

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

(Scripture Lesson: II Timothy 3:10-17)

Our text for tonight's meditation is verse 16 which says: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training the righteousness."

I believe all of us are aware of the fact that today, Feb. 4, is known as the "Bible Sunday". It is therefore interesting to see the report of the Philippine Bible House regarding its mission of selling Bibles, New Testaments and portions of Scriptures. In 1961, the Philippine Bible House was able to sell 354,268 Bibles, New Testaments and portions of the Scriptures. The report says that the purchase in 1961 has increased from those of previous years with around 35,687.

This increase therefore would mean that our people and perhaps other people in the country are becoming more lovers of the Bible. In other words, our people now are realizing more the great importance of the Bible. In fact the Bible is really a great book which ought to be, cherished and owned by any believer.

And so tonight, may I meditate with you on this Topic: "The Authority of the Bible".

Many Christians have regarded the fact the Bible is a Book with great authority. It is the Book which is highly regarded as one that is full of power and authority. But, what does it mean when we say that the Bible is full of power and authority?

Some Bible scholars have contended and advocated that, the authority of the Bible means that it is a book containing a report and interpretation that is infallible and complete. They maintain the idea that the Bible is infallible and complete to be literally followed and strained.

But so far as the Christian faith is concerned, the following things should be considered, I believe, as to why we believe in the authority of the Bible.

First, we believe in the authority of the Bible because the Bible is a record of God's redeeming revelation. Of course by revelation I mean God's self-disclosure for the salvation of mankind. And the Bible is the record and interpretation of this revelation. That is why we believe in its authority because it is the record of God's revelation.

The Bible therefore is not the revelation, but it is the record of God's revelation. It is a record of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and the fact that it is the record and interpretation of God's revelation it is therefore our concern to read the Bible. It is not only our concern to read the Bible as the record and interpretation of God's revelation, but it is also our great concern to present to other people in order that they may come in contact into a personal relationship with God's revelation, which is Jesus Christ. In this case therefore, we can claim the idea on the authority of the Bible because we believe that, it is the record and interpretation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. As we read through the pages of the Bible we are led to come into a personal encounter with God's revelation-Jesus Christ. And once we are confronted with Jesus Christ, we hear His still small voice saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one cometh unto the Father but by me."

The next reason why we have to believe in the authority of the Bible is the fact that, it is holy. It is a Holy Book. Of course, when I say that the Bible is holy, I do not imply that the Biblical writers wrote the Bible word for word or they were dictated by God. I believe that the Biblical writers wrote the Bible as they were inspired by God, and not as they were dictated by God. And so the holiness of the Bible, which is one reason why we have to believe in its authority, implies that the Bible itself is a means by which the gospel of God is declared and communicated to a sinful and corrupted people in order that they may come into a personal contact with the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, it is our experience that as we read through the pages of the Bible giving way of the Holy Spirit to speak to us we are persuaded and assured of the great truth embodied in it.

In other words, the holiness of the Bible rests on the fact that the Word of God is communicated to us through the persuasion and assurance of the Holy Spirit. This then strengthens the idea on the authority of the Bible. And I think this is what Dr. John Braille means in his book, "The Idea of Revelation", and I quote: "The Scriptures are holy because they are the vehicle through which the Gospel is communicated to us. We know nothing of Christ except what comes to us through the Bible."

The third reason that I would like to suggest why we have to believe in the authority of the Bible is that, through the Scriptures God reveals Himself to us in Jesus Christ. In other words, through the testimony of the Scriptures

Witnessed by the Holy Spirit, God is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. In a book written by Dr. C. H. Dodd entitled, "Expository Times", we read the following statements." God reveals Himself to us in Christ his Son, the eternal Word incarnate through the testimony of the Scriptures and the interior testimony of the Holy Spirit. We receive his revelation by faith, which is itself the gift of God. We receive it in the context of the life of the Church, the Body of Christ, the custodian of the Scriptures, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We believe that God deals with us and makes him known to us as our Father, our Savior, and our Lord." God reveals Himself to us in Jesus Christ through the testimony of the Scriptures. Thus we believe in its authority.

These are the reasons why I believe in the authority of the Bible.

1. Firstly, we believe in the authority of the Bible because it is a record and interpretation of God's revelation.
2. Secondly, we believe in the authority of the Bible because it is holy. It is holy in the sense that it is a means by which the gospel of God is declared and communicated to a sinful people in order that they may come into a personal contact with the Savior of the world -Jesus Christ.
3. Thirdly, we believe in the authority of the Bible because through the Bible, God reveals Himself to us in Jesus Christ. And when God reveals Himself, He does it for man's salvation.

These I believe, should be taken into consideration so far as the authority of the Bible is concerned. But out of these three reasons that are enumerated, there is one thing that we should consider more. I think if are to believe in the authority of the Bible, we should use the Bible Biblically. There is a need for us to use the Bible Biblically, if we are to believe the authority of the Bible.

The problem of some Christians today is that, they use the Bible personally. In other words, they use the Bible to support their own pre-conceived ideas for the sake of argument and debate. No wonder why these people use the so called "proof text" method to communicate the Gospel.

But, I think, to use the Bible Biblically is far better than to use the proof- text method in communicating the Gospel of God.

And using the Bible Biblically means that we have to use in accordance with the power of the Holy Spirit, not in accordance with the power of our pre-conceived ideas. Dr. Ferret wrote an article entitled "Theology for Today", issued last July 1956, and I quote:" Whoever uses the Bible in line with the power of Christ, the inclusive holy Love of God, for the sake of building up his holy body, the Church, in unity and faithfulness, and for the sake of winning the world for Christ, and to help it in its needs in accordance with the Spirit of Christ, uses the Bible rightly. He uses it Biblically".

Therefore, there is a need for us to use the Bible Biblically, if we are to believe in its authority. There is a need for us to use the Bible in accordance with the power of Christ, and not in accordance with the power of our pre-conceived idea, if we are to believe in its authority.

But again, may I say finally that, we cannot use the Bible rightly, we cannot use the Bible Biblically, if we do not believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, there is a need for us to believe in Jesus Christ, if we are to use the Bible Biblically. We cannot use the Bible in accordance with the power of Christ, if we do not believe in the Son of God.

Of course faith in Christ means a total self-surrender to Him. It is saying with all our heart, mind and soul "not my will any more, but thy will de done O God," Amen.

By: Rev. Juan B. Cabanting
The United Methodist Church
Baguio City
1970