

## The Church Vs. the Churches 2 – The Churches’ Views of Bible Authority – PT. 3

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The Spirit presents the reality we must address when it comes to the word of God, which is that some truth is easily received while other truth is more difficult, sometimes far more difficult.
  - A. Thus, as a preacher you are required to address the whole truth (2 Tim. 4:1-5).
  - B. This particular series may be one that for some or many sits on the side of being more difficult to receive than others.
2. This morning I want to continue our study of the churches of today versus the church of the Bible. But I plan for this to the last one for a few weeks.
3. I chose to present this series because:
  - A. God is concerned about the doctrine and practices of local churches (see Revelation 2-3, the epistles, etc.).
  - B. God expects us to be able to discern between what is right and wrong (Heb. 5:12-14).
  - C. Studies like this help us do as Paul was instructed by Christ to do (Acts 26:18) which is to take the truth to the world to “open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”
4. Today I want to continue our study of certain churches’ **expressed views** of the Bible’s authority and how these views compare to what the Bible claims concerning its authority.
  - A. It is my hope in doing so that we will be strengthened in the truth.
  - B. But again, it is my hope that upon considering these matters that we will be better equipped to show love to the world by exposing them to the truth for their good and salvation.

### BODY:

#### **I. Methodist Church:**

- A. Methodist view: The Scriptures are the *primary source* of authority for Christian doctrine, but *not the only source*.
  1. **Book of Discipline – Theological Guidelines: Scripture** – “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the **primary source** and **criterion for Christian doctrine**... While we acknowledge the **primacy of Scripture** in theological reflection, **our attempts to grasp its meaning always involve tradition, experience, and reason. Like Scripture, these may become creative vehicles of the Holy Spirit** as they function within the Church. **They quicken our faith, open our eyes** to the wonder of God’s love, and **clarify our understanding.**” (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/theological-guidelines-scripture>)
  2. The Methodist Church believes:
    - a. Scripture to be the *primary* (main, chief) source of authority for determining Christian doctrine.
    - b. **Like Scripture** itself, **church tradition, experience, and human reason** may become **vehicles of the Holy Spirit** to quicken faith, to help understand the scriptures, etc.
    - c. What the church has **traditionally believed and practiced**, learned by **experience** and **human reason** may at times **hold the same authority as Scripture**, being thought to be **vehicles of the Holy Spirit** to strengthen and guide the church.
- B. The church:
  1. Christ’s church accepts that there is *only one source of authority* in religion—**heaven** (Matt. 21:24-26 – “Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> The baptism of John was **from what source, from heaven or from men?**” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ <sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.”).
    - a. Jesus’ point: If doctrine is from **heaven, obey it**; if from **men, reject it!**

- b. How can **man-based tradition, experience,** and/or **reason** be trusted as “vehicles of the Holy Spirit” for determining doctrine or practice?
  - i. For, these are things that **come from men/humans** which the Scriptures from heaven do not sanction as being “vehicles of the Holy Spirit.”
  - ii. We are not to exceed [go beyond] what is written (1 Cor. 4:6 – “I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us **not to go beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.”).
  - iii. So, how can God’s church trust **human** tradition, experience, or reason seeing it must be judged by what the written Scriptures have revealed?
- 2. The church that belongs to Christ rejects the authority of *human*...
  - a. *Tradition* because it renders our worship vain (Matthew 15:3,6,9 – “And He [Jesus] answered and said to them, “**Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God** for the sake of your **tradition?**...<sup>6</sup>...And by this you **invalidated the word of God** for the sake of your **tradition.**...<sup>9</sup> **But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.**”).
    - i. When people give human tradition authority, it will conflict with, add to, or take away from the Bible’s authority.
    - ii. When human tradition is given authority in religion, it results in vain worship (15:9).
  - b. *Experience* because God’s revealed word is to *control* human *experience*.
    - i. Our life’s experiences do not affect God’s will for our lives. Instead, God’s will is to control or affect our life’s experiences (Col. 3:17 – “**Whatever you do** in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”).
      - 1) I know people think that if something they do seems good by the experience, then it can be claimed as being done “in the name of the Lord.” But that is not true.
      - 2) To act in the Lord’s name is to act **by His authority** (Matt. 7:21-23 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven **will enter.**”<sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy **in Your name**, and **in Your name** cast out demons, and **in Your name** perform many miracles?’<sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘**I never knew you;** depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness** [to act without law].”).
      - 3) Our *experiences* must be *governed* and *interpreted* by *Christ’s revealed word*, not the other way around!
  - c. *Reason* because by it we **cannot know God’s will**.
    - i. We must have revelation from God to truly know Him and His will.
      - 1) 1 Cor. 1:21 – “For since in the wisdom of God the world **through its wisdom did not come to know God**, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of **the message preached** to save those who believe.”
      - 2) 1 Cor. 2:11-12 – “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so **the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.**”<sup>12</sup> Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit who is from God**, so that **we may know the things freely given to us by God.**”
    - ii. Acceptable human reasoning will...
      - 1) Acknowledge what is written in the N.T. to be the Lord’s commandments that we must obey (1 Cor. 14:37 – “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”).
      - 2) Always be controlled by Christ’s will (2 Cor. 10:4-5 – “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”<sup>5</sup> We

**destroy arguments and every lofty opinion** raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive to obey Christ**").

- iii. So, rather than human reason being authoritative in directing our doctrine and practice, the Christian's mind and its reasoning **must be controlled by Christ's will**.
3. The Methodist's view that tradition, experience, and reason can "like Scripture" be a "vehicle of the Holy Spirit" is not supported by the Scriptures.
4. Therefore, what is required of us is to show love and compassion to those we might know concerning these matters by seeking to point them to the truth of God's word that they might have their eyes opened and receive the forgiveness of their sins in Christ.

## II. Presbyterian Church

- A. View: Scriptures are the *primary* but *flawed* source of authority, though not the only source.
  1. "In matters of faith, life, and salvation, Scripture **takes precedence over all other authorities**. However, the precedence of Scripture **does not call for the disregard of other authorities**...such sources...include **church councils, laws and decrees**; ancient and modern **theologians** and **thinkers** in general; and **various forms of knowledge and experience**." (www.pcusa.org/site\_media/media/uploads/\_resolutions/scripture-use.pdf)
  2. "Presbyterians have always had a **very strong doctrine of biblical authority**, but historically most have shied away from calling that doctrine **inerrancy**. Inerrancy is a word that points to **complete factual accuracy**...Believing in the inerrancy of Scripture commits us to **the factual accuracy of individual texts**, while believing in the authority of Scripture presses us to **know the message of Scripture as a whole**." (https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/dont-believe/)
  3. The Presbyterian Church believes:
    - a. Scripture is the **primary source of authority**, while also accepting as authoritative **church councils, laws, and decrees**, the words of **theologians** and **thinkers**, as well as various forms of **knowledge and experience**.
      - i. That is a very broad spectrum of authority.
      - ii. Note how much authority in religion is placed on what comes from within man!
    - b. The Bible's message *as a whole* to be true, while holding that **the Bible contains errors**—not every verse is factually accurate.
- B. The Church:
  1. Christ's church accepts the Scriptures to be **sufficient** for doctrine and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and is the only source of authority in religion (Rev. 22:18-19 – "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds to them**, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; <sup>19</sup> and **if anyone takes away from the words** of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.").
    - a. People are not to add to or take away from what the written Scriptures teach.
    - b. I know people will say this warning only applies to the book of Revelation.
    - c. But that misses the reason why this warning exists which is that Revelation, like all Scripture, is inspired, or God-breathed, or from **heaven**. Therefore, you do not tamper with it.
  2. Christ's church accepts the **factual accuracy** of all Scripture.
    - a. The N.T. is the words of Christ, the truth, revealed and written down for us by the apostles (Jn. 16:12-14; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 14:37).
    - b. Jesus confirmed the historical accuracy of the Creation account (Mt. 19:4-5; Lk. 11:51).
    - c. Luke confirmed the historicity of Bible characters in Jesus' genealogy that is traced all the way back to Adam (Lk. 3:23-38).
    - d. Jesus confirmed the truth of the prophet Jonah being swallowed by a great fish as well as his work in Nineveh (Matt. 12:39-41; Lk. 11:29-32)

- e. John and Paul confirmed the existence of Moses, the events of his life, as well as his giving of the Law (John 1:17; 7:19; 2 Cor. 3:7, etc.).
- f. N.T. writers confirmed the life, work, and words of the prophets (Acts 28:25-27). **Etc.!**
- 3. To believe parts of the Bible to be factually inaccurate destroys the Bible's authority.
  - a. If certain parts are false, how can we know the "whole of the Scripture's message" is true and authoritative? For, how can we know what parts are true and what parts are false!
  - b. To deny the inerrancy of the Scriptures is to **give man authority over the Scriptures**, seeing man becomes the judge of what Scriptures are true and authoritative, what has to be obeyed and what can be ignored.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. We have now seen that churches can and do deviate from the Bible's teaching concerning its sole and complete authority over the church and its doctrine and practice.
- 2. So, again, our job is to know the truth revealed in the Bible and show the love of Christ by seeking to expose His revealed truth to others for their salvation and ours.
- 3. If you have not submitted to the authority of Christ revealed in His word, why not do so today accepting Jesus as your Lord and Christ in faith and C-R-B that you might be raised to a new life and new hope of salvation through Christ?