



DOCTRINE: CANON

Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21

The Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God. It is necessary, authoritative, clear, and sufficient for all of faith and life. Therefore, it is important to know which books belong in the Bible by God's providential preservation and which books do not. The books that belong form the Canon of scripture.

If there is no Canon, then there is no coherent message. If there is no coherent message, then there is no Christianity. As Greg Bahnsen states, "The notion of a canon is at the *theological* foundation of the Christian faith. Without revealed words available to God's people, there would be no exercise by God of Lordship over us as servants, and there would be no sure promise from God the Savior to save us as sinners." Understanding the Canon correctly will strengthen our faith and life in our Lord and Savior.

The Canon:

1. What the canon of Scripture is and how we got it: Heb. 1:1-2

- Canon = "rod, stick, measure"; "the rule"; "The collection of books that belong in the Bible." (Bruce Metzger)

"When we speak of 'the canon of Scripture', we speak of Scripture as the measuring rod of all truth. The phrase also refers to the collection of books that properly belong in the Bible - the inches, as it were, on the yardstick." – Curt Daniel

- It is revealed by God then recognized by man (1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- God protects His Word in history as it is copied, translated and distributed (Mt. 24:35; Jn. 3:27). = "providential preservation"

2. What the characteristics are: 2 Tim. 3:16-17

- Necessity (Rom. 10:13-17; Mt. 4:4; Deut 8:3; 29:29; Col. 2:6-7; Ps. 119:9) The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will. (Grudem)

- Authority (inerrant, infallible) (Titus 1:2; Jn 17:17; Ps. 12:6; 1 Thess. 2:13) Scripture is the very word of God inerrant in the original manuscripts. Therefore, there is no untruthfulness or falsehood affirmed in any of the statements of the Bible. This comes with the authority of God. This is what scripture teaches of itself and must be obeyed.
 - Clarity/Perspicuity (Ps. 119:105; Dt. 6:4-9; 30:11-14; Rom. 10:5-9) The Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it. (Grudem)
 - Sufficiency (Ps. 19:7-9; 1 Cor. 10:31; Heb. 11:6; 2 Pet.1:3; Gal. 1:8) Scripture contains all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly." (Grudem)
- 3. Reasons why we may believe and trust it:** 2 Peter 1:16-21
- "I believe it because it is a reliable collection of historical documents written by eyewitnesses, during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses, who report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claim their writings are divine and not human in origin." - Voddie Baucham
 - The Bible says so.

Growing Notes:

1. Why is it important to your Christian faith and life to know which writings are God's words and which are not? How would your relationship with God be different if you had to look for his words that were scattered among all the writings of Christians throughout church history?
2. Have you had doubts or questions regarding the canonicity of any of the books of the Bible? What caused those questions? What should one do to resolve them?
3. Read 2 Tim 3:16-17. What characteristics of scripture do we learn from this passage? How does this affect your faith and life?
4. Read 2 Pet. 1:16-21. List the reasons from this passage that we may believe with confidence in the Bible. Which reason(s) is most important to you and why? Who else do you know that needs to read this verse?