

Institutes of Theology | Session 21
Inerrancy, Preservation, and Translation
December 23, 2025

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Welcome back, men. I know this is a busy time of year. We lost a few along the way because of that, but I'm glad you're here. I'm excited about what we're going to be covering tonight.

You know, we've been, on Sunday mornings, we've been dealing this last week with the reason we can trust and believe the Bible. You know, if I were to ask you tonight, why do you believe the Bible to be true? There are a lot of reasons you could give. In fact, John MacArthur wrote a little booklet called "Why You Can Trust the Bible," and had a number, I don't remember how many, but a number of reasons that he set forth. So there are a lot of things we could say, but one of the main reasons that we trust the Bible is because of Jesus Christ. We believe the Old Testament, as we were reminded last Sunday, because He affirmed it to be the very words of the living God. We believe those 39 books are given to us by God because Jesus our Lord said they were. And He pre-authenticated the New Testament. That is, He didn't give us a list of books and say, these are the books I'm giving to you. Instead, He gave us a list of men who would write those books, and we've accepted those books because He handpicked them to write on His behalf, to be His legal proxies, His representatives. So our ultimate authority, when you think about it, is Jesus Christ.

Jesus' view of Scripture, as we're learning in Matthew 5, should shape our view of Scripture. In fact, I want you to turn with me to Matthew 5. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here because we're going to be spending plenty of time there. But I just want you to be reminded again of what Jesus says here about the Scriptures; what He teaches about the Scripture. Matthew 5, verse 17. "Do not think that I came to abolish the law of the prophets." I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. As we learned, in the first century, the 39 books we call the Old Testament were already considered to be the inspired Scriptures. And Jesus here unequivocally identifies those 39 books as God's words to us. And He says, He didn't come to abolish the Old Testament, He came to

fulfill it. He came to explain its meaning in His teaching. He came to obey its commands in His life, and He came to embody its message in His person.

But notice in verse 18, the verse we'll look at this Sunday, or begin to look at, Jesus' view of Scripture. 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. As I mentioned in the New Testament, the word law can refer, as it does here, to the entire Old Testament Scripture. He's talking about the entire Old Testament. And Jesus here affirms, when He mentions the Scripture, He mentions, first of all, His confidence in its permanent authority. Until heaven and earth pass away. Jesus is using that as a kind of proverb that really means never. That's the idea. It's easier for the universe as we know it to go out of existence than for the smallest stroke of a letter of God's Word to fail. It's more enduring than the universe itself. That's what Jesus is saying.

Jesus also affirms its verbal inspiration, “not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law.” You've heard me say many times that Scripture is the product of the breath of God, in the same way that my words now and your words when you speak are the product of your breath. But God is not only the source of the thoughts of Scripture, but of the very words themselves. That's what we mean by verbal, the very words. But notice in verse 18, Jesus goes even farther. He says the Old Testament Scriptures are breathed out by God, not only in their individual words, but even down to the smallest individual letters in the Old Testament. And to the smallest strokes of a pen that distinguish one letter from another. So it is a powerful statement that Jesus is making here. It's inspired down to the pen stroke, Jesus says.

He also affirms its plenary inspiration. Not the smallest letter or stroke, not one shall pass from the law, notice, until all is fulfilled. In theological terms, the word plenary means all. Not only is each individual stroke and letter and word and sentence of the Old Testament breathed out by God, but all of it in its entirety is breathed out by God.

But where I want us to go tonight is a fourth confidence Jesus makes here, a statement He makes about the Scripture, and that is in its total inerrancy. It is completely without error. Nothing it says is contrary to truth or fact. And that's where we begin this evening. You saw the heading when we started. We're talking about the inerrancy of Scripture, the preservation of Scripture,

and the translation of Scripture. Those are the topics we're covering in our time together tonight. So let's start then with this issue of inerrancy. Let's begin with definitions.

What are we talking about? The English word comes from inerrant, which means it does not err. It is without error. Here are some theological definitions. Paul Feinberg writes, When all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs, that is the original documents that were written, and correctly interpreted, is entirely true and never false in all it affirms." Robert Raymond in his systematic theology puts it this way, "The Bible does not err in any of its affirmations, whether those affirmations be the spheres of spiritual realities, or morals, history, or science, and is therefore incapable of teaching error." "Biblical Doctrines," the book put together by John MacArthur in the Master Seminary, defines it like this, "Inerrancy means literally without error. When applied to Scripture, it means that the Bible is without error in the original copies. It is therefore free when properly interpreted from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact." Note that according to all those definitions, the Scripture is without error, not only in its doctrine and its ethics, but also when it speaks of the social, physical, and life sciences. We'll come back to that.

So that's what inerrancy means. But why is it important for us to spend some time here? Because of the attacks that have been made on inerrancy. And this has happened from the ancient times. The ancient attacks on inerrancy came from heretics. Marcion is a great example. He's a Gnostic in the early church who mutilated the Bible text. He published a canon of the New Testament, which included only 11 books. He was an avowed anti-Semite. He included only the Gospel of Luke and 10 epistles of Paul in his version of the New Testament. He deleted Paul's pastoral epistles and all those books he deleted he taught to be in error and not from God. So the idea of the Bible being full of errors and needing to be corrected is an ancient idea.

Fast forward, though, to the Renaissance, the time of the Enlightenment. The first significant challenge to the inerrancy of Scripture really didn't arise until this time period, until the 17th century. Marcion was sort of standing out there by himself. There weren't many who were jumping on board with that. But when you come to the Renaissance time period, the 17th century, Hugo Grotius, a professor at Remonstrant Seminary in Amsterdam, he was a heretic. He was a heretic on the Trinity, heretic on the person of Jesus Christ, a heretic on the nature of the

atonement. But he also taught that the Scripture was a fallible record. Baruch Spinoza was a Jewish philosopher. He followed René Descartes in “Exalting Human Reason.” He also divided the statements of Scripture into what he called primary matters, meaning spiritual matters, and secondary matters, which he meant were all of the facts of history and the facts of science and all of those things. And he ended up then saying that those other issues, the non-spiritual issues, were not true. He even, for example, rejected Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, even though it's clear for a number of reasons that Moses is its author.

So that was in the Renaissance period. Fast forward to the modern period. The attacks on inerrancy in the modern period have come from within the professing church. You see, from the ideas of those men in the Renaissance time period and the Enlightenment, eventually higher criticism and liberalism would be born in Germany. And the critics that grew up out of Germany would reject most of the Scripture. When you combine that with what was happening in the scientific world, you can understand what happened. It was in 1859 that Darwin published his *Origin of the Species*, and it further undermined confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture, where primarily? The creation account. And so as a result of that, people within the church began to question the inerrancy of the Scripture.

John Broadus, a professor and president of Southern Seminary in the mid to late 1800s said this, “If the Darwinian theory of the origin of man has been accepted, then it becomes easy to conclude that the first chapter of Genesis is by no means true history. From this starting point and pressed by a desire to reconstruct the history on evolutionary principles, one might easily persuade himself that in numerous other cases of apparent conflict between Old Testament statements and the accredited results of various sciences, the conflict is real and the Old Testament is incorrect.” In other words, he's saying once Darwin came along and planted the idea that maybe the Bible wasn't accurate in the issue of origins, then maybe other places where the Bible conflicts with current thought, it's an error as well.

And that's exactly what happened. If you want to read about what happened in the 20th century, I encourage you to read a book by Harold Linzel. You can get a used copy. Harold Linzel entitled “The Battle for the Bible.” It describes a history of the 20th century battle over inerrancy in evangelicalism. It was written in the mid 70s. It describes the battle that was raging then,

especially in and around Fuller Theological Seminary in Los Angeles. And what was happening was this. Those who were wavering on the issue of inerrancy began to make this deadly distinction. This is what they would say. They would say the Bible is infallible in its doctrine. That is, it is without error in matters of faith and practice, but the Bible is not inerrant. It is not without error in issues like history, genealogy, cosmology, and science. You see the dichotomy they were making? They're seeking to make themselves more comfortable in a science-driven world, and so they don't want to give up the Bible entirely, so they say the doctrines are true, but when the Bible starts speaking about science issues, well, it's just stuck in an ancient way of thinking, and it's not without error on those issues.

Now, to respond to this idea, a prominent group of evangelical leaders at that time created what was called the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, and out of that movement came the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. I knew and met a couple of men who served on that council. One of them was John MacArthur. In it, leading evangelicals formulated again what both Scripture and church history have historically taught about this issue. They answered all the issues that have been raised, and for a time, honestly, the issue of inerrancy was put to rest. But tragically, in our times, the issue has risen again, and I think may well become a defining issue among the church in the next 10 to 20 years. Stay tuned, but I think that could easily happen. There's even been some discussion of reviving the Council on Biblical Inerrancy because of that. If you want to read that document in its entirety, it's out there on the internet. You can find it. I'm going to quote it a couple of times before we're done tonight. So that's why we need to talk about this issue.

You live in a time when people in your world who call themselves Christians will say what I just shared with you. They'll say, well, yeah, the Bible's right in what it teaches about salvation, but it's not right in what it teaches about origins or what it teaches about science. Why is that a problem? Well, let's back up then and consider the arguments for inerrancy.

There are actually two lines of argument for biblical inerrancy. I want to start with a historical argument. I want to show you this is what the church has historically believed. And then I want to show you why the church has historically believed it by looking at the biblical argument. So we're going to start with the historical argument. Let me show you, this is exactly what the

church has taught. And then I'm going to show you why Christians for 2,000 years have landed here.

All right, let's begin with Greg Allison. In his book, "Historical Theology," where he's simply reviewing what the church has believed about all these various theological issues, he writes this. "The church has historically acknowledged that Scripture in its original manuscripts and properly interpreted is completely true and without any error in anything or in everything rather that it affirms whether that has to do with doctrine, moral conduct, or matters of history, cosmology, geography, and the like. Over time, the church has expressed this conviction by applying a number of terms to the Bible such as truthful, inerrant, and infallible. No matter what term you use, the church from its outset was united in its belief that the Word of God is true and contains no error."

The first significant challenge to this belief did not arise until the 17th century. Now, let me give you some examples. Here's Clement of Rome. These are some of the early church fathers. First 400 years of the church. "You have searched the Scriptures, which are true. You know that nothing unrighteous or counterfeit is written within them", nothing. Irenaeus. "The Scriptures are indeed perfect." Now, the early church fathers understood the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture in two ways. First of all, they understood it to be teaching that what Scripture affirms always corresponds to reality. Whatever Scripture says that's the reality. Tertullian. "The statements of holy Scripture will never be discordant with truth." Augustine. "I have learned to ascribe to those books which are of canonical rank, the canon, and only to them such reverence and honor that I firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any one of them." Couldn't be any clearer. This is what the early church taught. So Scripture affirms what Scripture affirms always corresponds to reality.

That's the first way they understood this whole concept. The second way that they understood it is that Scripture doesn't contradict Scripture. So not only does it confirm to reality, conform to reality, but you won't find one part of Scripture contradicting another part of Scripture. Again, Irenaeus. He says, "All Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent." Justin Martyr, "I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts

another.” Justin Martyr was a disciple of John the Apostle. Athanasius. “It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree or the God who gave them is false.”

But there is no disagreement at all. Far from it. Neither can the Father who is truth lie, for it is impossible that God should lie. Martin Luther, in commenting on the same point, says, “Everyone indeed knows that at times they, that is the early church fathers, have erred as men will. Therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred.” The Westminster Confession of Faith calls the Scripture the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Infallible. It speaks of the entire perfection of Scripture and the consent of all its parts. In other words, it doesn't contradict itself. It all agrees.

I mentioned the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. In October of 1978, 334 evangelical leaders gathered to articulate this statement. Here is a part of the summary statement. “Being holy and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.” Do you see what they're saying? They're saying, look, you can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't say it's right on what it teaches about salvation, but not on what it teaches about these other things. They're saying, no, it is without fault in everything it addresses, including who it claims wrote a given book.

For example, Article 12 of this same document says this, “We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.”

Now, understand this. What those 334 men were doing on the Council on Biblical Inerrancy was not coming up with some new teaching. They were merely reaffirming what has been taught through the history of the church, as I just showed you with the other quotes. And those could be multiplied, by the way. In fact, from the beginning, the church has understood the devastating effects, if there's as much as a single mistake in the Scripture. Here's how Augustine put it. He said, “It seems to me that most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that

anything false is found in the sacred books. That is to say that the men by whom the Scriptures have been given to us and committed to writing did put down in these books anything false.” Now watch what he says here. “For if you once admit into such a high sanctuary of authority one false statement, there will not be left a single sentence of those books which, if appearing to anyone difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away.” You see what he's saying? Once you admit to a single error, you have no trustworthy book. The church understood this. If any part is an error, then any part may be an error. We have no way to be sure.

By the way, Augustine's confidence in the truthfulness of all Scripture, listen to this, Augustine, 400s AD., his confidence in the truthfulness of all Scripture included, if you read his writings, creation ex nihilo, creation out of nothing, the creation of humanity no more than 6,000 years before his time, the long lifespans before the flood, and a worldwide flood. He believed all of those things because that's what the Scripture teaches. Allison concludes, “Clearly, he believed that biblical inerrancy extended to matters of cosmology and human origins.” John MacArthur, in “Biblical Doctrine,” writes this, “How can one be sure that God can rightly convey to man spiritual truths concerning matters of faith and practice if he cannot guarantee the facts of history are rightly recorded? If one affirms that the Bible is free from error in leading man to a right knowledge of God in salvation, then what prevents him from equally securing truthfulness of the rest? If God is able to keep the writers free from error at all, such as in writing spiritual truths, then there are no reasonable grounds to conclude that he was unable to secure a factual account of scientific and historical records.” So don't buy that story that circulates, that idea that you can sort of bifurcate the Scriptures, and you got spiritual truth and saving doctrine on one side, and you got all the scientific stuff over here. And since that doesn't agree with current scientific thought, we can just say, well, the Bible didn't intend for those to be accurate.

That doesn't pass the smell test of history, and it doesn't pass the smell test of Scripture. In fact, until the last couple of hundred years, no one, or I shouldn't say no one, but few in church history seriously questioned the inerrancy of Scripture. So how did all the great minds in the history of the church come to understand this truth that I've shared with you? From the claims of Scripture itself, and from the statements of our Lord. So let's look secondly then at the arguments for inerrancy. Let's start with the claims of the Scripture about itself.

We believe the Bible to be inerrant, without error in any way because of what the Scripture teaches about itself. Go back to Deuteronomy 13. We looked at this last time as we were thinking about the canon, but I just want to remind you of what Moses writes here. When he's talking about affirming who speaks for God, you'll remember here he says that it may be, verse one, that "If a prophet or dreamer of dreams arises and gives you a sign or wonder, and it comes true, but what he said when he was doing this miracle was, let's go after other gods and let's serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul." Serve Him, love Him, keep His commandments, listen to His voice, cling to Him. And he goes on to say, in the next verse, that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he's counseled rebellion. So in other words, it doesn't matter if a guy can perform miracles, if his message is out of sync with previous revelation, then he's not a false prophet. He's not a true prophet, he's a false prophet.

Go over to chapter 18. Chapter 18:21, "How can you know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken." In other words, here's how you can know if someone's truly speaking for God. What he says always is right. It always comes true. And if it isn't always right, and it isn't always true, he's not a prophet. So the Scripture itself undermines this whole idea that there can be errors in the writings of those claiming to speak on behalf of God. The mark of a true prophet with a truly divine message is total truthfulness without a hint of error or falsehood.

Second Samuel 7:28. "Now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are [what?] truth." Is this book the words of God? That's what Jesus said. So can the words of God not be true? Psalm 12:6. "The words of Yahweh are pure words. As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times." No way to say in that culture it's perfectly pure than that. Perfectly right. Psalm 119:160. "The sum of your Word is truth, and every one of your righteous ordinances is everlasting." Do you notice the two different ways he says it here? On the one hand, it's a claim for the truthfulness of the entirety of the Scripture. The sum of your Word is truth. But it's also a claim for the truthfulness of every single statement in Scripture. Every one of your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

Second Timothy, chapter two, verse 15. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed.” And when you're dealing with the Scripture, what are you dealing with? You're accurately handling the Word of truth. Looking at it as a whole, it is the Word of truth, the Word which communicates God's truth. Second Timothy 3:16. If all Scripture is from the breath of God, remember all Scripture is the product of the breath of God. It's God breathed. If that's true, then it must be without error. Why? Because that's who God is. Numbers 23:19. “God is not a man that He should lie.” The product of God's breath is never false. Hebrews 6:18. “It is impossible for God to lie.” And you know, the Scripture has about it, this self-affirming quality. You know, it's like Piper says, you know, you don't have to argue that sugar is sweet. You taste sugar and you just know it's sweet.

In a very real sense, God has so created His Word that it's like that. In fact, if you're interested, I would recommend this book to you. It's one of the, I think one of the best books John Piper ever wrote. It's called “A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness.” It actually talks about Scripture's internal witness to itself. It affirms its truthfulness in every line and every page as you see it interrelated and interconnect. So I would strongly recommend that book to you. So when you look, here's my point, when you look at the claims that Scripture makes about itself, you see this reality affirmed of it being truly without error.

But let's move on to a second line of argument, and that is the statements of our Lord, the statements of our Lord. Wordsworth, Bishop Wordsworth in B.B. Warfield's book puts it this way, “The New Testament canonizes the old. The incarnate Word, Jesus, sets His seal on the written Word. The incarnate Word is God.” Now follow his line of thinking here. “Jesus affirms the Old Testament. Jesus is God. Therefore, the inspiration of the Old Testament is authenticated by God Himself.” You follow his line of argument? Jesus is God. Jesus says the Old Testament is the very words of God. So we have God's own testimony from His Son that it is His Word.

Jesus exclusively used the Hebrew canon in Scripture. He rejected Jewish tradition, Mark 7. He said, I'm not going to have anything to do with your traditions. He rejected the Apocrypha, as I said, although it was part of the Septuagint, the Greek translation he often used. He never once quoted from the Apocrypha. But Jesus quoted directly from these Old Testament books, Genesis,

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zechariah, and Malachi. He quoted from every one of those books. In addition, he refers by name to a number of historical figures in the pages of the Old Testament. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Naaman, Jonah, and Zechariah. He refers to Old Testament places. He refers to Old Testament institutions. He refers to Old Testament ceremonies. But I want to take you to an interesting passage. Turn with me to Luke. Luke chapter 11, and verse 50. Let's go, let's start back at verse 49. "For this reason also, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill, and some of them they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation.'" Now watch how he describes this run of prophets. Verse 51, "From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God. Yes, I will tell you, it will be charged against this generation."

Now that is a fascinating statement, because the Hebrew canon, our canon goes from Genesis to Malachi, right? And you probably memorize the books at some point in your Christian life. That's our order of the canon. Genesis to Malachi, Old Testament canon. But the Hebrew canon is arranged in a threefold division. The Law, the Prophets, so the five books of Moses, the Prophets, and then a section called the Writings. Now the story of Abel, Jesus mentions here, occurs where? Early in the first book of the Hebrew canon, Genesis 4:8. The story of Zachariah that Jesus mentions in this text, occurs at the end of the last book in the Hebrew canon, 2 Chronicles 24, verses 20 and 21. So in Luke 11:51, think about this. We learn that Jesus used and validated the Hebrew canon. It's the same content as what we call the Old Testament, but the books in our Old Testament follow the order of the Septuagint, not the order of the Hebrew canon. But Jesus here does. And he describes the whole of Old Testament history from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, which was the first book of the Hebrew canon to the last book of the Hebrew canon. If we put it in our terms, from Genesis to Malachi.

Robert Leitner writes this. He says, "The gospel records bear testimony to the fact that Christ quoted solely from the Scriptures, sometimes from the Septuagint or Greek translation. His canon of Scripture was identical with the Hebrew canon, and He declared himself in complete agreement with its bounds, or its content. By referring to it as law, prophets, and psalms, He referred to it as the Scripture." So Jesus Himself affirms that canon.

He also referred to the Old Testament as the commandment of God. Look at Mark. Stay with me, because He's going to, this is all going to wrap together in a moment. Look at Mark chapter seven. Mark seven, verse eight. He says, "You neglect the commandment of God and hold to the traditions of men." He was also saying to them, you are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. Jesus was saying that the Old Testament can be referred to as the commandment of God. Notice in verse 13, He says, "Thus, you invalidate the Word of God by your tradition which you have handed down." So He calls the Old Testament the Word of God.

In addition to that, in Mark 12, verse 36, turn over there for a moment. Mark 12, verse 36, start at verse 35, "Jesus began to say as He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is the Son of David?'" Now watch what Jesus says about the Old Testament. "'David himself said, in the Holy Spirit.'" Or by the Holy Spirit is another possible translation. And then He quotes that famous text from Psalm 110, verse 1. So Jesus says of the Old Testament, it is the commandment of God, it is the Word of God, it is the product of the Holy Spirit.

Now with that in mind, watch what Jesus says about the Scripture. Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live on bread alone." He's quoting Deuteronomy here obviously in The Temptation. But He says instead, "man shall live on [watch this, every what?] word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. So what is Jesus affirming? He's affirming the words of the Old Testament. We just saw He's affirming that as that which proceeds out of the mouth of God. John 10:35, Jesus says the Scripture cannot be broken.

Those of you who dabbled in Greek a bit, the word broken here is *luo*, the verb you use to decline the different Greek verbs, forms of Greek verbs. It's the same verb that Matthew uses back in chapter five, to annul, to abolish, to repeal. The Word of God can't be repealed, annulled, abolished. The Scripture cannot be. Here's the essence of Jesus' argument. Psalms, where He's quoting from, belongs to the body of inspired books we call the Scripture. Therefore, what Psalm 82:6 says is true, and is Scripture. And all of Scripture generally, and particularly this verse, possesses such an absolute authority that it cannot be broken. B.B. Warfield says, It is impossible for the Scripture to be annulled. Its authority withstood or denied. This is what Jesus is saying about the Old Testament and its entire content. It can't be broken. It's like a chain made up of

links, and you can't break a single link. John 17:17 is high priestly prayer. Jesus says of God's Word, "Your Word is truth." No room for error in it.

Turn over to Matthew 22. Matthew 22 verse 32. Let's start at verse 31 to get the flow. "Regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was written to you by God? [Now again, Moses wrote it, but it was spoken to you by God.] I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the living." Now that's a fascinating statement. 400 years to 500 years after Abraham died, God said, I am the God of Abraham. Jesus was willing to prove the future resurrection and the continuing existence of those who died from Exodus 3.6 by arguing what? By arguing the present tense of the verb to be, because God didn't say, I was, but I am the God. What is Jesus doing? He's arguing a theological point, the resurrection from the Pentateuch on the basis of the tense of a Hebrew verb. This is what Jesus believed about the Scripture. He believed the tense of that verb was so right, so true, so without error, that He could argue for the future resurrection based on the tense of that verb.

Look at Matthew 22, verse 43. Again, let's get a running start. Look at verse 41. "Now, while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question. What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He? They said to him, the Son of David. He said to them, then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord? Saying, the Lord said to My Lord, sit at My right hand until I put your enemies beneath your feet. If David then calls Him Lord, how is He His Son?" Jesus here is quoting Psalm 110, verse one. And He builds his case. Think about this. Jesus builds the case for the deity of the Messiah on one Hebrew word, My, He's My Lord. You get the point here? Jesus' confidence in the Scriptures was that it was perfect down to the verb tense, down to a personal pronoun. And He argued doctrine based on such details.

Now turn back to Matthew 5:18. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law [now notice the end of this verse] until all is accomplished." Jesus says it's easier for the universe as we know it to be completely destroyed than for the smallest Hebrew letter, even the small stroke added to a letter to differentiate it from another. It's easier for the universe to pass away than the smallest stroke to pass away before all is accomplished. In fact, notice what Jesus says, "until all is accomplished." The Greek word for accomplished is different than the word fulfilled in verse 17. Literally, it means to happen or to

come to pass. So Jesus says it's easier for the universe to be destroyed than for anything that's written in the Scripture down to a pen stroke to fail to happen. Jesus was emphasizing its utter trustworthiness, its utter truthfulness, its certainty. Whatever it says is so true that it absolutely will happen. John Broadus writes, "The things predicted in the law must all occur. The entire substance foreshadowed by any ceremony must have come into existence. The civil regulations must continue to serve as the basis of much legislation. The moral precepts must be obeyed by every new generation, not till all this has taken place shall the least particle of the law be annulled."

Jesus believed in inerrant Scripture, down to its pen strokes, down to the tense of its verbs, down to the personal pronouns that were used. And that's what He expects of you, men. If you're going to be His disciple, you have to have the same view of Scripture that He has. He's your teacher. John 13:13, "You call me Teacher and Lord," you call me *didaskalos* and *kurios*, and He says, "and you are right, for so I am." If you are His slave, if you are His disciple, His student, His learner, then you need to learn your view of Scripture from Him. This is what Jesus believed about the Scripture. He believed it was inerrant. And that's why the great minds through the history of the church have believed it's an errant, and it's why you should.

Since I've been at Countryside, there was a prominent professor, a prominent Greek professor at Dallas Theological Seminary who stood up in his classroom and said to his students, "If you're going to try in your ministry to defend the traditional doctrine of inerrancy, then you need to be prepared to be disappointed." That's what he's teaching his students. In reality, it's his own view that is out of step with both historic Christian thought and the clear statements of Scripture and of our Lord.

This is the view Jesus held, and it's the view that we must hold. Men, you can have confidence in the Scriptures you hold. It's completely trustworthy in every detail. We have it on the authority of our Lord Himself. The Scripture you hold has eternal authority, verbal and plenary inspiration, and complete inerrancy. You can embrace it as true.

Now, if you want to read more on this issue, a couple of resources I would recommend. A classic is B.B. Warfield's book, "The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible." But a very readable book that will help you and challenge you if that's too heavy sledding for you is a book by Robert

Leitner called “A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy.” Those are great books that will help inform you further on this issue. If you have a good systematic theology, like we carry the Biblical Doctrines book down in our bookstore; carry it in our library, you can get that. Read through the section on the Scripture and specifically on inerrancy, and it will deepen your confidence in this issue.

But men, it really comes down to this. What did Jesus believe and teach about the Scripture, and what did He expect us to believe about the Scripture? That's what you need to believe. That's where you need to be. And you stand on a great authority when you do so. Far better than any authority that would tell you, you can't.

I want to take this next block of time to deal with the preservation of Scripture. We need to remember that our Bibles were constructed in several phases. To begin with, you have the original, what are called the original autographs. By that, we mean the original manuscripts of Scripture, the original animal skins on which Moses wrote in the 1400s BC. Or the pieces of papyrus in the first century AD in which Paul's amanuensis wrote the words that Paul dictated to him and which Paul signed with his own hand. Talking about those original documents as they were written by the hand of the biblical prophet or author or as they were dictated by the Apostle Paul. The original autographs.

Now, let me just remind you of the Bible's history. It was written over 1,500 years. From 1445 BC., the first books penned by Moses at the time of the Exodus, to 95 AD. John the Apostle was the last Apostle to die, and he wrote Revelation in the mid-90s AD. And so you have a span then of about 1,500 years over which these books in our Bible were written. They were written by over 40 different authors in our Bible, the way they're enumerated, is 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New.

The process of the Bible, the Bible was originally written in three languages. The bulk of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Half of Daniel and a couple of parts of Ezra were written in Aramaic, and then the New Testament was written entirely in Greek. Those original documents we're talking about, the autographs, those were written in those languages. And the original documents were written on papyrus in New Testament times. That's the papyrus reed from the bank of the rivers, particularly the Nile. They would take the papyrus reed, they would split it

into these thin strips, and then they would overlay them with each other and press it, and that would create a very thin writing surface that was used essentially as their paper. The other writing material was parchment, also called vellum, which is writing material made from thinned animal skin. That's what the original documents were written on.

However, here's the key. None of those original autographs exist today. We don't have the piece of papyrus that Paul dictated and signed. We don't have that original autograph, that original document. Instead, copies of those originals were meticulously made, and then copies of the copies and copies of the copies and so forth. That's the process. So to kind of illustrate it for you, this is what the manuscript process looked like. You have the original autographs, the original manuscripts. Then manuscript copies were made in the original language. Thousands of manuscript copies were made.

I mean, think about it. Let's transport our church back for a moment to the first century. We're the church in Ephesus. We get a letter from the Apostle Paul. It's really a letter from the Apostle Paul. What are we going to do with that? Well, I'm going to read that to the congregation when we gather on Sunday for worship. But other churches in Dallas here, the Apostle Paul, wrote us a letter. It's clearly his writing. What are they going to want? Well, we might not want to let go of it, but we can say, look, you send some guys over here, and during the week, your guys can make handwritten copies of that letter from the Apostle Paul that you can now read and share in your churches. And then, so that happens here in Dallas, and churches in the surrounding area, the larger area around us, over in Weatherford and over in East, they start, Tyler, they start sending from their churches representatives to copy not our letters anymore, but the letters from the other churches that borrowed it from us. And they're making their copies. And pretty soon, you've got all these copies of that letter around everywhere. That was the, that's the way the process worked.

Archaeologists have recovered thousands of these carefully made copies that were made and circulated among the churches in the Christian communities. Linguistic scholars pulled together all of the existing manuscripts then, carefully compare them, noting the likely original text and all the variations. This process is called lower textual criticism. Now, from their careful work then, a definitive Hebrew and Greek text is created, including all the possible variations in the footnote apparatus. And from these definitive texts in Hebrew and Greek, created by comparing

all of the manuscript and variations, other scholars create a translation in a different language, again, carefully including the variant readings in the marginal notes.

That's the process by which the Bible has come down to us. So, the question is, how can we be sure that God has preserved His Word through that lengthy process? Well, let's start by reminding ourselves that Scripture is clear that God's Word is fixed and settled forever in this way. Psalm 119:89, "Forever, O Lord, your Word is settled [where?] in heaven." God knows what He has said, and He always knows what He has said, and it is forever fixed and settled. Isaiah 40, verse 8, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever." Now, don't misunderstand, those verses and others like them are not in themselves an ironclad promise that God will perfectly preserve His Word on earth. Okay? It's not what I'm saying. However, Jesus, while He doesn't absolutely guarantee the preservation of Scripture, He does clearly imply the divine preservation of Scripture.

Again, look back at Matthew chapter 5, verse 18. I told you Sunday, this text is monumental. Here's another reason. Look at Matthew 5:18, "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." Now, Jesus was referring to more than the truth of Scripture. How do I know that? Because He specifically says that neither the smallest letter or the smallest stroke shall pass away. What does that imply? It implies that God has preserved His Word. How? In written form, and that He would preserve it.

Now remember, in Jesus' day, they no longer had the original autographs. They didn't have the actual scrolls and parchments on which Moses and the rest of the prophets had originally written. All they had were copies of copies that could be traced back to the originals. Yet, Jesus constantly referred to those copies as what? Scripture. In fact, let's go one step further. The Bible from which Jesus often quoted was the Septuagint. And it wasn't even a copy of the Hebrew. What was it? It was a translation from Hebrew into Greek. A Greek translation made from those Hebrew copies. Jesus was not saying that God's Word had been preserved in one specific place or translation. But He was clearly implying that God had preserved and would preserve His Word in written form until it was all fulfilled. Not one written letter, not one stroke will pass away. Now,

with that background, let's think for a moment about what we really have when we talk about the Word of God today.

Let's talk about the number of existing manuscripts. We have more manuscript copies of the Bible than any other ancient document. The Old Testament, we have 3,000 manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament. We have 1500 of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. It's huge. The New Testament, we have 25,000 manuscripts. By the way, the second largest number of manuscripts for an ancient document is Homer's Iliad, with 643 manuscripts. Anybody here study Homer's Iliad in school? Yeah, a few of you did. I did. Not one professor ever said, you know, we just really can't be sure that's what Homer wrote. 25,000 of them. Those 25,000 manuscripts include more than 5700 Greek manuscripts. By the way, less than 20 each manuscripts survive of most classical Greek and Roman works that, again, if you studied in college, less than 20 of them exist. We have over 5700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. We have over 19,000 early translation manuscripts. Translations were made from Greek into Latin, into Syriac, into Coptic, and those translations, we have over 19,000 manuscripts that date back to that.

We have the quotations of Scripture in the writings of the early church fathers, more than one million quotations of the New Testament in the early church fathers. In fact, just the quotations from the church fathers are extensive enough that we could reconstruct almost the entire New Testament from their quotations. One scholar estimated that if all the copies of the New Testament had been burned at the end of the third century, all the copies of the New Testament had been burned, we would have all the New Testament, except for about 11 verses in the writings of the early church fathers. When we look at the thousands of manuscripts of the Old Testament and the New Testament that have been preserved, we can have confidence that the meaning of the Scripture has been preserved for us. Our English Bibles were translated from a synthesis of those ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

But let's not talk about the number only. Let's talk about the dates of the existing manuscripts that we possess. In addition to the sheer numbers, it is equally impressive how soon after the original documents were written, that our surviving Biblical manuscripts were copied. Again, when you look at other ancient documents, you find that there's often a large gap of time between when the

originals were written and when the surviving manuscripts that we possess today were made. A long gap of time. The Biblical manuscripts date much closer to the original autographs and their events than any other ancient document. For example, I mentioned the Iliad. The time gap between the original writing and the earliest manuscript we possess today is 400 years. So Homer wrote, the manuscript we have today was copied 400 years later. The earliest manuscripts we have of most of the classic Greek and Roman works were copied 700 to 1400 years after the original documents were written. Now think about that. 700 years. Think about from now back 700 years. From now back 1400 years. That's the time gap between when the documents were written and the earliest existing manuscript we possess today.

On the other hand, in the case of the New Testament, we have a fragment of John's gospel. I've actually seen it. It's called the Rylands Papyrus. It dates to about 25 years after John wrote his gospel. We have copies of complete New Testament books within 100 years of the original. And we have complete manuscripts of all the books of the New Testament written within 150 years of the original. Just compare. Again, think about when you were in school. Not one professor who taught Homer's Iliad, or the classic Greek and Roman works, said to you, Oh, listen, we can't be sure that's what they wrote. And yet the Bibles, the manuscripts we possess, we have more of them, and they date much closer to the events than any other ancient document.

A powerful illustration of just how remarkably Scripture has been preserved is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. I've had the chance to be in the cave where they were discovered there in Israel. They were discovered in 1947 in caves at Qumran, near the north end of the Dead Sea. And the centerpiece of that discovery was a complete scroll of Isaiah. This is a picture of it here. It was written in the second century BC. In other words, this scroll of Isaiah, and I got to see it as well in the museum there in Jerusalem. It was written in the second century BC, 100 to 200 years before Christ. Now, when it was discovered in 1947, scholars compared that Isaiah scroll to the Hebrew text that we already had and that was used to translate our Bibles. And what they discovered is that the more recent manuscripts we already had were extremely close to that one that's more than 2000 years old.

For example, if you compare the first chapter of the Isaiah scroll to the Hebrew text from which our Old Testament was translated, there are only 20 minor differences. Not one of those

differences affects the meaning. In fact, not once do the two texts even use a different word. Most of the differences are in spelling, which, you know how that works. The bottom line is this, guys. By every standard that is used with ancient documents, the evidence for the reliability of the biblical documents is completely overwhelming. We have more manuscripts, and the manuscripts we have are closer to the original documents than any other ancient document. If they didn't hate the Bible, no scholar would question its authenticity and reliability. It has been remarkably preserved for us.

This was part of the point that Jesus is making in Matthew 5. I mean, think about it. Jesus often charged the Jews of his time with undermining the meaning of God's Word by their traditions. But never once did He accuse them of having a flawed, corrupted version of the Scripture. In fact, He used the same Hebrew Bible He taught from the same Hebrew scrolls every Sabbath day throughout the land of Israel. He used the same Greek translation that they used, and He called the content of both of them in the gospels the Word of God. The Spirit who revealed the Scripture, the Spirit who breathed out all of it in its entirety down to its smallest letters and strokes has also remarkably preserved it in written form.

Look at 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1, verse 24. Again, let me go back to verse 23. You have been born again. You've experienced the new birth, “not of seed, which is perishable, but imperishable.” What is that imperishable seed? The living and enduring Word of God. (Twenty)-four, “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” And notice the end of verse 25. “And this is the word which was preached to you.” From the copies of the Hebrew scrolls they had, and from the translation made in Greek.

Let me move on to another issue related to the manuscripts that we have, and that is the families of existing manuscripts. When you compare the surviving manuscripts and the minor variations that exist between them, scholars tell us that there are at least four Scripture manuscript families. That is, there are four groups of manuscripts that tend to follow the same minor variations in things like spelling and word order, etc. What are those manuscript families? These are the families, the Alexandrian text, the Western text, the Caesarean text, and the Byzantine text. And the Byzantine text is also sometimes called the majority text, because a majority of the

manuscripts that we possess fall into this group. Now, scholars disagree about which of these groups should be given the greatest weight when deciding between differences, because there are minor differences between these groups of manuscript families. So how do you decide? Because there are slight variations, there are different manuscript philosophies. There have to be guidelines to use in evaluating which manuscripts you think are the most faithful to the originals. Now there are several approaches to this issue.

First of all, the first approach is called the Majority Text approach. This view says that we should always prefer the reading in the largest number of manuscripts. So you got 500 manuscripts. And as you look at the reading of a particular verse, 400 of them say the same thing, and 100 of them say something else. So which reading should you prefer? This view says, well, you ought to prefer the 400, because there are more of them. It's democracy, right? This approach argues that God preserved His Word in the text found in the largest number of manuscripts. Because the largest number of manuscripts is found in the Byzantine or majority family, they believe that this family most accurately represents the original autographs. This is the basic theory on which the King James Bible is built. It's built on what's called the Textus Receptus. I'll explain that in just a moment.

But out of this Majority Text view, there's a bizarre variation that's called the King James only view. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have heard of the King James only view of the Bible? Yeah. It's a bizarre view. Those who take this approach argue that the English translation made in 1611, King James, 1611, is inspired of God. Here's how one King James only person puts it. Peter Ruckman wrote this. "The Holy Ghost honored the English text above any Greek or Hebrew text." By this, he meant that the King James translators were guided more accurately in their translation than those who copied the original manuscripts. There's a group of guys who sort of joined, I think it's out of vogue now, but they joined their voices together in something called the King James Bible Preachers Fellowship, and they described themselves this way, "As men who are unashamed proclaim the King James Bible, AD. 1611, as God's holy perfect Word, God still has a few men who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of scholarship."

Now, just to be clear, I used the term Textus Receptus, "TR." Literally, it means the received text. It's Latin for the received text. It was coined by a couple of brothers in the preface to their second

edition of the Greek New Testament in 1633. A portion of that introduction reads like this in English. “Therefore, you now have the text received by all in which we have nothing changed or corrupted.” In Latin, it reads *textum receptum*. And so from that expression, this was born. Now, the King James version—by the way, the Textus Receptus is a subfamily of the majority text or Byzantine family. Ironically, you know, the King James people say, we believe in the received text. We believe in the majority text. Ironically, there are about 190 differences between the Textus Receptus and the King James version. The King James translators, by the way, did not claim for their work what these King James only people claim. This is from the preface to the original 1611 King James version. And I've left the original spelling in here, just so you can see how spelling varies through the years.

“Therefore, as St. Augustine sayeth, that varietie of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures. [You need a variety of translations.] So, diversitie of signification and sense in the margine where the text is not so cleare must needes doe good, yea, is necessary as we are perswaded.” In other words, they are not claiming for themselves what the King James only people claim for the King James. By the way, the new King James version published by Thomas Nelson is not exactly what it sounds like. It sounds like it's like a new translation from the majority text family of manuscripts. In fact, what ultimately happened was they just changed the English text of the King James by modernizing some archaic words. So, note that that's really what happened.

A second manuscript philosophy is the Thorough Eclectic. You say, what is that? Well, it just is a view that says this: If there are two different readings in manuscripts, always prefer the reading based on your own literary analysis. And I added the word subjective. They wouldn't say that, but clearly this is very subjective. This view is usually that of liberal theologians who reject any consideration of manuscript families, the date of manuscripts, other external evidence. They just concentrate their attention on internal content, and they draw their conclusions based on their own subjective literary analysis of the text. That's not a viable philosophy.

Thirdly, the Westcott-Hort philosophy. This one's very common. This view advocates always preferring the reading that appears in the oldest manuscripts. They say, look, if you have a document, and copies of copies of copies and copies are made through several generations, it's

not the largest number of them that should have the weight, but the oldest, because as you make copies of copies of copies, it's more likely, the farther out you get, your copies are more likely to contain an error, or to add additional things, or whatever. So you want to go back to the oldest copies you have. That's what this argument says. Two linguistic scholars, Westcott and Hort, suggested the Alexandrian family of manuscripts, are the oldest in existence today, and therefore, their reading is to be preferred. They also concluded that external evidence—that is manuscript families—outweigh internal evidence.

And then finally, there's the Balanced Eclectic. This view says, always, if you have two manuscripts, they disagree on a reading, always prefer the reading supported by both internal and external evidence. In other words, look at each textual variant, and investigate it thoroughly, and consider it on both what's in the document and when it was written, what family it belongs to, all of those sorts of things. That is where I would land. I think this Balanced Eclectic approach is best. It gives equal weight to both internal and external evidence. It's an unbiased consideration to the various families of manuscripts without claiming one family is better than another.

Now, you say, wow, Tom, I mean, this doesn't sound very sure. Let's talk about the agreement of the existing manuscripts. Talked about a lot of manuscripts, talked about different families, talked about different readings. That could unsettle you. Textual variations are almost always incidental and don't significantly affect the meaning of the Scripture. Let me give you some examples. There are about 10,000 places in the New Testament with variants. By that, I mean variant readings where manuscripts say different things. 10,000 variants. Say, wow, that's a lot. Well, think about it, though. Most of the differences are in the spelling of the word, are in the word order. In Greek, you can change the word order. And so that's where most of those variations are. In spelling, our word order, zero effect on the meaning. Now, once those easily explained variants are removed, 99% of our Bibles can be fully, totally accepted without any reservation. And among the 1% of potentially significant variations, you need to know not a single doctrine of the historic Orthodox Christian faith is in any way altered or affected by that 1% of variant readings that are somewhat significant, more than spelling, more than word order. And this is really good. Modern translations put all of these significant variant readings in the marginal notes of our English Bibles. You know what that means? The Bible you hold in your

hand, it has marginal notes. Between what's in the text itself and what's in the margin, you can be confident you have the Word of God.

No scholars working in some smoke-filled room have hid the Scripture from you. Between the text you have in the column, or columns, depending on what you have in your Bible, and what you have in the marginal notes, you have all the possibilities for what the Scriptures teach.

Geisler wrote, "We have 100% of the New Testament, and we are sure about 99.5% of it. You can be absolutely confident that between the actual text in your English Bible and the marginal footnotes, you have the inspired Scripture."

Now, before we leave this topic, let me comment on the three primary debated passages. There are three passages in the New Testament that you need to know about. Number one is the ending of Mark, Mark 16:9-20, sometimes called the long ending of Mark. If you want a full version of this, I preached on this text when I ended the Gospel of Mark, you can go listen to it. Or you can listen, John MacArthur did an excellent job when he finished the Gospel of Mark dealing with this text. You can listen to that. But let me just say this to you. This long ending of Mark is probably not authentic. Probably wasn't original. It was added. It could be original, but it's not likely. But here's the deal. Not one thing in the long ending of Mark isn't said somewhere else in Scripture. So it's not an issue. And we know that that passage is questionable. Isn't that nice? You don't have to wonder.

The second passage is John 7:53 through 8:11. The woman taken in adultery; you remember the story. That story, most scholars would agree, is likely an authentic story, but it was not originally in that place in John's Gospel. If you read the verse before, and the verse after that passage, you can see they fit together like hand in glove. And this story doesn't fit. So, it's probably authentic, probably actually happened, probably was written by John, but wasn't in that place in John's Gospel.

The third passage is 1 John 5, verses 7 and 8. Let me just take you there, because this is the most obvious one. 1 John 5. You'll notice, if you look at verse, if you have a NAS with marginal notes, if you look at the marginal note for verse eight, it says this, "A few late manuscripts add, 'there are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one, and there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit,'" et cetera. So a few late manuscripts add that.

That passage that's in the marginal note there is absent from all but four Greek manuscripts. And all four of those Greek manuscripts are dated very, very late. None of the early church fathers quote this passage but think about it. When they were in the Trinitarian debates, if this verse had existed, you don't think they would have used this verse to argue for the Trinity? Of course they would have. It's also absent in all the ancient versions. It's quoted the first time, not in a Bible text, but in a Latin treatise about the Bible in the fourth century AD. But fast forward to the time of the Reformation, apparently Erasmus, the Roman Catholic scholar, was eventually responsible for including this verse in his Greek text. He inserted the passage in his third edition of 1522 of the Greek Testament but indicated in a lengthy footnote his own personal suspicions that the manuscript that he was presented that had this verse had been prepared in order for him to include it. In other words, let me simplify that for you.

What he means is this verse wasn't there, the Catholic Church wanted it there, so they came up conveniently with a manuscript that had evidence of this verse, and he was forced to include it, but he didn't think it was authentic, and neither does anybody else.

But here's the point I want you to get, guys. Look at those three passages. The fact that we know that these three passages are the only primary disputed passages in Scripture is in itself a testimony to the reliability of the text that's been passed down to us. We know what they are. We know where they are. We know this is it. And we know what the variant readings are that have any significance at all. They're all in your Bibles in the marginal notes. You can be absolutely confident, men, that between the actual text and the marginal notes in your English Bible, you have the inspired Scripture. It has been preserved for us.

That brings us to the third category that I want us to look at tonight, and that is the translation of Scripture. There is a need for modern translations. You know, some Christians object to the idea of modern translations. But frankly, unless you read Greek and Hebrew fluently, you have to have a good translation of the Scripture. I read Greek pretty well. I read it most every day of my life. Hebrew, not as well. I need a translation and resources and tools to help me sort it through. So is a translation of the Scripture biblical? The answer is absolutely. Jesus and His apostles used a translation of the Hebrew testament, the Septuagint. They called it the Scripture by using the Septuagint. Jesus and His apostles affirmed—what?—the validity of translations of the Scripture.

In addition, let me say, we need the Scripture to be translated into modern English. Now, most of you don't object to that. But when I was growing up, there was a pushback because people were still primarily using the King James Version. I remember when the New American Standard came out and the NIV rocked the Christian world because a lot of Christians argued, no, we need to stick with what we had for hundreds of years, the King James. Some object, objected because of the beauty of the language of the King James.

But my response to that is, you know, they talk about the thees and the thous and the thines, how elevating that is. Listen, those were ordinary pronouns in Elizabethan English. You spoke to your dog that way. In addition, its old language is frequently misunderstood. You know, I've had people tell me, I grew up with the King James. I grew up with the King James Bible. Didn't have the NIV or NAS until they were published, which was into my Christian life. And some people will say, well, Tom, look, I understand that old language just fine. Well, that's not entirely true. I read a study that said that the NIV—this may have changed by now because of the education level—but at the time I read the study, the NIV was written at a seventh grade English level. The NAS was written at a twelfth grade English level, and the King James was written at a post-graduate level for the average person to grasp and understand. In fact, no less than C.S. Lewis, who taught English literature at Oxford, said this, “We must get away from the Authorized Version if for no other reason, simply because it is so beautiful and so solemn. Beauty exalts, but beauty also lulls. Early associations endear, but they also confuse. Through that biblical solemnity, the transporting or horrifying realities of which the book tells may come to us blunted and disarmed, and we may only sigh with tranquil veneration when we ought to be burning with shame, or struck dumb with terror, or carried out of ourselves by ravishing hopes and adoration.” It's so true. Language changes. And to really grasp its meaning, you need an up-to-date translation. By the way, the New Testament was written not in classical Greek, but in *koina* Greek. *Koina* simply means common, in the common language of the people. And so even the way God chose to bring us the Word of God illustrates the need for translations that connect with people that put it in their language that they understand.

Now, when you think about translation, let me give you the primary translation philosophies. There are translation philosophies. The Bible's been translated in the English in a variety of translations. Which translation of the Bible is best for serious Bible study? Well, you need to

understand the different philosophies. First of all, there's what I would call formal equivalence. That's word for word equivalence as much as possible. You have a Greek word, you try to find an English word that it's equal, as close as you can. There are times when you can't, figures of speech and other things obscure it, but normally, you can go word for word. That's formal equivalence. The King James is based on that. The NASB, the ESV, all are formal equivalence Bibles.

A second philosophy is called dynamic equivalence. This is idea or concept equivalence. In other words, you are not saying, here's the Greek word, what's the closest English word? You're saying, here's the Greek expression. What does that Greek expression, those Greek words, what do they mean in Greek? What are they trying to say in Greek? How does that Greek idea translate into an English idea? Now, let's put that English idea in English words. That's dynamic equivalence.

What's the problem with that? Well, there's a whole lot of interpreting going on there. The translator now isn't translating, he's interpreting. He's saying, this is what it means, and I'm going to make my translation tell you what it means, not what it says. The NIV leans toward dynamic equivalence. The New English Bible, the New Living Translation, they're all dynamic equivalence Bibles.

And then thirdly, there's paraphrase. This is really just not really a translation. It's just the author's interpretation of the original. You have J.B. Phillips translation, The Living Bible, The Message, those are all paraphrases. Now, let me show you what that looks like on a translation continuum. On the one end, on the left there, you have formal equivalence. As you can see, the NAS, this is why we use it, because it is, in our language, in English, it's the closest word for word equivalence that you can get. The ESV is a good translation. If it's all we had, we'd be thrilled to have it, and I would use it. I personally find that the NAS saves me time. I have to explain less, because the NAS is getting closer to the original text. So I would encourage you to seriously consider, at least for a study Bible, the NAS as opposed to the others.

The King James, New King James are certainly toward the end of formal equivalence, but not quite as much so as these others are. Then you have dynamic equivalence, the NIV, the New Living Translation would be on that end. And then on the other end entirely is paraphrase, Phillips, the Message, the Living Bible, and so forth. But again, understand that the farther right

on this line you go, the more decisions the translators are making for you. They are taking what the Scripture says in the original language out of your hands and telling you what it means rather than what it says.

And let me show you what that looks like. Let's take one passage. First Thessalonians 1:2-3. You can see we go down here, and we go further down the spectrum. So let's just read through these. Here's the NAS. "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers, constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father."

If you can read Greek and you go to the Greek Testament, you're going to find that is pretty close to word for word. ESV, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." You can see there's really only one expression there that's different. Instead of constantly bearing in mind, it's remembering and they change the word order. You can see, so they're making a couple of changes. Not bad, still got the meaning, still almost word for word, but a couple of changes.

NIV, "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith." Now watch what he does here. Watch what the translators do. In the NAS, it's "your work of faith." Here, "it's your work produced by faith." In the NAS, in the Greek, it's "labor of love." Here, it's your labor prompted by love. And in the original, it's steadfastness of hope, and the NIV says your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. See what they're doing? They're not just translating, they're interpreting what those phrases mean for you.

Here's The New Living translation. We're moving further away from the word for word. "We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly." Notice the sentence structure changes, the length of the sentences, what constitutes a sentence. "As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ." And then here's Philip's paraphrase. "We are always thankful to God as we pray for you all, for we never forget that your faith has meant solid achievement. Your love has meant hard work, and the hope that you have in our Lord Jesus

Christ means sheer dogged endurance in the life that you live before God, the Father of us all.” You see what happens? This is why you need to choose wisely. Now, I'm not saying you never read any of these. I read all of these from time to time. Just remember what they are.

The further you get down this list, the more they're like commentaries, and the less they're like translations. You don't want a commentary as your Bible. You want a translation, and that's why you gravitate to the top of this list.

I want to consider, as we finish our time, how a high view of Scripture, a view of Scripture like Jesus, that it's inspired, it's inerrant, it's been preserved for us, how that should affect our practical and daily use of Scripture. And we can see this in the life of Jesus. If, like Jesus, you and I have a truly high view of Scripture, then we're going to treat the Bible the way Jesus treated it. And here's how He treated it, and how we should. Number one, He read it all and expected others to read it. Luke 24:27, “Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” How could He do that? Because He read it. As a human, He read it, and He knew it. Matthew (ed: Mark) 12:10, “Have you not even read this Scripture?” May our Lord never have to say that to us. “Have you never read this Scripture? The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone.” He read it, and He clearly expected others to read it.

Secondly, He memorized it, and He used it against temptation. Matthew 4, verses 4, 7, and 10, in response to Satan's temptation, what did Jesus do? He pulled out the sword of the Spirit. It is written. It is written. It is written. Guys, this is how you deal with temptation. I have on my iPhone and my iPad, I have a note of the passages that respond to the kinds of temptations that I face and that we face as men. Little swords of the Spirit that I can draw when I'm tempted in those categories of pride or selfishness or lust or anger, I can pull out that sword and remind myself what God says. That's what Jesus did, and that's what He expects you to do.

Thirdly, He believed it could be understood. Therefore, He studied it and He rebuked others for not understanding it. Luke 2:46, “After three days, His parents found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers.” What was He doing? He's 12 years old. He's listening to the teachers of the law and asking them questions. He's serious as a young man about understanding the

Scripture. Are you? I assume you are. You're here tonight, but I don't want to assume that because sometimes people just show up.

John 17:8, Jesus says, "The words," He's praying to the Father, He says, "The words which you gave me, I've given to My disciples and [notice] they received them." And from those words, what? "They truly understood that I came forth from you, and they believe that you sent me." That's what we're supposed to do with the words, the words in the Scripture. We're to receive them for what they are, the Word of God. We're to seek to understand them, and we're to believe them.

Number four, He obeyed the Scriptures and expects us to as well. John 15:10, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. John 8:21, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the Word of God and do it." He says, you're My, you're My brother. If you hear God's Word and you do it, that's what He expected of Himself. It's what He expects of us. Luke 11:28, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it.

Number five. He taught it as the focus of His ministry, and He demanded that people place themselves under its authority. Again and again, we're told in Mark's Gospel, I won't turn to those passages, that He taught the Scripture, He taught them the Word, He taught them the Word.

Men, this is what Jesus expects from you. We've studied this whole semester; we've studied the Word. So let me just go back and ask you, look at that list, is that you? Do you regularly read the Scripture, all the Scripture? You memorize it? Do you use it against temptation in your life? Those things that keep coming up in your life? Have you found passages that address that issue negatively and positively, and you use those passages when you're in the midst of temptation like Jesus did? Do you really seek to understand, to study the Scripture in order to understand it?

Listen, Jesus would say to you, if you haven't worked hard to understand the Scripture, He would say to you, what's wrong with you? This is God's Word. So, do you obey it? I mean, do you genuinely seek to obey what you know? I mean, none of us perfectly obey the Scriptures. But is it your heart, your desire, your goal, your ambition, your daily work to try to obey the Scripture? Jesus gave Himself to that, and He expects that of you as well.

And then, finally, do you truly place yourself under the authority of Scripture? I want to end with one passage. Turn to Romans chapter 12. This is one of my favorite passages about really this issue. Romans chapter 12, you know where it falls. Paul has spent the first 11 chapters laying out the doctrine of the salvation, the gospel of God, justification by faith alone as the only way to be right with God. And having laid that out beautifully with election and justification and sanctification and all of the issues related to salvation, he comes to chapter 12:1 “Therefore, [in light of all of that, the gospel of God] I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” You know what he says? He says, because of the gospel, because of what you have in Jesus Christ, your body doesn't belong to you. It belongs to Him. And then he says in verse two, “And do not be conformed to this world.” Don't allow the mindset of the age, literally the word “world” is “age.” Don't allow the mindset of the age to push you into its mold. That's the conformed. Instead, be transformed, be metamorphosized by the renewing of your mind.

How does that happen? “So that you may prove what the will of God is.” Not talking about what job you take or what car you buy. He's talking about the will of God in Scripture as it's revealed here. In other words, he's saying, look, not only does your body not belong to you, but your mind doesn't belong to you. You have no right to think what you want to think about anything. Instead, you need to let God's Word change your mind about everything and shape what you think about every issue. That would be my challenge to you as we finish this semester on Scripture. Your mind, man, it doesn't belong to you. You don't have a right to think anything on your own that runs contrary to what God has revealed in His Word. This is what's supposed to shape your mind. You're thinking about everything just like it did with our Lord. May the Lord give us grace to live like that.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the incredible confidence we can have in your Word. Thank you for the fact that our Lord so clearly confirmed it as your Word, that we can rest in confidence in it. Lord, as we continue to learn about this, even on Sunday mornings as we walk our way through Matthew chapter 5, Lord, shape our minds to be His mind. May we think about the Scripture the way He thinks about the Scripture, and may we obey it as He does.

Father, I thank you for these men. And thank you for their willingness to be here tonight and to be here all semester, to walk through these great truths. Lord, use your Word. Don't let it return to you void, but let it accomplish in every heart what you intend to accomplish, because your Word is alive, and it's powerful, and it's sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to our very hearts and souls, dividing in ways that nothing else can. Father, use your Word powerfully in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.