

TTS Scripture – Session Twelve: On the Bible

Welcome to TTS!

- Many thanks for coming!
 - **Coming Up: “A Kingdom People of Word & Spirit”**
 - Sun July 1st: Foundations – Church P1/3
 - Sun July 8th: Scripture – continuing with 2 Tim 4
 - Sun July 15th: Foundations – Church P2/3
 - Sun July 22nd: Foundations – Church P3/3
 - SUMMER BREAK
 - **REMEMBER:**
 - Lean on the website!
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[1] Intro / Recap

DISCUSS: What do we remember from Foundations last week?

[1A] The Impossibility of All Theology:

- **How can creaturely language describe the Creator?**
 - Apophaticism – the *via negativa*.
 - “[God is] free from every limitation and beyond them all” [Pseudo-Dionysius – *The Mystical Theology* V]
- **BUT – God’s in the business of speaking about God.**
 - “Why then look for something when you have comprehended the incomprehensibility of what you are looking for[?] ... It is sought in order to be found all the more delightfully, and it is found in order to be sought all the more avidly” [De Trinitate XV Prologue]
 - God thereby makes the impossible task, possible.
- This is where our theology of Scripture must begin:
 - ***With the impossibility of all theology, only made possible because of God’s free, gracious self-revelation through the Word.***

[1B] How Ought We To Approach Scripture?

- **How did Jesus approach Scripture?**
 - As authoritative, final, sufficient, alive, divine and human.
 - As something to be cherished, memorised, used, engaged with, and applied.
 - *“The Scriptures cannot be broken”* [John 10:35]
- **How did the Apostles approach Scripture?**
 - According to Peter:
 - **LOOK:** 2 Pet 3:1-2 – includes apostolic works.
 - **LOOK:** 2 Pet 1:20-21 – divine + human inspiration.
 - According to Paul:
 - **LOOK:** 2 Tim 3:14-17 (re: *Sola Scriptura*)
 - *Theopneustos* – supremely authoritative.
 - *Exartizō* – supremely sufficient.
- **Correlates with how the confessions describe Scripture.**
 - Authority / Necessity / Sufficiency / Perspicuity.
 - **And we added – kindness.**

LOOK: Ps 84

→ [[LIVING BREATH + PRAYER]] ←

[2] How Ought We To Receive Scripture?

BUT NOTE:

*“As for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, **knowing from whom you learned it**, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”* [2 Tim 3:14-15]

- **Our theology of Scripture must connect with two doctrines:**
 - Pneumatology – school of the HS, inspiration etc.
 - Ecclesiology –
 - *“[The] Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth”* [1 Tim 3:15]
 - “For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church” [Augustine – *Contra Epistolam Manichaei* V.6]
 - “The authority of the Church is an introduction through which we are prepared for faith in the Gospel” [Calvin Inst. I.VII.3]

The people of God are a people of the Word – you cannot receive the Scriptures without having received from the Church.

- The ultimate proof of this is in your hands.
 - **DISCUSS:** What do you know about the canon, in general?
 - (Re: DVC – fax machine from heaven!)
 - **DISCUSS:** Why do you think it might be important?
 - (1) Church history is a good thing.
 - (2) Shines a spotlight on the ‘enginery’ of three key doctrines – pneumatology, ecclesiology, and scripture.

[2A] The Old Testament Canon

- **DISCUSS:** What do you know about the OT canon, specifically?
 - Different terms employed:
 - ἀπόκρυφος [*apokryphos* obscure] – from verb to hide.
 - Deutero-Canonical – from *deutero*, or ‘second’.
 - Protestants have 39 books, but other traditions differ:
 - Found in RC, Greek and Slavonic Bibles – Tobit / Judith / Additions to Esther / Wisdom of Solomon / Ecclesiasticus / Baruch / Letter to Jeremiah / Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon) / 1 & 2 Maccabees.
 - Found in Greek and Slavonic Bibles – 1 Esdras / Prayer of Manasseh / Ps 151 / 3 Maccabees / 2 Esdras.
 - In Appendix to Greek Bible – 4 Maccabees.
- **The OT Canon is a Complex Issue:**
 - **LOOK:** Jude 1:14-15 – from Book of Enoch.
 - Clement of Rome quotes from Judith [*First Epistle LV*]
 - Polycarp quoted from Tobit [*Epistle to Philipppians X*]
 - For each book there’s a history.
 - There’s also lots left unsaid in the historical record.
- **Does this mean we should regard the DC as inspired?**
 - (1) Jesus never used the DC, nor the apostles besides Jude.
 - Even Jude’s use is similar to Paul in Acts 17.
 - (2) The Jewish community was broadly opposed to the DC.
 - The Tanakh (e.g. *Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim*) has 24 books, matching our 39, with minor prophets as one.
 - Josephus has 22 books, possibly with Ruth in Judges and Lamentations in Jeremiah [*Against Apion I.41*].

- The Qumran community held the Tanakh as immutable until prophets and Messiah [1 QS 9.11].
- (3) The DC texts themselves sometimes seem to dispute it.
 - The 24-book limit – 2 Esdras 14:45-46.
 - The ceasing of the prophets – 1 Macc 9:27, 2 Bar 85.
- (4) The DC texts contain unbecoming internal errors.
 - Cf. Whitaker's *Disputations on Holy Scripture*.
- (5) The earliest patristic statements differed on the DC.
 - The Byrennios List [c. 100AD] excludes all but 1 Esdras.
 - The canon of Melito of Sardis [c. 180AD] excludes all but Wisdom and Esdras.
- (6) Many later, major patristic figures also differed.
 - Athanasius rejected all but Baruch.
 - Jerome rejected Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, and Tobit.
 - Synod of Carthage [397AD] rejected all but Tobit, Judith, 1&2 Esdras, and 1&2 Maccabees.
- **However, this is no reason to dismiss them entirely:**
 - "There are other books besides these not indeed included in the canon, but appointed by the fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness" [Athanasius – *Festal Letter XXXIX*]
 - "The books of the Apocrypha, as Jerome says, are read by the Church for examples of life and instruction in behaviour, but the church does not use them to establish any doctrine" [39 Articles VI]

[2B] The New Testament Canon

- **We have nothing quite so complex with the NT:**
 - From the 2nd Cent, Irenaeus spoke of the 'four-fold Gospel'.
 - Muratorian Fragment [c170AD] – almost identical.
 - As for rest of NT:
 - Pauline texts were almost universally acknowledged.
 - Some debate over 1 Clement and Shepherd.
 - Some lingering debate over Hebrews, 1 + 2 Pet, Rev.
- **What was the Church's criteria? Bruce Metzger:**
 - (1) The *regula fidei* – the rule of faith.
 - Received, catholic orthodoxy. (E.g. Incarnation.)
 - (2) Apostolicity. (Re: Shepherd.)
 - Or association with – e.g. Mark and Luke.
 - (3) Wide acceptance and use.
 - "This was, of course, based on the principle that a book that had enjoyed acceptance by many churches over a long period of time was in a stronger

position than one accepted by only a few churches, and then only recently” [*The Canon of the NT*, p. 253]

- **BUT the remarkable thing is the eerie consensus...**
 - **LOOK:** John 14:26
 - “The fact that the NT writings were preserved is itself a testimony to the *de facto* canonical authority which they exercised more or less from the first. In short, the NT canon was not so much decreed as *acknowledged*. The NT writings were hailed as canonical in recognition of the authority they had been exercising from the first and in steadily widening circles since then. It is not the church that determines the gospel, but the gospel which determines the church” [Dunn]

[2C] On the Roman Catholic Objection

- **BUT Dunn’s quote hints at an important objection.**
 - A collection of authoritative of books – OR an authoritative collection of books?
 - RC’s – the canon is the undoing of *Sola Scriptura*.
- **DISCUSS:** how would we reply?
 - (1) The HS is Lord of the Church.
 - Once again – we need a healthy ecclesiology here.
 - Without a magisterial, catholic Church, the canon is impossible.
 - “For among the many excellent gifts with which God has adorned the human race, it is a singular privilege that he deigns to consecrate to himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that his voice may resound in them. ... Many are led either by pride, dislike, or rivalry to the conviction that they can profit enough from a private reading and meditation; hence they despise public assemblies and deem preaching superfluous. ... This is like blotting out the face of God which shines upon us in teaching” [Inst. IV.I.V]
 - (2) Scripture validates (and goes before) the act of canon.
 - E.g. John 14, 2 Pet 3.
 - (3) We’re not atheists, so the canon ‘isn’t NOT’ theological.
 - The theological premise, “*Thus saith the Lord*” (which is the essence of SS), still theo/logically precedes the historical fact of the canon.
 - (4) The RCC still suffers from the same ‘flaw’.
 - I.e. how do we know about a magisterium?

[2D] So what IS the relationship of Scripture to the Church?

- **DISCUSS:** What do you think?
 - I.e. we receive the Scriptures through the Church, but is the Church a guardian? A master? A teacher? Etc.
- **There's a helpful thought experiment here:**
 - **DISCUSS:** Can you disagree with Scripture?
 - Why not? (Obvious but work with me here!)
 - **DISCUSS:** Can you disagree with the Nicene Creed?
 - “Yes!” – then heresy is ok?
 - “No!” – then is it infallible?
 - The *quia* (because)/ *quatenus* (insofar as) distinction.
- **LOOK:** Eph 2:19-20 – **the Church is built upon Scripture.**
 - *Theologia reformata et semper reformanda usque ad finem:*
 - ‘Theology reformed + always reforming until the end’
 - The Ineffable One makes himself effable by the Word.
 - The Church’s task is to reform herself in accordance.
 - She confesses the faith perpetually, each generation.
 - Confessions are useful – *sed solus quatenus sunt scripturis*. (But only insofar as they’re of Scripture!)
 - On this, see Karl Barth:
 - “Under the Word and therefore under Holy Scripture the Church does have and exercise genuine authority. It has exercises it by being obedient, concretely obedient, by claiming for itself not a direct, but only a mediate authority, not a material but a formal, not an absolute but a relative. It has and exercises it by refraining from any direct appeal to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in support of its words and attitudes and decisions, by not trying to speak out as though it were infallible and final, but by subordinating itself to JC and the Holy Spirit in the form in which JC and the HS is actually present and gracious to it, that is, in his attestation by the prophets and apostles... Therefore, it has and exercises it in the concrete humility which consists in the recognition that in the Holy Scripture it has over it everywhere and always and in every respect its Lord and Judge: in the incompleteness of its own knowing and acting and speaking which that involves, in the openness to reformation through the Word of God which constantly confronts it in Holy Scripture” [Barth – CD I/2, §20 p. 586]

[3] How Ought We To Use Scripture?**LOOK:** Ps 119:25-40**DISCUSS:** How ought we to use Scripture? How should we handle it?*“Listen, and hear my voice; pay attention, and hear my speech”*

[Isa 28:23]

God has spoken. What do we do with that?

We pay attention, and in three ways. (In keeping with the metaphor!)

[3A] FIRST: we pay attention to his voice.

- **LOOK:** Gal 4:21-26
 - **DISCUSS:** What is Paul doing here?
 - “[Our] competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” [2 Cor 3:5-6]
- **Rightly handling the Word of Truth involves being attentive to his voice – i.e. to the various ‘senses’ of Scripture.**
 - This was common in the ancient and pre-modern Church:
 - “Nevertheless, as we began to say, we think that the way that seems to us right for understanding the Scriptures and seeking their meaning is such that we are taught what sort of understanding we should have of it by no less than Scripture itself. ... Therefore, a person ought to describe threefold in his soul the meaning of the divine letters, that is, so that the simple may be edified by, so to speak, the **body** of the Scriptures; for what is what we call the ordinary and narrative meaning. But if any have begun to make some progress and can contemplate something more fully, they should be edified by the **soul** of Scripture. And those who are perfect are [those who are] edified by that spiritual law which has a shadow of the good things to come, edified as by the **spirit** of Scripture. Thus, just as a human being is said to be made up of body, soul, and spirit, so also is sacred Scripture, which has been granted by God’s gracious dispensation for man’s salvation” [Origen – *De Principiis* IV.II.4]
 - “This is what happens to those who earnestly and piously, not proudly and wickedly, seek the sense of the Scriptures. To them is carefully demonstrated the order of events, the reasons for deeds and words, and the agreement of the OT with the New, so that not a single point remains where there is not complete harmony. The secret truths are conveyed in figures that are to be brought to life by interpretation” [Augustine – *On the Profit of Believing* III.9]
 - **DISCUSS:** Can we think of any examples from Scripture?
 - Luther’s four senses:
 - Historical / Allegorical / Tropological / Anagogical.
 - Example of Mount Zion, according to the killing letter:
 - *Historical:* land of Canaan.
 - *Allegorical:* the synagogue.
 - *Tropological:* Pharisaic / legal righteousness.
 - *Anagogical:* the future glory of the flesh.
 - Example of Mount Zion, according to the spiritual letter:
 - *Historical:* the people living in Zion.
 - *Allegorical:* the Church.
 - *Tropological:* the righteousness of faith.
 - *Anagogical:* the eternal glory in heaven.

[3B] SECOND: we pay attention to his words.

- **DISCUSS:** Can you see a problem with over-emphasising this?
 - Elitism / Chaotic (re: Mary as ark) / 2 Pet 1:3 – plain sense.
 - **Rightly handling the Word of Truth must first involve being attentive to his words – i.e. to the primary, plain sense.**
 - **DISCUSS:** What are some good exegetical principles?
- **Some suggestions:**
 - (1) Pray:
 - The Spirit illuminates [1 Cor 2:11].
 - (2) Identify:
 - What kind of text is this? (What's it trying to be?)
 - When is it set? (What precedes / follows it?)
 - (3) Read:
 - In full, and with surrounding context.
 - Today's chapters by Stephen Langton [1205AD]
 - Today's verses by Robert Estienne [1551AD]
 - Out loud, and perhaps a few times.
 - (4) Reflect:
 - In general, what is the main 'thesis' of the text? (Jn 1)
 - How does it fit within the *smaller* unit? (Lk 15:24-4)
 - Where does it fit within the *larger* unit? (Lk 14/13/1)
 - What is the author referencing?
 - (5) Remember:
 - The green thumbs principle. (E.g. Luke 14:33?)
 - The text says as much about the time *in which* it was written, as it does about the time it's writing *about*!

[3C] THIRD: we pay attention to our hearing.

- **Rightly handling the Word of Truth must also involve how come to hear it in the first place – i.e. to translations, study aids, etc.**
 - **DISCUSS:** How do you study the Word? Have you any suggestions?
- **On translations – Dynamic vs. Formal Equivalence**
 - NASB / KJV / NKJV / ESV / RSV / NRSV / NIV / TNIV / CEB / NLT / GNT / Living / Passion / MSG
- **In general:**
 - Commentaries / audio / out loud / in community.