preaching that resists an authoritative Word, however, insults the Scripture as the Word of God.”¹⁰⁶ Again, the authority of the preacher resides solely in the authority Word. “The preacher’s authority,” he states, “is that of one who has been commissioned to teach and preach the inerrant and infallible Word of God.”¹⁰⁷ A retreat from the authority of Scripture in essence renders the pulpit powerless. Neither the preacher nor the audience can have any confidence in the credibility of what is being preached since there is no longer a standard source of authority.¹⁰⁸ Stott agrees with this assessment when he writes, “To address a

¹⁰³Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 11.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁶Mohler, “As One with Authority,” 94.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 96.

congregation without any assurance that we are bearers of a divine message would be the height of arrogance and folly.”¹⁰⁹ Mohler exhorts, “Without apology, stand only on the authority of God Himself, entrusted to us in His Word. Do not lean away from that authority. Never back off and never equivocate.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, the stakes are too high to do otherwise.

Inerrancy and the Method of Preaching

Preachers must therefore choose between several sermon models in which to communicate biblical truth, determining which one more accurately conveys biblical authority. Vines and Shaddix include expository sermons along with topical, textual, narrative, biographical, dramatic monologue, theological, and ethical discourse as the traditional sermon models.¹¹¹ A preacher’s theology of the Word and of preaching affects his choice of form. Craddock agrees when he writes that, “the separation of method of preaching from theology of preaching is a violation, leaving not one but two orphans. Not only content of preaching but method of preaching is fundamentally a theological consideration.” He goes on to state, “The method is the message. So is it with all preaching: *how* one preaches is to a large extent *what* one preaches...How one communicates is a theological commentary on the minister’s view of the ministry, the church, the Word of God, sin, salvation, faith, works, love, and hope.”¹¹² With this connection in mind, a brief critique of popular sermon models and their compatibility with inerrancy is helpful. Ultimately, expository preaching, it will be demonstrated, is the method that instills the greater confidence and authority to the preacher.

¹⁰⁹Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 96.

¹¹⁰Mohler, “As One with Authority,” 98.

¹¹¹Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29-30.

¹¹²Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 43-44.

A Critique of Various Models

Craddock places sermon forms into two main categories: deductive, moving from general truth to application, and inductive, the movement from experience to general truth.¹¹³ He sees the deductive model as ineffective, and instead promotes an inductive methodology. Craddock lists several theological presuppositions for this argument, all of which emphasize the important role of the listener in the sermon event. He opines that the audience deserves the right to participate in the sermon and to formulate their own conclusions and application.¹¹⁴

While such a view may be popular in this anti-authoritarian age, one must consider how effective the inductive model is from both a theological and a practical standpoint. Chapell correctly points out that preaching is more about telling people what they need to hear, not necessarily what they want to hear. Inductive preaching can also prove frustrating to those without a proper doctrinal background to correctly apply the perceived conclusions. Chapell writes, “Preachers whose primary focus is life’s particulars provide neither the biblical authority nor doctrinal perspective necessary to address our culture’s complex challenges.”¹¹⁵ One of the primary premises of inductive preaching is assuming that listeners will arrive at the proper conclusions and application of biblical truth without explicitly being told. Yet this was not the practice of the Old Testament prophets.¹¹⁶ Even Jesus, who frequently taught in a narrative fashion through parables, often explained the meaning of his stories to his disciples, not leaving application to chance.¹¹⁷ The greatest argument against inductive preaching, however, is

¹¹³Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 45.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 51-55.

¹¹⁵Bryan Chapell, “Alternative Models,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 124.

¹¹⁶York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 15.

¹¹⁷Chapell, “Alternative Models,” 125.

the issue of authority. By allowing the audience to determine the meaning and application of biblical truth, the preacher abdicates the authority of God's inerrant Word.

For some, the topical sermon is another method that preachers may legitimately employ. Vines and Shaddix offer this definition: "The topical sermon is built around some particular subject. The idea for the subject may be taken from the Bible or elsewhere. Usually, the preacher gathers what the Bible teaches about one topic, organizes those passages into a logical presentation, then delivers a topical sermon."¹¹⁸ The preacher's freedom to choose an idea and search for various biblical texts relating to this idea is an essential component of topical preaching.¹¹⁹ Proponents of this sermon form argue that Jesus sometimes spoke topically in his teaching ministry, thus lending credibility to this method.¹²⁰

Topical preaching has its advantages. It provides variety when used in between book studies. Topical sermons are also effective sources of teaching on various doctrines that unfold throughout the Scriptures not always found in verse-by-verse pericopes.¹²¹ This method can also be utilized for special occasions such as holidays or at times of significant events in the life of a church, community, or the world.¹²² Broadus argues that topical preaching "trains the preacher's mind to logical analysis, and few kinds of power are so valuable to him."¹²³

¹¹⁸Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

¹¹⁹Francis C. Rossow, "Topical Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 85.

¹²⁰Irvin A. Busenitz, "Thematic, Theological, Historical, and Biographical Expository Messages," in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 211.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 212.

¹²²Busenitz, "Thematic, Theological, Historical, and Biographical Expository Messages," 215.

¹²³John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870; repr., Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 254.

This method has major drawbacks, however, as far as the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture are concerned. Rather than biblically driven, the topical sermon can become man-focused, dealing more with felt needs in order to appear more relevant.¹²⁴ The primary danger is the threat of taking individual texts out of context. The preacher must prevent using the text as a springboard to address topics that do not directly flow from the text. Busenitz argues, “Contrary to what is frequently thought, topical preaching is not always the easiest. In many respects, it is the most difficult when done with correctness and accuracy.”¹²⁵ He later writes of the preacher, “His task is to *unfold* the Scriptures, not merely to *enfold* them into a topic. The latter will bend the Word to conform to the preacher’s perspective; the former will bend the preacher’s perspective to conform to the Word.”¹²⁶ To combat this danger of proof-texting, he argues that the preacher must always focus on the contextual, historical, and literary analyses of every text used in the sermon.¹²⁷

The Primacy of Expository Preaching

Of the various methods and philosophies of preaching, expository preaching should be the practice most preferred in light of the doctrine of inerrancy. Thomas sees expository preaching as a necessary corollary to the doctrine of inspiration.¹²⁸ He provides this quote from Motyer: “An expository ministry is the proper response to a God-breathed Scripture.” John Calvin is then listed as an example of one who practiced expository preaching as a result of his high view of Scripture.¹²⁹ Hughes argues that non-

¹²⁴Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 42.

¹²⁵Busenitz, “Thematic, Theological, Historical, and Biographical Expository Messages,” 212.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 214.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 216-17.

¹²⁸Derek Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Orlando, FL: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 63.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 64.

inerrantists do not regularly practice exposition; rather the practice stems from those who hold a high view of Scripture.¹³⁰ MacArthur makes this statement more emphatically when he writes, “The failure to preach expositionally and doctrinally is inexcusable. It can only be attributed to ignorance of, or indifference to, the implications of an inerrant, God-breathed Scripture. God gave His Word to His people, and He expects His undershepherds to feed it to them.”¹³¹ Likewise, Mohler argues, “I believe that the only form of authentic Christian preaching is expository preaching.”¹³²

In *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, MacArthur devotes an entire chapter to the connection between inerrancy and expository preaching. “The only logical response to inerrant Scripture,” claims MacArthur, “is to preach it *expositionally*. By *expositionally*, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God.”¹³³ He goes on to say, “Stated simply, inerrancy demands exposition as the only method of preaching that preserves the purity of Scripture and accomplishes the purpose for which God gave us His Word.”¹³⁴ A belief that God has spoken and that His words are perfectly preserved in the Bible should motivate the preacher to proclaim as faithfully as possible what the text actually says. Expository preaching is the most effective means of accomplishing this.

Robinson defines expository preaching as, “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary

¹³⁰Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” 46.

¹³¹John MacArthur, Jr. and The Master’s Seminary Faculty, “Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John MacArthur (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 261.

¹³²R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 49.

¹³³John MacArthur, Jr. and The Master’s Seminary Faculty, “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching,” in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 18.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 19.

study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”¹³⁵ Vines and Shaddix offer this similar definition of an expository sermon as, “A discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions which issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.”¹³⁶

Precisely defining expository preaching however can prove difficult. Robinson believes this type of preaching to be more a philosophy than a method.¹³⁷ While a consensus definition might prove unattainable, there seem to be two primary pieces to a genuine expository sermon: explanation and application of Scripture. York and Decker communicate the need for these essential components with this broad definition: “Expository preaching is any kind of preaching that shows people the meaning of a biblical text and leads them to apply it to their lives.”¹³⁸ Expository preaching, therefore, is any proclamation of a biblical text that seeks to explain the meaning of the passage according to the original author’s intent and attempts to apply this truth to the modern congregation in order to conform the hearers to God’s purposes in Christ. By this definition, a topical sermon can also be identified as expository providing it accurately communicates the authorial intent of each passage referenced.

A commitment to exposition thus requires a commitment to authorial intent. The God-breathed Scriptures have an intended meaning, and the interpreter must do due diligence to ascertain this meaning. York and Decker argue this point when they write, “Clearly, every passage in the Bible had an intended meaning when the author wrote it,

¹³⁵Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

¹³⁶Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

¹³⁷Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 22.

¹³⁸York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 33.

and that meaning has not changed.”¹³⁹ Preachers who desire to remain true to the biblical text, therefore, are not at liberty to assign a different meaning to the passage. York and Decker also state, “The main point we assert here is that discerning and sharing the meaning of the text is the foundational task of preaching.”¹⁴⁰ A sermon untrue to authorial intent is thus a false representation of God.

Armed with a high view of Scripture and a dedication to authorial intent, the preacher is now ready to exercise sound hermeneutical principles to determine the meaning of the text. According to Packer, “Hermeneutics is the theory of biblical interpretation or (putting it the other way round) the study of the process whereby the Bible speaks to us (from God, as Christians believe).”¹⁴¹ He goes on to state that evangelical hermeneutics is a three-step process which includes exegesis, synthesis, and application. “Exegesis,” writes Kaiser, “will seek to identify the single truth-intention of individual phrases, clauses, and sentences as they make up the thought of paragraphs, sections, and, ultimately, entire books.”¹⁴² MacArthur argues for the importance of exegesis when he states, “The existence of God and His nature requires the conclusion that He has communicated accurately and that an adequate exegetical process to determine His meaning is required.”¹⁴³ Proper exegesis will thus guide the interpreter to an accurate understanding of the Scripture as the original author intended and assist in making proper application to the modern hearer.¹⁴⁴ Kaiser also states, “Preparation for

¹³⁹York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 30.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 34.

¹⁴¹J. I. Packer “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 332.

¹⁴²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 47.

¹⁴³MacArthur, “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy,” 17.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 22.

preaching is always a movement which must begin with the text of Scripture and have as its goal the proclamation of that Word in such a way that it can be heard with all its poignancy and relevancy to the modern situation without dismissing one iota of its original normativeness.”¹⁴⁵

The grammatico-historical method is perhaps the most effective means of performing exegesis. According to Kaiser, the aim of this method is to “determine the sense required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history.”¹⁴⁶ The grammatical aspect gives close examination to the phrases, clauses, and sentences used, whereas the historical component takes into consideration the time and circumstances of the author.¹⁴⁷ Packer sees the grammatico-historical method as the necessary result of the doctrine of inspiration.¹⁴⁸ York and Decker provide a thorough explanation of the importance of understanding the proper context, content, and concern of the biblical passage that is to be preached.¹⁴⁹ “We speak God’s words,” they argue, “*only* to the degree that we accurately reflect the meaning of the text.”¹⁵⁰

Such rigorous exegetical work requires a great deal of time and effort. According to Kaiser, however, “Rewarding results will come only if the search is sustained by an enthusiastic joy of discovery through the long hours of hard and patient work. And in all, it must be tempered by the experience of prayer and suffering.”¹⁵¹ A high view of Scripture and of preaching demands faithfulness to the biblical text, and this

¹⁴⁵Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 48.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 87-88.

¹⁴⁸Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” 349.

¹⁴⁹York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 52-81.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵¹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 50.

requires thorough exegesis. MacArthur writes, “As a result of this exegetical process that began with a commitment to inerrancy, the expositor is equipped with a true message, with true intent, and with true application. It gives his preaching perspective historically, theologically, contextually, literally, synoptically, and culturally. His message is God’s intended message.”¹⁵² Expository preaching, fueled by careful exegesis, thus provides the most effective means of communicating God’s inerrant Word to the modern audience.

Conclusion

The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to preach with authority in the local church. A high view of Scripture must inevitably lead to a high view of the preaching ministry. An inerrant Bible impacts one’s definition, theology, and method of preaching and thus enables the pastor to preach God’s Word with confidence, calling his audience to submit their hearts and lives to its teachings. Of the many pastoral responsibilities, none is more crucial than the task of preaching. Criswell sums it up well when he writes, “Those who come to church want to know if God has anything to say. The preacher is in the pulpit to tell them what God says. He learns the message of God from God’s self-revelation and self-disclosure in the Holy Scriptures. The preacher then stands upon a solid rock, preaching the immutable, eternal Word of God.”¹⁵³

¹⁵²MacArthur, “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy,” 23.

¹⁵³W. A. Criswell, *Criswell’s Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 75.

CHAPTER 4

EMBOLDENED IN THE PERSONAL SETTING: THE IMPACT OF INERRANCY ON THE PASTORAL MINISTRY

Introduction

While preaching is the most essential task of the pastor, other ministries of the Word are also necessary.¹ Ministering to individuals in the personal setting is vital to the health of the church. Pastoral work is the personal application of the pulpit ministry.² In order to truly display the love of Christ, the pastor must interact with the souls God has placed under his care. As circumstances of life unfold, members of the congregation require individual attention to ensure they are walking faithfully with the Lord. God's inerrant Word is a trustworthy tool for such pastoral ministry.

According to Pierre and Reju, "The goal of a pastor in all his labor is to elicit faith in Christ through the proclamation of his gospel message. This is true in public as well as personal proclamation of the Word."³ The Apostle Paul is an example of ministering the Word in both public and private settings (1 Thess 2:8-12).⁴ As the term indicates, the pastor must serve as the shepherd responsible for feeding, nurturing, and protecting the flock. God has provided a sufficient and necessary Word to accomplish

¹Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 25.

²Charles Bridges, *Christian Ministry with an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 344.

³Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 31-32.

⁴Ibid., 28.

this work.⁵ The inerrancy of Scripture emboldens the pastor to perform personal ministries in the local church such as counseling, confronting, and comforting.

Inerrancy and Counseling

Both members within the church and individuals outside of it occasionally seek the pastor's wisdom to deal with various life situations. At other times the pastor may intervene as he recognizes someone struggling with consequences from poor decisions or the effects of things beyond his/her control. A good shepherd desires to impart godly insight in these circumstances. The doctrine of inerrancy provides much needed confidence for the minister as he seeks to apply God's Word in such personal situations.

The Necessity of Counseling

Counseling is an essential part of pastoral ministry. "God has called you to shepherd his sheep," writes Pierre and Reju, "and often those sheep are hurting, confused, or stubborn."⁶ In reality, a call to pastor is also a call to counsel. This requires the minister to be personally involved with the lives of those whom he pastors. Counseling is a ministry of the Word in which the pastor can powerfully impact others by personally imparting Scripture.

Counseling, however, can be an intimidating task for some pastors. This fear can be overcome by both experience and confidence in the power of God's inerrant Word.⁷ Professional training can prove helpful, yet pastors without advanced education can still effectively counsel with the knowledge that God's Word is sufficient to meet the greatest needs of mankind.⁸ The idea that a pastor can somehow be unqualified to

⁵John MacArthur, Jr., and the Master's Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), xiv.

⁶Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 14.

⁷Ibid., 32-33.

⁸Ibid., 18-19.

provide any counseling because of insufficient training displays a lack of confidence in the power of Scripture.⁹ Certain situations, however, may require the pastor to refer a counselee to a resource outside the church.¹⁰ Even in these moments the pastor should remain actively involved in the individual's care, ensuring biblical principles are being applied.¹¹

Lambert provides the following definition: "Counseling is a conversation where one party with questions, problems, and trouble seeks assistance from someone they believe has answers, solutions, and help."¹² Where preaching may be seen as truth through proclamation, counseling is truth through conversation.¹³ Tripp emphasizes this connection between the pulpit and counseling when he writes, "Their basic content and purpose are the same; both find their reason for being in the God who speaks, the Counselor who has come, and the Word who has spoken."¹⁴ Through pastoral counseling, the minister proclaims the Scripture on a personal level to build faith in the counselee's heart.¹⁵ Pastors who view the Bible as inerrant can have confidence that God will use such conversations to conform counselees to his Son as they rely on the full sufficiency of the Word.¹⁶ The doctrine of inerrancy thus provides the pastor, whether

⁹Edward E. Hindson, "The Inerrancy Debate and the Use of Scripture in Counseling," *Grace Theological Journal* 3, vol. 2 (1982): 212.

¹⁰Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 118-20.

¹¹Ibid., 128.

¹²Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 13.

¹³Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 78.

¹⁴Paul David Tripp, "A Community of Counselors: The Fruit of Good Preaching" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 3 (Winter 2003): 12.

¹⁵Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 78.

¹⁶Kevin Carson, "The Richness and Relevance of God's Word," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 46.

preaching or counseling, an absolute standard by which to administer God's truth to his people.¹⁷

The Theology of Counseling

Every counselor operates with a particular view of God, whether theistic, atheistic, or agnostic, and this view in turn affects the diagnosis and solutions offered by that counselor.¹⁸ The pastor's obligation, therefore, is to provide hope to those who are hurting by applying sound, biblical theology to their lives.¹⁹ Ministers speak to God on behalf of people, and speak to people on behalf of God, remembering that Christ must be the message and goal of all faithful counseling.²⁰

Jay Adams, considered the father of the modern biblical counseling movement, views the Bible as sufficient to address every human need and therefore the sole foundation of counseling methods.²¹ His five essential factors to biblical counseling are each based upon the trustworthiness and sufficiency of Scripture.²² Under this view, pastors with a thorough knowledge of the Bible can be used more effectively by the Holy Spirit to instill the life-changing truth of God's Word into the hearts and minds of those being counseled.²³ Whether a pastor labels himself as a "Christian" counselor or a "Biblical" counselor, if he believes in the inerrancy of Scripture he will have greater confidence in the counseling process because the truth of God remains the sole solution

¹⁷Hindson, "The Inerrancy Debate," 209.

¹⁸Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 17.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 319.

²⁰Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 31.

²¹Hindson, "The Inerrancy Debate," 213.

²²*Ibid.*, 213-14.

²³*Ibid.*, 214.

to the greatest needs of the human condition.²⁴ In this way, pastors rely upon the inspired Scripture in counseling just the same as they do in proclamation.²⁵

Since the Bible is sufficient, the pastor never lacks wisdom needed to deal with difficult situations. “The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture,” according to Lambert, “is a promise that God himself will give you something from him to say in those sacred moments.”²⁶ A thorough knowledge of the Bible pays huge dividends for the minister in the counseling session. Biblical counseling is more than simply finding a particular passage that speaks directly to the issue at hand. Rather, it is an understanding that the entire Bible is relevant and useful for counseling.²⁷ Total inerrancy allows for the entirety of Scripture to be at the counselor’s disposal, whether dealing with a particular passage or using biblical theology to trace a concept’s progression throughout Scripture. Pastors can also combat the problem of the church’s biblical illiteracy by demonstrating the Scripture’s entire sufficiency in this personal setting. God’s revelation provides the greatest source of confidence to effectively counsel.²⁸

The doctrine of Scripture lays the foundation for other doctrines instrumental to pastoral counseling. The Bible describes how sin has wrecked the human heart along with the rest of creation. Mankind now suffers the effects of sinful consequences along with the pain of living in a fallen world.²⁹ The doctrine of total depravity teaches that every aspect of human existence is tarnished by sin. This does not mean that human

²⁴Kevin DeYoung and Pat Quinn, “The Preacher, the Counselor, and the Congregation,” in *Scripture and Counseling: God’s Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 21-22.

²⁵Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 83.

²⁶Ibid., 38.

²⁷Ibid., 64.

²⁸Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 79.

²⁹Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 248.

beings are as sinful as possible, but that sin has infected every human component.³⁰ Sin produces rebellion, foolishness, and an inability to do what God has commanded (Rom 7:19-23).³¹ Scripture is necessary for faithful counseling because it accurately conveys the reality of sin and its effects. Lambert explains, “Sin is a disposition of human beings that leads to a failure to conform to the moral law of God.” He goes on to write, “Sin does not just describe the bad things humans beings do or fail to do. More fundamentally, it describes who we are as wicked people.”³² A biblical view of sin includes both evil desires and behaviors.

While the Bible points to sin as the source of humanity’s problems, it also explains how Christ and his saving work are the solution to mankind’s problems. The Holy Spirit works through God’s Word to bring about real change in the hearts and lives of God’s people.³³ With this knowledge the pastor presses upon the counselee the importance of ongoing repentance and faith, actions necessary for both conversion and Christian living.³⁴ As pastors address the counselee’s issues they must be mindful of his/her spiritual condition. The Bible is necessary for matters requiring salvation and sanctification. God has provided genuine resources in his Word for when Christians are faced with any problem.³⁵

Whether people are suffering from their own choices, the actions of others, or issues beyond anyone’s control, biblical counseling points to God’s strong and loving

³⁰Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 67.

³¹Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 13-16.

³²Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 217-18.

³³Carson, “The Richness and Relevance of God’s Word,” 33.

³⁴Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 287.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 295.

character.³⁶ He has provided necessary and relevant instructions for his people. As such, there is a correlation between our love for Christ and our knowledge and obedience to the Word.³⁷ Biblical counseling depends on all areas of systematic theology coming together from Scripture to form a sufficient resource.³⁸ The doctrines of Scripture, sin, salvation, and sanctification provide the pastor with the wisdom and boldness to successfully counsel those in need.

The Methodology of Counseling

The inerrancy of Scripture also impacts the way in which pastors provide counseling. A belief in the Bible's authoritative power requires the counselor to use it in the counseling session. Hindson states, "The effective Christian counselor cannot merely wave the Bible over people as if it were a magic wand. He must open it and explain its truths to the soul in need."³⁹ The pastor sets the tone for the counseling sessions by opening the Bible in the very first meeting and in each session subsequent to that.⁴⁰ This allows the counselee to see firsthand how important the Scriptures are to Christian living.

Proper hermeneutics is also essential to effective counseling.⁴¹ The pastor must remain as faithful to authorial intent in pastoral ministries as he is in the pulpit. This requires an understanding of Scripture's overarching theme. Pierre and Reju summarize this by stating, "What we want to stress most is that Scripture's central concern is the glory of God displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God's

³⁶Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 261.

³⁷Carson, "The Richness and Relevance of God's Word," 39.

³⁸Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 65.

³⁹Hindson, "The Inerrancy Debate," 210.

⁴⁰Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 64.

⁴¹Ibid.

Word addresses all human problems only in light of that. Its relevance, authority, and sufficiency mean that what the Bible emphasizes as most important in human life, we emphasize as most important in human life.”⁴² This requires the pastor to have both a general and intimate knowledge of the Word and how it points to Jesus’ saving work. A familiarity with the Bible allows the pastor to quickly find passages of Scripture that are appropriate at any given moment.⁴³

Throughout the counseling process, the pastor should labor to keep the counselee engaged with the Word. This includes an appropriate amount of prep work in between scheduled meetings. Once the formal counseling sessions have concluded, the pastor can entrust the counselee to their own personal and private ministry of the Word to supplement the public ministry of preaching.⁴⁴

Biblical counseling should not be seen as exclusively the work of the pastor, however. The local church plays a vital role in counseling as doctrines are applied to the community of faith.⁴⁵ Believers must recognize that God works in their lives in order to work through them. According to Tripp, “As you respond to the Redeemer’s work in your life, you can learn to be an instrument in his hands.”⁴⁶ In order to transform lives, Christians must lovingly bring God’s Word to others, whether in formal or casual settings.⁴⁷ The Bible is sufficient for any believer to be an effective counselor.⁴⁸

⁴²Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling* , 65.

⁴³Ibid., 67.

⁴⁴Ibid., 97-98.

⁴⁵Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 304.

⁴⁶Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 16.

⁴⁷Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 114-15.

The corporate gathering plays a crucial role in the church's counseling ministry. The worship, fellowship, and accountability found only in the local church provide an environment for biblical counseling to flourish.⁴⁹ The preaching of the Word is a key component in this. "Good preaching," according to Tripp, "should create a community of counselors."⁵⁰ As such, the preacher must realize that he is the counselor of counselors. Every person in the pew has the ability to influence others around them. The public ministry needs the private ministry to apply the Word in specific life situations.⁵¹

Creating a culture of faithful, biblical counseling in the church is essential. Allchin suggests four sequential steps to creating such an environment: envisioning, enlisting, equipping, and empowering.⁵² The pastor must prayerfully enlist others to assist him in the counseling task and equip them to serve in accordance to the biblical mandate of Ephesians 4:11-12. Such a strategy has a practical benefit. No church could ever hire enough professional staff to meet everyone's needs. Every believer serving the members of his/her church more closely fulfills God's ordained plan for ministry. Churches of any size have the sufficient resources via the inerrant Word and Spirit-filled members to provide a faithful counseling ministry.

Inerrancy and Confronting

Another important aspect of pastoral leadership is spiritual confrontation. The authority and sufficiency of the Word play a crucial role in this vital ministry.

⁴⁹Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 309-10.

⁵⁰Tripp, "A Community of Counselors," 4.

⁵¹Ibid., 13.

⁵²Ron Allchin and Tim Allchin, "Equipping Biblical Counselors for Your Church," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care Through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 191.

Confrontation must begin in the personal setting, and if not effectively resolved, it then becomes a matter of official church discipline. Unfortunately, a hostile attitude towards church discipline has arisen in recent years. Cox attributes this hostility to poor ecclesiology, a pitiful grasp of Scripture, and a narrow view of church discipline.⁵³ Objectors view church discipline as unloving and judgmental and fear it opens the church up to potential lawsuits.⁵⁴ Despite its common practice throughout church history, misinterpretation and misuse of Scripture has contributed to its neglect today.⁵⁵

Confronting someone in sin can be an intimidating assignment. Despite this difficulty, the well-being of both the individual Christian and the church as a whole is at stake. Pierre and Reju state, “Church discipline is simply the members of a church loving one another by confronting patterns of sin that destroy and defile the church.”⁵⁶ Cheong and Jones emphasize the role of Scripture in this process by defining church discipline as, “God’s ongoing, redeeming work through His living Word and people as they fight the good fight of faith together to exalt Christ and protect the purity of His bride.”⁵⁷ As the primary shaper of a church’s culture, the pastor’s responsibility is to ensure church discipline takes place.⁵⁸ God’s inerrant Word provides the necessary mandate, motive, and method for such spiritual confrontation.

⁵³Don Cox, “The Forgotten Side of Church Discipline,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 44.

⁵⁴Robert Cheong and Robert Jones, “Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 161-65.

⁵⁵Timothy C. Seal, “Church Discipline: Recovering the Lost Treasure,” *Theology for Ministry* 1 (November 2006): 91-92.

⁵⁶Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 109.

⁵⁷Cheong and Jones, “Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline,” 158.

⁵⁸Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 104.

The Mandate to Confront

God's concern for his people's purity makes confrontation an essential component of pastoral ministry. Several NT passages (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 13:1-2; 2 Thess 3:14-15; 1 Tim 1:18-20; Titus 3:10; and 2 John 9-11) command discipline to take place within the corporate setting.⁵⁹ Confrontation of a brother in sin is also required in Galatians 6:1-2. Discipline should serve as the immune system for the local body of Christ.⁶⁰

The demand for spiritual integrity among God's people, however, is not a New Covenant phenomenon. Ezekiel 33:1-9 requires those in spiritual authority to serve as watchmen on the wall, warning those in their charge of imminent spiritual danger due to sin. Leviticus 19:15-18 also deals with the subject of confrontation. In this text, the Lord prohibits hateful actions, such as taking vengeance and bearing grudges, against one's fellow countryman. Loving one's neighbor as oneself should be the driving principle for relationships amongst God's people. It is within this context that the command to rebuke those in sin is found. Verse 17 states, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him" (Lev 19:17). One should rebuke his brother when he sins or else share in his guilt.⁶¹

Confronting those who sin is a fulfillment of the two Great Commandments (Matt 22:37-40). According to Tripp, "Confrontation has little to do with us. It is all about the Lord, motivated by a desire to draw people back into close, obedient, and loving communion with him."⁶² In order to fulfill the first Great Commandment, a pastor must fear disobeying God more than he fears upsetting a church member. Rebuke is also

⁵⁹Seal, "Church Discipline," 91.

⁶⁰Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 186.

⁶¹Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 258.

⁶²Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 201.

rooted in the second Great Commandment. A desire to love others may be used as an excuse not to confront them in sin when, in fact, love should be used as motivation to rebuke. Tripp states, “Being nice and acting out of love are not the same thing. Our culture puts a high premium on being tolerant and polite. We seek to avoid uncomfortable moments, so we see, but do not speak.”⁶³ Failing to confront betrays an attitude of self-love rather than a selfless heart for others.

The connection between spiritual confrontation and the inerrancy of Scripture is found in 2 Timothy 3:16. The Word of God is useful for teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness because it is God-breathed. The Bible thus carries God’s authority when it commands confrontation to take place. “Reproving” is from the word ἐλεγμός, which means an expression of strong disapproval.⁶⁴ Paul expounds upon this connection further when he commands, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). The five aorist imperatives in this verse, combined with the solemn charge in verse 1, create a serious tone.⁶⁵ “Rebuke” is from the word ἐπιτιμάω, a strong word also used by Jesus to rebuke demons (Mark 3:12; 9:25).⁶⁶ A commitment to the Bible’s integrity thus requires a commitment to confront those in sin.

As uncomfortable as confrontation may be, a pastor must not shirk this responsibility. The overseer of God’s flock must remain vigilant, watching and warning

⁶³Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 202.

⁶⁴Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ἐλεγμός”.

⁶⁵William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, in vol. 46 of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, Ralph P. Martin, and Lynn Allan Losie (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 572-73.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 574.

those who stray.⁶⁷ MacArthur laments the decline of this vital aspect of ministry when he writes, “Guarding Christ’s flock of believers from spiritual danger is one of the most neglected pastoral duties in today’s church.” He goes on to state, “God has charged these sentinels to protect the flock from doctrinal error and personal sin.”⁶⁸ Confrontation may not be desirable, but is sometimes necessary. The pastor who does not confront those in sin is disobedient, unloving, and fearful.⁶⁹ Boldness in ministry along the lines of Jesus, Paul, and Luther is needed today; such boldness comes from placing oneself under the authority of God’s inspired Word as these men did.⁷⁰

The Motive to Confront

A desire for God’s glory through the holiness of his church serves as motivation for spiritual confrontation. Church discipline takes place with the knowledge that “God is relentlessly pursuing, preparing, and protecting us as His bride in our ongoing struggles with sin as we journey toward heaven.”⁷¹ As a loving Father, God disciplines his children (Heb 12:1-11). The church serves as a primary agent through which God brings this discipline. A healthy church brings glory to God, and the local church must enforce discipline to be considered healthy.⁷²

Church discipline is a binary concept of formative and corrective discipline, both of which are essential to evangelism and discipleship ministries.⁷³ Formative

⁶⁷Richard L. Mayhue, “Watching and Warning,” in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 339.

⁶⁸Ibid., 336.

⁶⁹Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 83.

⁷⁰Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 296-97.

⁷¹Cheong and Jones, “Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline,” 156.

⁷²Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 192-93.

⁷³Cox, “The Forgotten Side of Church Discipline,” 44-45.

discipline is preventative, building disciples strong in the faith; whereas corrective discipline is curative, dealing with church members who have fallen into sinful attitudes or behaviors.⁷⁴ A church focused on formative discipline should not need to practice corrective discipline often.

The healthiest of churches, however, will occasionally need to discipline members to maintain spiritual health. The Bible provides clear motivation for this type of spiritual confrontation in the church. Paul deals with this subject in Galatians 6:1-2 where he commands that anyone caught in any trespass should be restored. “Caught” indicates public knowledge or eyewitness testimony, whereas “trespass” refers to a blatant violation of a clear command of God.⁷⁵ Paul uses the word *καταρτίζετε* to describe the necessary reaction to such a situation. This is a medical term meaning to repair or mend, like the resetting of a broken bone.⁷⁶ The word is also a present imperative denoting an ongoing requirement for the church.⁷⁷ The goal for this type of confrontation is not embarrassment but bringing a sinning brother back into a right relationship with God.⁷⁸ This requires compassion and the removal of self-righteousness on the part of the one who confronts.⁷⁹ Restoration, not removal, must remain the desired goal.

Paul also addresses church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5 where he describes how a church must respond to a brother who refuses to repent of blatant sinfulness. “He provides the contemporary church with a compass to guide her through the stormy seas of

⁷⁴Seal, “Church Discipline,” 89.

⁷⁵Ibid., 97.

⁷⁶Dave Earley and Ben Gutierrez, *Ministry Is...: How to Serve Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 232.

⁷⁷Seal, “Church Discipline,” 98.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 232.

church discipline, internal conflict, and aberrant doctrine,” according to Cook.⁸⁰ A member of the Corinthian church was in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother, and corporate discipline should have taken place. Paul was angered that the church did not take proper action against the sinful brother but instead chose to celebrate the man’s decision. They had failed to understand how the lack of corporate discipline would negatively impact the entire congregation.⁸¹ Paul ordered the church to assemble for the purpose of banning the sinful brother from their fellowship.⁸²

While explaining the process of excommunication Paul never lost sight of the motive for doing so. The desired outcome was the fallen brother’s restoration.⁸³ Bringing this man to the point of repentance, however, required intentional church action. Paul used the phrase “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5) to describe both the necessary action and motive. The unrepentant brother’s excommunication would hopefully have a sanctifying effect resulting in his repentance and eventual salvation.⁸⁴ Forbidding the church to associate with immoral people who identify themselves as brothers in Christ (1 Cor 5:9-11) might appear harsh, but it demonstrates the correlation of a proper profession of faith with an ethical lifestyle. “Paul’s intention,” writes Cook, “was that they not associate closely (do ‘not even eat’) with anyone who claims to be a believer but denies their relationship with Christ by their lifestyle (vv. 10-11).”⁸⁵

⁸⁰William F. Cook III, “Twenty-First Century Problems in a First Century Church (1 Corinthians 5-7,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 44.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²James B. Polhill, “1 Corinthians: A Church Divided,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 13.

⁸³Cook, “Twenty-First Century Problems,” 47.

⁸⁴Ibid., 45-46.

⁸⁵Cook, “Twenty-First Century Problems,” 46.

Paul viewed such exclusion as redemptive for the fallen brother and beneficial to the congregation's spiritual health. He likened the spreading influence of sin in the church to leaven in dough. Unrepentant sinners should therefore be removed from the fellowship for their own spiritual well-being and for the sanctity of the church.⁸⁶ In this way Paul wed's theology and practicality. A person's identity in Christ (indicative) must necessarily impact the way he/she lives (imperative). The pastor must likewise teach the church these truths and lead it to put such steps into place.

Paul's treatment of this specific situation provides the modern church with a blueprint for dealing with immoral behavior amongst its membership, particularly in regards to the motivation behind such action. Church discipline should be practiced for the sake of the individual believer, the local church, and for the glory of God. No real pastoral ministry can take place without at times confronting sin.⁸⁷ The pastor's response to the sins of his people will either be motivated by love or a form of hatred.⁸⁸ To love someone is to desire truly what is best for them, and sometimes that means rebuking them for their attitude and/or actions. The pastor must always speak from Scripture in these situations with the goal of redemption.⁸⁹ God has placed the minister within the congregation to be an agent of heart change, and that only happens through the power of his Word.⁹⁰

The spiritual purity of the church must also motivate the pastor to confront sin. How a church deals with sin determines whether God's favor will be upon that

⁸⁶Polhill, "1 Corinthians," 13.

⁸⁷Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 231.

⁸⁸Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 205-6.

⁸⁹Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 83-84.

⁹⁰Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 212-13.

congregation.⁹¹ The ability to administer and receive rebuke in a loving manner also enhances the local church's evangelistic capability. Tripp argues this point when he writes, "The ultimate apologetic for the reality of the gospel is the loving unity of the body of Christ, a unity so deep, resilient, and pervasive that it can only be compared to the unity of the Trinity."⁹² The Gospels reveal that the recovery of sinners, whether lost souls or wayward saints, was important to Jesus.⁹³ Confronting sin in the local church, according to Scripture, should be motivated by the desire to glorify God through the restoration of fallen brothers.

The Method to Confront

The Bible also provides the necessary method to confront those in sin. Some may be surprised that it is Jesus himself who gives the proper protocol for church discipline (Matt 18:15-20).⁹⁴ Motivated by a love for his church, the Lord commands confrontation of sin to take place. Christians cannot use love as an excuse to ignore sin, nor can they use Jesus as an example of tolerance. In Matthew 18:15, Jesus states, "Go and rebuke him" (HCSB). The Greek word used for "go" is ὑπαγε, a present imperative requiring continual pursuit of the individual.⁹⁵ "Rebuke" is ἐλεγξον, an aorist imperative signifying intensity in striving to convince.⁹⁶ The Master demands continual, intentional confrontation of sin. A failure to comply with his directives must be considered sin.

The method Jesus provides is incremental. First and foremost he requires individual confrontation. Once sin becomes evident, the Christian must approach the

⁹¹Seal, "Church Discipline," 93-94.

⁹²Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 207.

⁹³Seal, "Church Discipline," 89.

⁹⁴Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 233.

⁹⁵Seal, "Church Discipline," 99.

⁹⁶Ibid.

erring brother personally. “Go and show him his fault in private,” is the first step taken. It is crucial to maintain a spirit of humility, compassion, and concern for the individual. This step is the least threatening and often leads to the guilty party’s repentance.⁹⁷ As church members walk through life together, such confrontation takes place most often in informal moments where they lean upon one another for accountability.⁹⁸

If repentance occurs on the personal level, there is no need to proceed further. A lack of repentance, however, requires a continuation of the discipline process.⁹⁹ “But if he does not listen to you,” says Jesus, “take one or two more with you so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed” (Matt 18:16). This few-on-one confrontation applies more pressure on the guilty brother to repent, opening his eyes to the gravity of the situation.¹⁰⁰ The Lord also stresses the importance of witnesses in this matter, listening to the words of both parties to prevent the spread of gossip and hearsay.

If the sinner still does not repent, Jesus demands the matter to be taken “to the church” (Matt 18:17). Some advocate bringing the unrepentant brother before the elders of the church prior to alerting the entire congregation. A refusal to repent before the elders, or even to meet with them, would be grounds to initiate the final step in the discipline process.¹⁰¹

Jesus requires the church to formally act upon those members who stubbornly refuse to repent of their sins. Once the congregation has been informed of the matter, they are to treat the individual “as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt 18:17). The

⁹⁷Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 233-34.

⁹⁸Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 203-4.

⁹⁹Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 234.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 235.

church is to no longer view the individual as a fellow Christian if their life is inconsistent with God's Word. The member who refuses to repent must therefore be removed from fellowship and seen as one who needs to hear and believe the gospel.¹⁰² This less-intimate relationship must continue until formal repentance takes place. Such a fracturing of fellowship should be communicated with the individual upon every encounter with them in hopes that conviction leads to confession, repentance, and eventual restoration.¹⁰³

Exercising discipline in such a manner can be emotionally and spiritually painful for the congregation and the individual being rebuked. Churches do well to establish cultures that decrease the likelihood of such action. One particularly effective step is to implement stricter guidelines for joining the church. Many Southern Baptist churches are giving greater attention to the reception of applicants for membership¹⁰⁴, returning to a more historical practice.¹⁰⁵ As people join the church they should be informed of the connection between membership and church discipline.¹⁰⁶ Churches with higher expectations of its membership, who clearly communicate the formal procedures of discipline in place, significantly reduce the number of insincere prospects attempting to join the church.¹⁰⁷ Narrowing the front door in this manner should prevent the need to enact discipline in the future.

Scripture clearly communicates the mandate, motive, and method required to confront believers who sin. Following the biblical pattern is necessary for operating in

¹⁰²Seal, "Church Discipline," 101.

¹⁰³Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 235-36.

¹⁰⁴Cox, "The Forgotten Side of Church Discipline," 45.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁶Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 108.

¹⁰⁷Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 112.

the authority and blessing of God and for avoiding potential litigation.¹⁰⁸ Individuals trapped in sin do not need to hear opinions; rather the mirror of God's Word is needed for him/her to see themselves as God does.¹⁰⁹ The pastor has been given the authority, influence, and responsibility to ensure the church is handling spiritual confrontation properly. He is the one to develop a culture of accountability to the Word and the body of Christ.¹¹⁰ Ministers, however, are not above being confronted (1 Tim 5:19-20). Pastors who grant their members permission to confront them in sin model the humility to Scripture which is necessary for the church to function in God's power and blessing.¹¹¹

Inerrancy and Comforting

In a world contaminated with the stain of sin, Christians will inevitably face pain and suffering. Pastors may find themselves tasked with the responsibility to comfort church members in such moments. The busyness of modern society, unfortunately, has led to the neglect of this important ministry.¹¹² Yet, suffering provides a unique opportunity to display the gospel's reality to other believers. According to Spurgeon, "I venture to say that the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the exception of sickness. Sickness has frequently been of more use to the saints of God than health has."¹¹³ The inerrancy of Scripture plays a key role in helping Christians

¹⁰⁸Seal, "Church Discipline," 101.

¹⁰⁹Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 210.

¹¹⁰Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry Is*, 238.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 237.

¹¹²Brian Croft, *Visit the Sick: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Illness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 11.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 13.

understand the sovereignty of God over suffering, along with revealing his expectation that his people are required to care for those in need.¹¹⁴

Comfort God's People

The call to comfort God's people is found in the book of Isaiah. Chapter 39 concludes with a prophecy regarding the Babylonian captivity due to Israel's collective sinfulness. The human bondage that was to come typified Israel's spiritual bondage.¹¹⁵ Suffering in the form of God's judgment was to fall upon the whole nation, both those in rebellion and those who were faithful to God. Pain and sorrow are sometimes the result of poor choices, while other times God's people suffer from circumstances beyond their control. Either way, divine comfort is needed.

Immediately following the darkness of this prophecy Isaiah writes, "Comfort, O Comfort My people, says your God" (Isa 40:1). The Lord commissions Isaiah, along with all who have received his word, to accomplish this ministry of comfort. The command's repetition emphasizes the task's importance along with the richness of the divine comfort that is provided.¹¹⁶ God designates Israel as "My people" and himself as "your God." This covenant language serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness to his chosen people despite their inability to keep his Law.¹¹⁷ Whether suffering as the result of sin or circumstances beyond their control, God's people must be reminded that their relationship with God is not conditioned upon their faithfulness to him, but rather his faithfulness to them.

Like the prophet Isaiah, modern pastors are tasked with the responsibility to comfort God's people. The term "pastor" denotes nurturing and guidance of the sheep.

¹¹⁴Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 16.

¹¹⁵Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 17.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 18-19.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 19-20.

This is done through both the teaching ministry and by personal example.¹¹⁸ God takes this pastoral assignment of comforting seriously. In Ezekiel's time, God rebuked the leaders of Israel for failing to properly care for the sheep. The prophet writes, "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them" (Ezek 34:4).

Providing care for God's people is essential for effective leadership.

The ministry of comfort was taught and modeled by Christ as he healed the sick and cared for the downcast.¹¹⁹ To comfort someone in need is to serve the Lord himself (Matt 25:37-40), whereas withholding care for those in need is to neglect the Lord and invite judgment upon oneself (Matt 25:41-46). The apostles also modeled this ministry in the Early Church (Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-43; 28:8-9). The author of Hebrews calls upon the church to "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" (Heb 13:17). God will judge pastors for how they have cared for the people in their charge.

Richard Baxter serves as an example of providing godly comfort to a church. He faithfully visited the members of his congregation, paying particular attention to the sick. According to Baxter, "We must be diligent in visiting the sick, and helping them prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death."¹²⁰ Baxter sought to carry out the Lord's mandate to comfort the suffering, tangibly demonstrating the love of God to others. Modern pastors do well to emulate Baxter's compassion.

While comforting is a pastoral function, the pastor does not bear this responsibility alone. The body of Christ is called to rejoice and suffer together (1 Cor

¹¹⁸David Deuel, "The Pastor's Compassion for People," in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 217.

¹¹⁹Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 13.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

12:26). Croft believes the church must care sacrificially for those who suffer in order to achieve God's redemptive purposes.¹²¹ Preaching is the primary tool that pastors can use to motivate their members to do this. God's Word provides the preacher with the authority to publicly exhort the church to comfort others who are ailing.¹²² As laypeople fulfill God's mandate, they will come to understand the blessings not only to the afflicted but also to those who serve them.¹²³ Comforting others should not be seen as a burden but rather as a privilege and a divinely appointed opportunity to guide those suffering to the hope of the gospel.¹²⁴

Comfort with God's Promises

Isaiah's command to comfort God's people also included the specific means to bring this comfort: the proclamation of God's Word. The Lord uses tragedy, such as the Babylonian exile, to cause the afflicted to seek divine hope.¹²⁵ This hope is conditioned upon the faithfulness of Scripture. Young states, "Isaiah and the other prophets are to speak, for it is by the declaration of God's truth that comfort is brought to those who are in need thereof."¹²⁶ God promises Israel that her affliction has come to an end. The prophet must declare this message boldly since it comes directly from the Lord. Again Young writes, "The speaking unto the heart is not to be done by some quiet, obscure method, but by means of vigorous proclamation. Those commanded are to call out to

¹²¹Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 25.

¹²²Ibid., 56.

¹²³Ibid., 14.

¹²⁴Ibid., 27.

¹²⁵Young, *Isaiah*, 19.

¹²⁶Ibid., 20.

Jerusalem in bold, decisive manner, so that there will be no uncertainty as to the message.”¹²⁷

This confidence in Scripture is exactly what modern pastors need to comfort those who are hurting. The Bible reveals that sickness and death can be traced back to the Fall of man and the curse of sin (Gen 3). Scripture also shows that God sovereignly uses physical suffering to reveal man’s need for spiritual redemption.¹²⁸ Even in moments of affliction, God’s people can find comfort in his sovereign plan spelled out in Scripture.¹²⁹

As pastors seek to administer comfort, they must not forsake God’s promises. Ultimately the gospel’s truth brings comfort via the certainty of Christ’s atonement and the Spirit’s presence.¹³⁰ Scripture states that God is the source of all compassion since he is the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3). The pastor must thus rely upon the promises of God to effectively minister to those who hurt. The apostles cared for those whom they served, and this concern lead them to focus on the main priority, their spiritual need. Pastors best demonstrate their love for the flock by faithfully teaching God’s truth. “The pastor’s instrument of nurture,” writes Deuel, “is God’s Word reinforced by personal example.”¹³¹ A minister must have confidence in Scripture in order to effectively administer compassion. Croft summarizes this when he states, “Whatever promises of God we choose to share, we should remind ourselves of them, believe them, and allow them to fill our hearts with joy. If we know and believe the truth we share with others, they are more likely to receive these words as truth from someone whose hope and

¹²⁷Young, *Isaiah*, 21.

¹²⁸Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 17-18.

¹²⁹Ibid., 25-26.

¹³⁰Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 215-16.

¹³¹Deuel, “The Pastor’s Compassion for People,” 226-27.

confidence are evident as well.”¹³² Belief in Scripture’s inerrancy instills confidence in both the pastor and those to whom he ministers.

The OT prophets relied upon God’s promises to comfort the suffering. They pointed to the promised Messiah who would ultimately bring redemption and spiritual healing. Jesus came as the fulfillment of those promises, demonstrating his kingdom authority over sickness and death. His resurrection guarantees his followers their physical resurrection and eternal life.¹³³ Jesus assures his people that they will face tribulation in this world, but they can take heart because he was faithful in his promise to overcome the world (John 16:33).

Pastors must lay a solid doctrinal foundation for their people to stand on in times of suffering, and this only comes by faithfully speaking God’s Word.¹³⁴ This should be done from the pulpit and in the personal setting. Visiting the homes and the bedsides of the hurting provides an ideal opportunity to instill hope by sharing the promises of Christ. The pastor who has confidence in God’s Word should never leave a visit without sharing Scripture. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom 10:17), so believers can be encouraged and the lost can be evangelized by the minister who brings God’s promises to light during times of suffering.¹³⁵ Pastors should train their people to stay in the truth of God’s Word and to apply it in their lives so times of suffering will not catch them off guard and bring unbearable discouragement.¹³⁶

God’s promises also enable the pastor to effectively minister during times of grief. Funerals provide a unique opportunity to share the hope of Christ with believers

¹³²Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 41.

¹³³Ibid., 21-23.

¹³⁴Paul Tautges, *Comfort the Grieving: Ministering God’s Grace in Times of Loss*, rev. and updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 20.

¹³⁵Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 34-35.

¹³⁶Tautges, *Comfort the Grieving*, 61-63.

and unbelievers, therefore evangelistic preaching should be a priority.¹³⁷ Paul established a precedent in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 for ministering to those who grieve. He spoke to them “by the word of the Lord” (15) and instructed them to “comfort one another with these words” (18). God’s truth comforts in a supernatural way. Christians are promised a physical resurrection in a world free from sin, pain, and death (Rev 21:4; 22:1-2).¹³⁸ Tautges writes, “If we fail to gently speak the truth of the gospel in times of grief, we have not made death a servant to God’s purposes.”¹³⁹ God calls pastors to comfort those who mourn, and any comfort outside the truth of Scripture is inadequate.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to perform personal ministries such as counseling, confronting, and comforting in the local church. Pastoral ministry is a tremendous privilege and responsibility.¹⁴¹ Scripture’s trustworthiness allows the minister to speak with confidence and authority in these situations. According to Tripp, “Personal ministry brings the monsoon of God’s Word to the parched terrain of the heart.”¹⁴² The pastor must decide if he will rely upon his own wisdom or upon the power of God’s Word to minister to those in need. Croft argues for this when he writes, “Though we can be effective in some practical ways and have some measure of wisdom pastorally, if our care is devoid of the hope of the gospel and the promises in God’s word, the hope and encouragement we offer will be nothing more than an illusion.”¹⁴³ Adams

¹³⁷Tautges, *Comfort the Grieving*, 78-79.

¹³⁸Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 27.

¹³⁹Tautges, *Comfort the Grieving*, 16.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁴¹MacArthur, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, xiii.

¹⁴²Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 23.

¹⁴³Croft, *Visit the Sick*, 29.

also links the importance of doctrine with pastoral ministry when he states, “The fact of the matter is that it is irresponsible and dangerous to attempt to do practical ministry apart from a sound theological base. The only basis for Christian living and pastoral ministry is biblical and theological.”¹⁴⁴ Doctrine is more than philosophical; it makes a practical difference. Scripture’s inerrancy guarantees the pastor a trustworthy Word from God with the necessary power to bring about spiritual transformation in the lives of those to whom he personally ministers.

¹⁴⁴Jay Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 1.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BROADER CHURCH

Introduction

The doctrine of inerrancy grants pastors greater confidence in the pulpit and in performing pastoral ministries. Inerrancy's impact, however, is not limited to clergy. Individual congregations also have the responsibility to defend this vital doctrine and to live according to Scripture's mandates to receive the blessings it affords. The argument can be made that the modern tendency to drift from a high view of Scripture has negatively affected the body of Christ. This chapter will show that inerrancy has historical, theological, and practical implications for the broader church and, therefore, must be preserved.

Historical Implications

Despite the speed and enormity of cultural changes in this past century, doctrine remains important. Boyce correctly asserted that every age stands in need of God's truth.¹ Unfortunately, postmodern skepticism and suspicion of absolute truth have infiltrated the modern church. "In our day," writes Hannah, "theology seems to be an irrelevant topic, one that may even be destructive to the health of the church."² According to Horton, the term "orthodox" has become a pejorative term.³ Churches

¹James Petigru Boyce, "Thus Saith the Lord: Ezekiel 2:4," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 34.

²John D. Hannah, *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 9.

³Michael Horton, *We Believe: Recovering the Essentials of the Apostles' Creed* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 13.

today must decide if they will buckle to cultural norms or stand firm in the traditional convictions regarding Scripture that have been passed down from previous generations.

The orthodox view of Scripture's authority and trustworthiness has provided a firm foundation as the source for truth throughout church history.⁴ Those who seek to undermine Scripture's inerrancy must understand that they are outside the bounds of historical orthodoxy. By studying the history of doctrine, believers will have a greater understanding of their connection to the early church and to other Christians. Arrogance can be avoided and a common ground for fellowship may be established.⁵ Tracing the church's view of Scripture through history will help establish parameters for the modern debate of the Bible's authority.

Early church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine treated Scripture as the divinely inspired, authoritative words of God.⁶ The same is true for the principle reformers Luther and Calvin, who viewed Scripture as true and authoritative due to its divine authorship.⁷ This idea continued to prevail as Christianity spread into the New World. American theologians such as Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and B. B. Warfield began to articulate a fuller understanding of Scripture's inerrancy in response to growing theological attacks in their era.⁸

A more liberal view of Scripture began to dominate classrooms and churches in the mid-twentieth century.⁹ The inerrancy controversy was found in almost every

⁴Hannah, *Our Legacy*, 36.

⁵Ibid., 12.

⁶Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 403.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 406.

⁹Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 9.

denomination of the United States as this skeptical view of the Bible gained momentum.¹⁰ Evangelicals were forced to respond to this increasing threat, prompting the formation of the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy and the drafting of the Chicago Statement.¹¹ Denominations had to decide if they would hold to the orthodox view of Scripture or succumb to the liberal view.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) successfully turned back the tide of liberalism this past century. The Bible's inerrancy was taken for granted in the SBC until recently.¹² Even though early SBC theologians such as Dagg, Boyce, Mullins, and Manly had argued for the total inerrancy and authority of Scripture, the emergence of liberalism in the twentieth century began to affect the SBC as well.¹³ By the end of the century, many concluded that liberal theology had infiltrated the seminaries, and something had to be done before the matter worsened.¹⁴

The theological inadequacy of SBC seminaries and agencies led to the Conservative Resurgence of the late 1900's. Examples of liberal teachings and publications in this era are prevalent.¹⁵ "The bottom line," writes Sutton, "is there were two different beliefs about the Bible in the Southern Baptist Convention."¹⁶ He later states, "The Conservative Resurgence was absolutely necessary for the health, vitality,

¹⁰Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 407.

¹¹Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 10.

¹²Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 408.

¹³*Ibid.*, 408-13.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 6-30.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 420.

and well-being of the Southern Baptist Convention as a viable, evangelical denomination.”¹⁷

The SBC took appropriate action to return its agencies and institutions to the traditional, orthodox view of the Bible. This controversy revealed the importance of holding to doctrinal convictions. Each generation must determine to fight against the world’s intentions to undermine God’s Word. Too much is at stake to drift from the historical view that Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. One of the architects of the SBC Conservative Resurgence, Paul Pressler, summed up the importance of this stance. “Countless millions will be brought to Christ,” writes Pressler, “because our institutions are being returned to the faith once delivered to the saints based on the authority of God’s Word. A greater hill on which to die has never existed for a follower of our Savior.”¹⁸ Remaining firmly planted in the historical view of Scripture’s inerrancy is thus essential for the broader church moving forward.

Theological Implications

Many modern churches, however, abandoned a conservative view of Scripture. Evangelical scholars believe this drift has negatively impacted the church. Kaiser, for example, laments the current spiritual condition of the church, likening its teachings to spiritual “junk food.” In his opinion, “The Church and the Scripture stand or fall together.”¹⁹ Questioning the Bible’s trustworthiness has stripped the sermon of its

¹⁷Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 421.

¹⁸Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist’s Journey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), xi.

¹⁹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 7-8.

authority and has left congregations malnourished. The solution is a return to sound doctrine, particularly the doctrine of Scripture, for it gives life to the church.²⁰

A conservative doctrine of Scripture allows the church to share a common source of truth. Inerrancy provides a trustworthy anchor, a shared center of authority by which all other doctrines must be formed.²¹ As such, only doctrine that is faithful to Scripture can be defined as “sound.”²² Such common ground must begin with the conviction that the Bible is God’s Word, and therefore authoritative, trustworthy, and coherent.²³ Pastors who trust in Scripture will train their people to do likewise. While members may look to the pastor as an example of where to find truth,²⁴ no minister or church should be seen as infallible. That privilege belongs solely to God’s Word.²⁵ Sound doctrine regarding Scripture also guards against false teaching.²⁶ Inerrancy therefore ensures that believers are united under the banner of shared truth.

The power of the gospel flows from God’s revealed Word. God has spoken and his inspired message must be the foundation and sum of all Christian teaching. Believers must take great care not to add, subtract, or modify Scripture (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19).²⁷ Doubting the trustworthiness of God’s Word is akin to subtracting from its authority. Similar to a skydiver doubting a parachute’s integrity is the minister who

²⁰Bobby Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine: How a Church Grows in the Love and Holiness of God*: (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 13.

²¹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 423.

²²Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, 17.

²³*Ibid.*, 37.

²⁴Mark Dever, “Sermon: Expository Preaching as a Mark of a Healthy Church,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 67.

²⁵Boyce, “Thus Saith the Lord,” 36.

²⁶Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, 41.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 38.

doubts the Bible's credibility. An errant Bible, then, leads to uncertainty in the message preached.²⁸ Instead, those who hold to Scripture's inerrancy and accurately communicate its message can speak with boldness, calling upon listeners to submit their lives to its teaching or else sin by their disobedience.²⁹

Christian theology is dependent upon special revelation. In the Bible, God has revealed who he is and what sinners must do to be saved.³⁰ The Bible offers more than information, however. God's Word also creates life and provides direction and power for holy living.³¹ The Holy Spirit is the only source of life-giving power, and he uses the Word of God to accomplish this.³² Dever writes, "Either He has spoken, or we are forever lost in the darkness of our own speculations."³³ The modern church thus forfeits its very power source when it compromises the integrity of the Bible.

As the church battles for the inerrancy of Scripture, it fights for more than mere intellectual and philosophical arguments. The purpose of theology is growth in godliness.³⁴ Packer writes, "Evangelicals have been fighting not just for orthodoxy, but for religion; not just for purity of confession, but for fullness of faith and life; not just for God's truth as such, but for the godliness that is a response to it."³⁵ He later states, "The concern for godliness has always been there, whether or not it has always broken surface

²⁸Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 422.

²⁹Ibid., 36.

³⁰Boyce, "Thus Saith the Lord," 37.

³¹Dever, "Sermon: Expositional Preaching," 66.

³²Boyce, "Thus Saith the Lord," 38.

³³Dever, "Sermon: Expositional Preaching," 65.

³⁴Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, 45.

³⁵J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 326.

in the debate....The concern continues and this is why Evangelicals continue to spend their strength contending for the authority of an infallible Bible as a basic principle of Christianity.”³⁶ The doctrines of salvation and sanctification are at stake in the battle for Scripture’s inerrancy.

Conservative scholarship has addressed many of the objections against the full inerrancy of Scripture.³⁷ Partial inerrancy, held by theologians such as Pinnock, is the belief that the Bible is inerrant only in salvific matters.³⁸ Claiming that only parts of the Bible can be trusted, however, casts a shadow of doubt upon the whole. Belcher summarizes this when he writes, “If we deny the ability of Scripture to speak authoritatively concerning its own nature, then we also must question its ability to speak authoritatively concerning all other matters of doctrine.”³⁹ The absence of a completely accurate Word of God leaves mankind with nothing but subjectivity regarding the person and work of Christ.⁴⁰

Several theological implications for the inerrancy of Scripture are clear. A trustworthy Bible provides an authoritative message from God that unites all believers under a shared source of truth. Casting doubt upon any portion of Scripture threatens to undermine the life-changing message of the whole. The battle for the Bible in the past century has caused division among evangelicals, yet it is a fight worth waging. Geisler

³⁶Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” 327.

³⁷Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 319-41.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 47.

³⁹Richard P. Belcher, *A Layman’s Guide to the Inerrancy Debate* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 40.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 36.

and Roach are correct in stating, “It is better to be divided by the truth than to be united by error.”⁴¹

Practical Implications

Academic arguments over the trustworthiness of Scripture are pointless if not applied to the lives of individuals and to the church.⁴² Churches holding to the doctrine of inerrancy typically experience practical benefits. God’s Word has the power to transform congregations into healthy, vibrant bodies that effectively fulfill the Great Commission and maintain a rigorous pursuit of his kingdom. The Lord seems to honor those churches that revere his Word because he has promised that it will not return void (Is 55:11). Faithfulness to the written Word in turn leads to a deeper knowledge of Christ, the living Word.

Healthy Churches

The term “healthy” may appear to be a subjective word, but Scripture provides a way to gauge a congregation’s spiritual well-being. Churches that reject the Bible’s inerrancy lose this vital barometer and often revert to pragmatic views of church health.⁴³ In Dever’s view, “Too many churches misunderstand the priority that they are to give to God’s revelation and to the nature of the regeneration He offers therein. Reevaluating these must be a part of any solution to the problems of today’s churches.”⁴⁴

⁴¹Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 344.

⁴²A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 188.

⁴³Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 25-26.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 26.

The doctrine of inerrancy provides a trustworthy guide to measure church health, but it must be applied by lining up the doctrines and practices of the church and making necessary changes to more closely align with Scripture. It is difficult to imagine God blessing a church spiritually that does not fully trust in and obey his Word. As the church in Ephesus demonstrated, a church can hold a dead orthodoxy (Rev 2:1-7). The Lord's admonition to this church reveals his expectation that conservative doctrine should inevitably lead to a loving, Christ-like lifestyle.

While numerical growth should be celebrated, it does not always indicate church health. Instead, persevering faithfulness to the Bible must be the goal. The Word of God, not numbers, should be a church's priority because it presents what should be believed and practiced.⁴⁵ Dever writes, "But if you get the priority of the Word established, then you have in place the single most important aspect of the church's life, and growing health is virtually assured, because God has decided to act by His Spirit through the Word."⁴⁶ The Holy Spirit brings forth fruit as believers are exposed to Scripture. Vital ministries such as evangelism, encouragement, and equipping then take place as tangible indicators of church health.⁴⁷ The early church is an example of how God often chooses to bring numerical growth to those congregations who faithfully believe and practice the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42-47).

If Scripture is truly God's Word, then biblical fidelity is the surest indicator of church health. The pastor must play the primary role in establishing the centrality of the Word in the congregation.⁴⁸ Through his preaching and pastoral ministry, he sets the

⁴⁵Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 29.

⁴⁶Ibid., 39.

⁴⁷McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 188-89.

⁴⁸Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 133.

tone for the rest of the believers. The church must consider a man's theology of Scripture, then, before calling him to shepherd the flock. Dever states, "To charge someone with the spiritual oversight of a church who doesn't in practice show a commitment to hear and to teach God's Word is to hamper the growth of the church, in essence allowing it to grow only to the level of the pastor."⁴⁹ Healthy churches are those who hold the entirety of Scripture in highest regard, conforming doctrine and practice to its words, and are led by pastors who do likewise.

Attractive Churches

The American church enters the twenty-first century with some troubling statistics. A 2015 Pew Research Center report found that Mainline Protestant churches are losing about 1 million members annually.⁵⁰ Theologically, these denominations may be classified as liberal, having abandoned a literal interpretation of the Bible in an effort to be culturally relevant.⁵¹ This strategy, however, appears to be backfiring. A study of Presbyterian (USA) churches found that millennials are more likely to leave a church that has a low view of biblical authority.⁵² Liberal theology, particularly regarding Scripture, is hurting the church's mandate to reach and retain people.

On the other side of the theological spectrum, the majority of churches that are growing are committed to a high view of Scripture. A study conducted over the past 5

⁴⁹Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 42.

⁵⁰David Haskell, "Liberal Churches Are Dying. But Conservative Churches Are Thriving," accessed January 11, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/04/liberal-churches-are-dying-but-conservative-churches-are-thriving/?utm_term=.5fe5f48d80ca.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 41.

years determined conservative theology to be a significant indicator of church growth.⁵³ This mirrors Rainer's research that discovered the unchurched are attracted to conservative evangelical churches with uncompromising beliefs.⁵⁴ The majority of those searching for a church are hungry for truth, and they are seeking pastors and churches with conviction.⁵⁵ While not every conservative church is growing, biblical fidelity remains one of the key factors to spiritual and numerical growth. Geisler states, "It appears to be a fact of history that belief in inerrancy is part of a vital, growing, evangelistic, and mission-minded Christianity."⁵⁶

The argument has been made, however, that both liberal and conservative churches decline. Bass writes, "The Southern Baptist Convention's loss of a million members in the last decade exposes as a false narrative the conventional wisdom that only liberal denominations decline."⁵⁷ She correctly asserts that church health includes more than doctrinal fidelity. According to Bass, "The issue is: Are you a congregation that provides a way of meaningful life for people to be able to navigate the chaotic times and to be able to connect with God, to experience a new sense of the Spirit, to be able to love and be compassionate? That's what makes religious communities vibrant, not whether they are liberal or conservative." While this is true, it does not have to be an either/or matter of theology or practice. In reality, conservative doctrine offers a more

⁵³Haskell, "Liberal Churches Are Dying."

⁵⁴Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 127.

⁵⁵Ibid., 62.

⁵⁶Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 329.

⁵⁷Diana Butler Bass, "SBC Decline Dispels Idea That Only Liberal Denominations Die," accessed June 28, 2017, <https://baptistnews.com/article/diana-butler-bass-sbc-decline-dispels-idea-liberal-denominations-die/#.WVVsEHmWyM->.

reliable answer to these questions than a liberal view of Scripture, provided that a belief in inerrancy leads to the practical outworking of the Christian faith.

Contrary to the liberal view, preaching and doctrine do not hinder church growth. Rather, they were listed as the primary reasons why the formerly unchurched joined a particular church.⁵⁸ Conservative doctrine is an effective means to growing a church, and it also plays a part in retaining membership. High assimilation churches are unapologetically conservative in doctrine, holding a high view of Scripture.⁵⁹ Churches that require prospective members to affirm a basic doctrinal statement are also more likely to retain members.⁶⁰ The conclusion is that doctrine makes a difference, in particular, a conservative view of the Bible.

The pastors of growing churches also tend to be theologically conservative.⁶¹ These pastors believe in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.⁶² Rainer's research concludes that 80% of pastors who are effectively reaching the unchurched believe in the Bible's full inerrancy.⁶³ Unchurched-reaching pastors express a love for God's Word, and they seek to lead from its authority.⁶⁴ This impacts every aspect of their ministry, especially preaching. The conservative pastors in this study believed in the power of the preached Word and primarily preached expository sermons because it is the method most faithful to the text.⁶⁵

⁵⁸Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 56.

⁵⁹Rainer, *High Expectations*, 27.

⁶⁰Ibid., 57.

⁶¹Ibid., 67.

⁶²Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 218.

⁶³Ibid., 150.

⁶⁴Ibid., 196.

⁶⁵Ibid., 215.

Pastoral leadership is vital for growing churches. Pastors who combine firm convictions with a gentle spirit typically lead churches to exhibit these same qualities.⁶⁶ Uncompromising in matters of truth, however, does not require one to be harsh or bitter in spirit.⁶⁷ A high view of Scripture starts with exegesis and should flow naturally into application. God's Word has the power to radically transform those who humble themselves to its teachings. Evangelistic passion and ongoing ministry into the community are the desired fruits of doctrinal absolutes.⁶⁸ Many conservative churches are thriving because they wholeheartedly trust God's Word to direct and empower their ministries.

A commitment to the Word followed by church growth should come as no surprise as this is the pattern established by the apostles in Acts. Following Peter's sermon at Pentecost, "those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). After healing the lame man at the Temple, Peter preached about the importance of faith in Christ and repentance of sin. Luke summarizes the impact by stating, "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). Later he writes, "The word of God kept on spreading and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). In each of these statements, a direct corollary exists between the proclaimed Word and numerical growth. Modern churches do well to imitate this apostolic pattern in order to experience biblical church growth.

⁶⁶Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 135.

⁶⁷Boyce, "Thus Saith the Lord," 41.

⁶⁸Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 135.

Revitalized Churches

A high view of Scripture should stimulate church revitalization. The sad truth is that many congregations are plateaued or declining. A recent SBC study revealed only 27 percent of churches experienced measurable growth, whereas 43 percent were plateaued, and 30 percent had declined.⁶⁹ Approximately 1,000 SBC churches close each year, along with 3,500-4,000 churches from other denominations.⁷⁰ Many of these SBC churches could be considered conservative in their theology. The issue, however, is that their orthodoxy has not led to orthopraxy. Perhaps they have embraced inerrancy as a doctrine but not fully in practice. If conservative theology has not lead to a revitalized church, the problem is not with the church's view of Scripture but its obedience to God's Word.

The need to revitalize churches is great. Some have turned to pragmatic means, however, to bring about this restoration, focusing primarily upon numerical growth rather than church health. In these churches, the Bible may be given lip-service, but the power to bring about change rests solely upon the cleverness of man.⁷¹ Again the issue is a dependence upon God and obedience to his Word rather than trusting in man-made schemes. According to Croft, "The most gifted and clever pastor is still too sinful, broken and weak to save a church under his own power."⁷²

As has been noted, the drift from a high view of Scripture has weakened many churches. A recent Barna study indicates that only 55 percent of Christians believe in the Bible's inerrancy.⁷³ As a result many congregations are left spiritually hungry for the

⁶⁹Kevin Ezell, "Breathing New Life into Dying Churches," in *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2015), 13-14.

⁷⁰Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 15.

⁷¹Ibid., 16.

⁷²Ibid., 18.

⁷³Charles R. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal* (New York: FaithWords, 2010), 63.

truth and devoid of God's supernatural power. Swindoll writes, "God's Word has been replaced with artificial food. The wolves of postmodernism have invaded the pantry, and now houses of worship that once were places of feasting have become places of famine."⁷⁴ Today's spiritual famine is reminiscent of the days of Amos. Israel had been the beneficiary of God's revelation and the proclamation of his prophets, yet they had forsaken the Word. Taking Scripture lightly and trusting rather in institutionalized religion are the causes of this famine of God's Word.⁷⁵

A renewed emphasis upon trusting and obeying Scripture is necessary to revitalize declining churches. Olford states, "We believe that true 'heaven-sent' revival and aggressive evangelism will only come when there is a return to the preaching and obeying of God's inerrant Word."⁷⁶ The pastor must take the lead in the revitalization process by first making a commitment to Scripture. He must then take every opportunity, in the pulpit and out, to impart God's Word to the congregation. A love for the Bible is contagious, and this must be evident in his teaching and lifestyle.⁷⁷ A high view of Scripture recognizes the supernatural power and wisdom that flows directly from God. Croft writes, "God's spirit working through His word is the only way to bring true lasting spiritual life to a local church."⁷⁸ The Bible is crucial because it contains the power and provides a trustworthy guidebook for the task of revitalization.⁷⁹

⁷⁴Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, 239.

⁷⁵T. J. Betts, *Amos: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Message* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2011), 166-69.

⁷⁶Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1998), 2.

⁷⁷Dan Dumas, "The Revitalizer: Who You Must Be," in *A Guide to Church Revitalization*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2015), 22.

⁷⁸Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 17.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 17-18.

The pastor must also never forget the spiritual warfare that accompanies this work. Those who strive to revitalize a dying church will find themselves a target for the enemy.⁸⁰ Boldness can be found, however, in faithfully adhering to revealed Scripture. According to Swindoll, “An awakened church stands firm on the inspired Word of God.”⁸¹

The prophetic message of Ezekiel 37 provides a timeless principle that applies to church revitalization: God’s Spirit working through God’s Word has the power alone to bring life out of death.⁸² Croft writes, “A church is revitalized by the power of God through the Spirit of God at work through the word of God by means of a faithful shepherd of God.”⁸³ The valley of dry bones is an appropriate symbol for the state of the modern church. The bones left unburied represented death, despair, and destruction.⁸⁴ This representation of Israel in Ezekiel’s day is especially striking considering the promise of a New Covenant that had been delivered in the previous chapter.⁸⁵ The dry bones symbolized man’s inability to bring about this blessing. Without God’s power there is no hope. Mohler laments the spiritual climate of the modern church when he writes, “Lacking spiritual energy, devoid of biblical knowledge and conviction, many of our churches wear the pallor of death.”⁸⁶

⁸⁰Dumas, “The Revitalizer,” 25.

⁸¹Swindoll, *The Church Awakening*, 193.

⁸²Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 30.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁴R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 151.

⁸⁵Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 24.

⁸⁶Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 153.

God's command to prophesy to the bones may have seemed woefully inadequate to Ezekiel. The same mindset may be found in today's churches that have forsaken a high view of the Bible and of preaching. Yet Ezekiel's obedience to authoritatively proclaim God's Word brought about an unbelievable outcome. The resurrection of the dry bones symbolized hope for both ancient Israel and for the modern church.⁸⁷ The Spirit's power was unleashed when the man of God boldly proclaimed the message he had received. The principle is the same today. God brings life by declaring, fulfilling, and explaining his Word.⁸⁸ The modern pastor must exhibit the same trust in the Word of God as evidenced by Ezekiel. If God cannot bring life out of death then preaching his Word is pointless.⁸⁹ Thankfully, the OT prophecy of a New Covenant was fulfilled in Christ, and the hope for church revitalization is found in the preaching of this good news.⁹⁰

Conclusion

Inerrancy has historical, theological, and practical implications for the church today. A departure from a high view of Scripture represents a deviation from a Christian conviction that has dominated throughout church history. Theologically, only God's Word has the power to create and sustain life. If God has spoken, then his Word must be true, trustworthy, authoritative, and powerful. Churches that drift from this conviction forfeit their distinctiveness from the culture. This has practical implications in the area of church growth as unbelievers are drawn more toward churches that embrace a conservative view of the Bible. Healthy congregations are those that measure their success upon faithfulness to Scripture rather than pragmatism. Churches that find

⁸⁷Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 155.

⁸⁸Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 26.

⁸⁹Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 154.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 156.

themselves in spiritual decline must renew their commitment and obedience to God's Word to find any hope for revitalization.

The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to lead with authority in the local church. The call to lead God's people is always intricately connected with God's Word as evidenced in both the OT and NT. Pastors must therefore have firm convictions regarding the nature of Scripture. The concept of Scripture's total inerrancy has strong biblical, theological, and historical support. Embracing the Bible's trustworthiness impacts the minister's responsibilities such as preaching and pastoral ministry. Pastors who trust in Scripture can preach, counsel, rebuke, and comfort with complete confidence. The Bible's inerrancy is a viable solution to the numerous attacks on pastoral authority. God is glorified, and his church is strengthened when pastors recognize their dependence upon him and lead in humble submission to his revealed Word. Even timid Timothy (2 Tim 1:7) can find boldness to lead by remaining under the umbrella of God's inspired, authoritative, and inerrant Word (2 Tim 3:16-17).

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ABSTRACT

LOGOS AND LEADERSHIP: HOW INERRANCY IMPACTS A PASTOR'S AUTHORITY

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This thesis examines the connection of biblical inerrancy to pastoral leadership. Chapter 1 touches on various challenges to pastoral confidence and examines the literature on subjects such as inerrancy, preaching, and pastoral ministries. A literary void detailing the impact of inerrancy on pastoral leadership exists. The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to lead with authority in the local church.

Chapter 2 examines the connection of God's Word to spiritual leadership in both the Old and New Testaments. The call to lead God's people is always tethered to his revealed Word. Today's pastors should, therefore, have a settled conviction regarding the trustworthiness of Scripture. A brief definition and defense of inerrancy is given.

Chapter 3 looks at the impact of inerrancy on the preaching ministry. Inerrancy affects one's definition, theology, and methodology of preaching. Inerrancy emboldens the pastor to preach God's Word with authority.

Chapter 4 details inerrancy's effect on pastoral ministries such as counseling, church discipline, and comforting. The Bible provides a trustworthy and authoritative guide for dealing with these personal matters in the church. The doctrine of inerrancy emboldens the pastor to perform such pastoral ministries.

Chapter 5 examines how pastors holding to inerrancy impact the church in general. Churches would be healthier and more appealing to the unchurched if pastors would lead under the umbrella of inerrancy. Doctrinal beliefs have practical effects.

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