

WHERE DO YOU STAND WITH YOUR FAITH? #9  
“The Authority of Scripture”  
Daniel 9:1-19, I Corinthians 15:1-11, James 4:7-12  
October 29-30, 2022

In his book *Edge of Adventure*, Keith Miller gives this powerful illustration about the authority of Scripture. He says, “The Bible can change not only a life, but an entire lifestyle. Most of us have heard the story of the *Mutiny on the Bounty*, but few of us have heard how the Bible played a very vital part in that historical event. The *Bounty* was a British ship which set sail from England in 1787, bound for the South Seas. The idea was that those on board would spend some time among the islands, transplanting fruit-bearing and food-bearing trees, and doing other things to make some of the islands more habitable. After ten months of voyage, the *Bounty* arrived safely at its destination, and for six months the officers and the crew gave themselves to the duties placed upon them by their government.

“When the special task was completed, however, and the order came to embark again, the sailors rebelled. They had formed strong attachments for the native girls, and the climate and the ease of the South Sea island life was much to their liking. The result was mutiny on the *Bounty*, and the sailors placed Captain Bligh and a few loyal men adrift in an open boat. Captain Bligh, in an almost miraculous fashion, survived the ordeal, was rescued, and eventually arrived home in London to tell his story. An expedition was launched to punish the mutineers, and in due time fourteen of them were captured and paid the penalty under British law.

"But nine of the men had gone to another distant island. There they formed a colony. Perhaps there has never been a more degraded and debauched social life than that of that colony. They learned to distill whiskey from a native plant, and the whiskey, as usual, along with other habits, led to their ruin. Disease and murder took the lives of all the native men and all but one of the white men named Alexander Smith. He found himself the only man on an island, surrounded by a crowd of women and half-breed children.

“Alexander Smith found a Bible among the possessions of a dead sailor. The Book was new to him. He had never read it before. He sat down and read it through. He believed it and he began to

appropriate it. He wanted others to share in the benefits of this book, so he taught classes to the women and the children, as he read to them and taught them the Scriptures.

“It was twenty years before a ship ever found that island, and when it did, a miniature Utopia was discovered. **The people were living in prosperity, decency, harmony, and peace. There was nothing of crime, disease, immorality, insanity, or illiteracy. How was it accomplished? By the reading, the believing, and the appropriating of the truth of God’s Word in the Bible!”<sup>1</sup>**

That’s the difference that the Word of God makes in any society! When we read the Word from the Bible, when we believe in the Word of the Bible, when we put it into practice in our lives and follow God’s Word as found in the Bible, it enables us to have full, prosperous, and healthy lives.

The time we decide that God’s Word is no longer relevant for our world today is the time we begin to see the problems of alcoholism, drug use, promiscuity, abortion, homosexuality, murder and disease corrupt our society and we have heartache, grief and sorrow because of them. Living according to the Word of God as our ultimate authority brings life to us, not death. The problem is that we think we know better. We consider God’s Word outdated and archaic, so we decide to capitalize on destructive behaviors and then we watch our world fall into destruction.

Daniel 9 helps us to see the sorrow and the anguish that comes as we rebel against God’s Law and Commandments. Daniel, and many of those from Jerusalem, were in captivity in Babylon when they finally realized what their rejection of God’s Law brought to them. He came to understand the prophecy given to Jeremiah by God of what would happen to Jerusalem unless the people changed their ways and returned to the Lord God Almighty. Seventy years of exile was given by the Lord, while the city of Jerusalem became desolate and uninhabited. God had called them back to Him, but they refused to follow Him, so the punishment was given for their rebellion.

An interesting question could be asked today, “**How much punishment does the Unites States of America deserve from the Lord our God for our rebellion and refusal to follow His ways? Or**

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<sup>1</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998] pg. 50-51)

**any nation for that matter that thumbs their noses at the Word of God and refuses to allow its truth to guide their society to life, health and prosperity?”**

Daniel came to understand the situation while he was in Babylon after Jerusalem fell into the control of her attackers. “*So (he, Daniel,) turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting and in sackcloth and ashes*” (9:3), eagerly seeking the Lord’s forgiveness and grace. Did you hear the agony in his prayer as you heard it today? Did you feel the shame that was theirs for not obeying the Commands of the Lord God? Did you listen to his pleading with the Lord for mercy?

Daniel lays it right out there: “*...we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from Your commands and laws. We have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land...The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything He does; yet we have not obeyed Him*” (9:5-6, 14). How appropriate for our own world today?

Yet, we, like them, continue in our own ways heading down the same path as they went, looking at the same consequences they experienced. But do we really see those consequences? No, because our society, just like theirs, says that God is loving and kind and would never do such a thing to us. And we forget the promises of destruction from God because of our own rebellion against Him as we follow our own ways. **What will it take for us to fall on our own knees and pray the same prayer to God for our own sins? Lest we follow the ways of Jerusalem during the days of Daniel, we best be seeking the forgiveness and grace of the Lord before it’s too late.**

You see, God’s Word is perfect and it will not be mocked forever. God has laid out His plan of Salvation for anyone who will read it, receive it, believe it and live it. God has provided a way for us to find redemption, but it is not through our own works. It is through His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that forgiveness of sins comes to us. No one else can save us. **No one else can redeem us back to God. Only Jesus saves us!**

The Apostle Paul says it well in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of I Corinthians. Hear it again: “*By this gospel (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born*” (I Cor. 15:2-8). All that Jesus did to bring us Salvation is recorded in this book called the Bible, and it is ours for the reading and believing. But if we fail to live it every day in our lives, we believe in vain. **The faith must be lived out so that everyone can see the difference and begin to follow Jesus so that they may be saved,** just like Alexander Smith did on that South Sea island.

God promised a Messiah who would “*take away the sins of many*” in the world (Romans 11:27, Hebrews 9:28). To any that would put their trust in Him, He would forgive their sins and bring them new life in Christ Jesus, for He “*came to seek and to save that which is lost*” (Luke 19:10). It’s a promise from the Lord our God! And it comes to us in the Authority of the Scriptures in the Bible. This is the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and **only the Word of God has the power to transform those who believe it, and to reform any nation that chooses to follow it.**

Clark Pinnock wrote well of this situation of our rebellion as well as the promise that comes when we follow God’s Word in Scripture. He says, “The distinctive mark of theology today is its dreadful ambiguity. The chaos of American theology today can be traced back to its roots in the rejection of biblical infallibility. Preaching is not the act of unfolding our personal convictions. It is the duty of informing [people] of all that God has spoken. To move off from the pages of Scripture is to enter into the wastelands of our own subjectivity. Scripture plays an important role in the salvation of [mankind]. The Bible is a divinely provided map of the spiritual order. It contains the directions and

markings to guide a person into reconciliation with God.” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, October-December 1967)<sup>2</sup>

That is the true authority of the Scriptures for all of us, IF WE WILL read it, believe it and then implement it into our lives on a daily basis. Listen to the way that James describes it. This is James 4:7-12. (READ James 4:7-12).

**When we submit ourselves to God, we find His perfect will and ways for us.** If we would but let the Bible direct every part of our lives, we would come to understand the horrible situation we are in today, and we, too, would “*grieve, mourn and wail*” (Ja. 4:9) like Daniel did.

Now, **to submit our lives to God means that we first defer to Him first in every part of our life.** We seek out what He says is right and good. We call out to Him for guidance and direction first, rather than going to anyone else with our situations. We hold back from our instinctual reactions to situations, and we seek the Lord’s wisdom. Rather than impulsively living for our own satisfactions, we allow God to provide for us at just the right time, and in just the right way.

**Submitting to God also means that we bow down to Him as the Lord of our life.** We subject ourselves to His will, even if the rest of the world is telling us to do things differently. We humble ourselves to His commands and obey Him, not only when we are told not to do something, but also to do whatever it is He is calling us to do.

**Submitting to God means that we yield to the Lord all that we are and all that we have.** We give up the right to hold onto the things we have and allow Him to use us in marvelous ways to provide help and safety and provision for another. Yielding to the Lord means that we agree to be led and guided by the ways of God for the benefit of all those around us.

**Submitting to God also means that we surrender ourselves to the power and majesty of the Lord.** We are not all powerful. We are not all wise. We are not all knowing; but God is. By giving our lives over to the wisdom of God, He provides us with strength, wisdom and knowledge in order to live our lives in ways that please Him and those around us. When we surrender ourselves to God, we

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<sup>2</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, pg. 49)

find His Salvation and His provision.

**And when we submit ourselves to God, we give in to His desires and plans for our lives** rather than seeking our own wants and wishes. We give ourselves completely over to Him.

As we submit ourselves to God, He does not abandon us, or abuse us, or lead us to destruction. Rather, as God sees that we are adamant in following Him, He blesses us, and watches out for us, and fights for us so that we don't have to be afraid of any enemy (foreign or domestic), for He puts a hedge of protection around us and causes us to flourish. This is God's great desire for us as His servants.

But Satan on the other hand, wishes for our destruction. He goes about convincing us that we don't need God's ways, and tells us that we can do things much better than God can. He tells us we should give up the laws and commandments of the Lord God and use our own wisdom to provide for our lives. Satan desires that we rebel against God and forget Him and live the way that we want, watching out only for our own selfish interests, not caring about anyone else. He persuades us to get all we can, from whomever we can, in any way that we can, for as long as we can, and to horde all those possessions and powers for our own glory and fame. Satan does a great job of making us afraid of running out of ... whatever, and he tells us we have to stop trusting in the Lord's provision and look out only for ourselves. Remember that Satan's ultimate desire is to destroy humanity, and he does it best by convincing us that we don't need God in our lives.

**James tells us that when we resist Satan, when we stand up against him and his schemes, when we remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan flees away from us.** When we hold tightly to God's laws and commandments Satan hates us even more, but as we live according to God's ways, he is overpowered by the presence of Jesus with us. And Satan cannot abide where Jesus is.

So James tells us, "*Come near to God and He will come near to you*" (4:8). Imagine God drawing near to you! His power repels any evil and allows no harm or hurt to come to you. His protection is overwhelming, even against the most fully equipped or dangerous army. His love is so strong that we have no need to fear of being alone, for there is no rejection by God for those who turn to

Him and draw closely to Him. God's abundance is so great that we have no need for wanting anything, not even when an annual conference demands escrow money or unfunded pension money. When God draws near to us, what have we to fear? What have we to want? What have we to lose? The answer is NOTHING! No fear! No want! No worry! When God draws near to us, as we draw near to Him, we have complete peace and hope and love.

But in order for us to draw near to God, we must "*wash our hands...purify our hearts...and ...humble ourselves before the Lord* (so that) *He will lift us up*" (Ja. 4:8-9). **If we come before the Lord as sinners and double-minded persons, God rejects us.** He desires that we be solely focused on Him and to let go of the promises and pleasure of this world which Satan controls. He desires for us to put our hope in Jesus Christ and to receive His forgiveness through His grace-filled sacrifice on the cross at Calvary, giving up His body and His blood for us in payment for our sins.

But some would say that God's ways are too restrictive, and too narrow. I like the way that Leslie Flynn describes it, though. In his book, *Now a Word from Our Creator*, Flynn says, "The Ten Commandments may seem narrow, but so does every runway on airports around the world. Yet no passenger wants (their) pilot to miss the narrow runway and land a few yards off the mark in some field or waterway or row of houses. The narrow ribbon of pavement is really the broad way that leads to a safe, comfortable landing. So the seemingly rigid Decalogue guide us to happy, fulfilled living."<sup>3</sup> As we follow God's narrow guidelines we find life, abundance and peace.

The authority of Scripture in the Bible is not there for us to squirm and squeal against as we anguish against all its guidelines and restrictions. No, those guidelines and restrictions are there for us to rejoice in and follow so that they provide prosperity, health, safety and peace to us. When we stay true to the strict authority of the Scriptures, we will have no fear of becoming lost, or led to destruction.

**The authority of the Scriptures then need to influence our whole life.** James tells us not to "*slander one another,*" or to speak against a fellow believer, or to judge one another. For when we do

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<sup>3</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, pg. 47)

that, we are going against the Word of God, which tells us to “*love our neighbor as we love ourselves*” (Mark 12:30-33). Slandering each other does not show love toward each other, but rather spite and anger. By following the authority of God’s Word in the Bible, we learn how to treat each other and we free ourselves from judgment.

God is the One who has given us His Laws to govern our lives. He has given us the opportunity to find real life as we follow His Word in our lives. And God is the only Judge who “*is able to save and destroy*” (Ja. 4:12). Though there are human judges needed in our world today because of our rebellion against God’s ways, God is the Ultimate Judge, and He judges us based upon His Law and Commandments. We are each held account for all we do in our lives based upon how God’s Word in the Scriptures lays out how we are to live. **If we are so focused on staying true to God’s Word in our own life, we’ll have very little time to judge another with regard to their own life.**

So how does this influence your faith? How do you stand with regard to the Words in the Bible? Are you focusing your life as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you letting Jesus be the Lord of your life, guiding you in all your ways? Are the Scriptures important to you in how you live, how you speak and how you conduct yourself? Are you placing the Scriptures before you as having the highest authority in your life?

Satan love it when we leave the Bible on the shelf and disregard its truths. The demon’s tremble when we reach for the Bible, and they fall faint when we open it up and read the truth of God’s Word. And when we actively put God’s Word into our everyday lives, they turn tail and run away, knowing that they have no more influence in us. So what will it be? Will you follow the Word? Let’s pray.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word in the Bible. Thank You for providing us the Way, the Truth, and the Life in Jesus Christ. Give us the courage to read the Bible, to believe what it says, and then to live our lives in accordance with every word in it. Let Your Word become so powerful within us that we begin to change our society as we let it live in us. Guide and direct us to be Your witnesses living by Your Word, in the Name of our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. AMEN.