

The Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture – Outline

I. An Introduction to the Terms

A. Definitions and Claims

1. **Inerrancy:** Scripture *does not* err in any of its propositions. In all of its parts, it corresponds, as a matter of fact, to what really is.
 - a. “The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy” defines it: “The quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.”
 - b. A record can be inerrant without being infallible. A phone book is inerrant until someone moves. It would be infallible if no one could violate its information.
 - c. Scripture is inerrant, because it, factually-speaking, is wholly true.
2. **Infallibility:** Scripture *cannot* err in any of its propositions. It holds immunity from error, illegitimacy, or failure. It is fully certain, reliable, and trustworthy regarding both facts and faith. Not only is it true, but it is binding.
 - a. CSBI defines it: “The quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.”
 - b. Scripture, being inerrant, cannot cease to be so, because it is the authority of God; it is unbreakable and thus infallible (unable to fail when put to the test).
 - c. Scripture, being infallible, permanently includes and secures its inerrancy combined with its authority.

B. Similarities:

1. Both entail errorlessness.
2. Both are true, because of the nature of inspiration and of the God who inspired.

C. Differences:

1. To say the prophecy is true, because it was fulfilled is to promote inerrancy. To say the prophecy was fulfilled, because it was true is to promote infallibility. One promotes prophecy as a matter of fact. The other promotes prophecy as binding upon reality. Was Christ sinless, because He did not sin (as a matter of fact, yes; this is similar to inerrancy)? Or did Christ not sin, because He was sinless (as a divine reality, yes; this is similar to infallibility)?
2. Inerrancy follows from infallibility. But infallibility does not flow from inerrancy.
3. Inerrancy is true, because God cannot lie. Infallibility is true, because God defines reality. God cannot lie, because He defines reality.

II. The Biblical Doctrine of Inerrancy

A. Foundations of Inerrancy

1. Comes from the Same Hermeneutical Principles as the Trinity.
2. Is the Needed Conclusion when Inspiration is Understood.
 - a. God cannot lie or err.
 - b. God breathed the very words (and smallest particles) of Scripture.

- c. Therefore, no part of Scripture can err.
- 3. Its Importance
- B. *Scriptures on Inerrancy*
 - 1. Inerrancy Stated
 - a. Psalm 12:6 – “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”
 - b. Revelation 21:5 – “And He that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold I make all things new.’ And He said unto me, ‘Write: for these words are true and faithful.’”
 - c. John 17:17 – “Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth.”
 - 2. Inerrancy Qualified
 - a. John 14:26 – “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”
 - b. Psalm 33:4 – “For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.”
 - 3. Inerrancy Applied
 - a. Proverbs 30:5-6 – “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.”
 - b. Psalm 18:30 – “As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.”
 - c. Romans 3:1-4 – “What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith[fulness] of God without effect? May it never be: indeed, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged.”

III. Why Full Inerrancy is Necessary [Please don't call yourself conservative, an evangelical, or a consistent Christian when tampering with this subject.]

- A. *Doctrine is Based on History*
 - 1. Doctrine rests on historical facts. If a compromised view of inerrancy takes place – that historical facts can be false, while only doctrine is true – then what do we do with doctrines that are based on historical facts?
 - 2. If God's promises contain any historical fact in them, how can we be sure they are true? If doctrine contains any historical fact, how can we be sure it is true? If God is trying to teach us through lessons in narrative, how can we be sure it is true? For Scripture to have theological weight, it must have factual weight.
 - 3. If inerrancy is trivial, why was it so dangerous to take away from the words of Revelation in 22:18-19? After all, Revelation is mainly facts in symbolic form without much “deep” doctrine by liberal standards. Revelation 22:18 implies (a) the book was exactly how God intended it to be in its very words, just like all of Scripture. (b) the book was perfect the way it was and that the only way error could be injected by human tampering.

- B. *There is no reason to reject inerrancy from the attitude of Scripture itself.*
 1. Why do we find these compromises only OUTSIDE of Scripture? The fact that the whole of Scripture does not hint at errant texts should tell us something of our arrogance when we compromise it. EVEN IF some parts are errant (this is not possible), would we not be contradicting even the inerrant parts when promoting errancy?
 2. The nature of inspiration has to be rejected to embrace errancy.
 - a. A lie is a knowing contradiction of what corresponds to reality. God is all knowing. God cannot lie. Thus, any error in the Biblical text cannot be from God. But if Scripture is not all from God, verbal inspiration has to be discredited.
 - b. Note the implications of this. If verbal inspiration is discredited, then (a) passages are lying which affirmed verbal inspiration (even if Jesus said it) and (b) man becomes the ultimate judge of what God requires of a person.
- C. *The authority and weight of Scripture is nullified.*
 1. There is no true accountability to God's Word when we don't know what is God's Word.
 2. There is no unique spiritual value to a partially-inerrant text. We can find errant texts anywhere.
 3. Once one level of errancy is accepted, is there really a limit? If so, what infallible, objective standard exists?

IV. Dealing with Bible Difficulties

- A. *Make Sure They Are Actually Somewhat Legitimate* ("Legitimate" not implying they actually exist, but that they are worth addressing).
- B. *Categories of Bible Difficulties*
 1. Difficulties Between Texts – Differences within the text itself
 - a. Genealogies: Who is the son of Arphaxad (Luke 3 v. Genesis 5)
 - i. Not all genealogies were meant to be complete
 - ii. "Father" is not limited to the biological source and can mean ancestor
 - iii. Genealogies are especially easy to copy wrongly in a manuscript. Thus, with the slip of the eye, a wrong name could have been written.
 - b. Quotations
 - i. Loose quotations were considered acceptable, especially since the apostles were inspired in their quotation of the Old Testament text.
 - ii. Most New Testament quotations of the Old were from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament), whereas our translation is based on the Hebrew text directly. Thus differences can be expected when one understands translation processes
 - c. Numbers – Famine in 2 Sam. 24 and 1 Chron. 21 / Legion in Matt. 8 and Luke 8
 - i. Numbers could easily be miscopied in the manuscripts, since many numbers were represented by letters (these could have been smudged or faded or miswritten in the process).
 - ii. Numbers are often omitted or emphasized according to an author's discretion, not showing an error but showing a purpose in writing.
 - iii. Often, a detailed look is in order to show the reason behind difference in

numbers. There will usually be nuances in the specific text that justify its use of the number.

- d. Factors – The order of events following the Resurrection, Christ's title on the cross, who tempted David to do a census, etc.
 - i. These are solved by a “both/and” approach rather than an “either/or” approach (it is the combination of what both texts say with attention to the details).
 - ii. Also, if records were word-for-word the same, would not skeptics accuse God of pointless repetition? Of course parallel accounts will emphasize and choose different factors. That is where the beauty of them is.
 - iii. If one assumes error, he will see error. If one assumes God's authority, he will see design.

2. Difficulties Between Themes

- a. Dispensational Issues – Should one find a seeming contradiction between Old and New Testaments, he should ask himself if the statements were meant to govern men for all time or only in that specific pattern of administration. God has dealt with men in various ways through the ages, and those variations are to be expected. They are not contradictions; rather they are simply changes in how God has dealt with men.
- b. Doctrinal Issues – Does God sleep or not? (Psalm 121:4 / Matthew 4:38)
- c. Directional Issues – Is it good to marry or not to marry? (1 Corinthians 7 / 1 Timothy 4:3 / Hebrews 13)
 - i. The issue has to do with circumstance. In the Corinthian circumstance, marriage was not preferable because of the context in which the people found themselves.
 - ii. When dealing with differences in commands, every factor must be considered. Often certain factors are involved which change the focus of the command. When these are realized, the commands will not contradict, but complement.

3. Difficulties in Concepts – Difficulties that happen in the mind of the reader. With these, we must embrace the mystery of the thing, accepting the limitation of our minds in their current state.

- a. Sovereignty of God v. Will of Man
- b. The Two Natures of Christ

4. Difficulties in Social Perception – Difficulties that contradict social presuppositions. Scripture deals with things as they were, and this may hurt modern assumptions. But we must see the things objectively.

- a. Slavery – Does Scripture condone or condemn it?
 - i. The slavery of Scripture was different than today's slavery
 - ii. It was willful
 - iii. It was temporary
 - iv. It was regulated
 - v. It was a social order, not a subhuman existence.
- b. Slaughter – The Conquest of Canaan
 - i. Regarding the men and women, their sin brought judgment.
 - ii. Regarding the children, their extermination was an ultimate preservation.

- c. Awkwardness – Judah and Tamar
 - i. Scripture deals with things as a matter of fact, thus making it the only true authority for human faith and practice.
 - ii. Awkwardness is a sign of relevance.
- 5. Difficulties in Spiritual Perception – Difficulties that men find because of unbelief
 - a. This is a general category that we must be mindful of.
 - b. The cross doesn't make sense to the unbelieving mind.
 - c. Creation and the image of God doesn't make sense to the unbelieving mind.
 - d. Headship doesn't make sense to the unbelieving mind.
 - e. Judgment doesn't make sense to the unbelieving mind.
 - f. The sinfulness of sin doesn't make sense to the unbelieving mind.
- C. *10 Principles for Dealing with Bible Difficulties*
 1. Be spiritual.
 2. Be an able handler of the Scriptures.
 3. Learn to love the big picture.
 4. Learn to struggle with a text and be strengthened as a result.
 5. Be offensive as well as defensive.
 6. Learn to admit ignorance, and then pursue the answer.
 7. Learn to address Bible “contradictions” with precision.
 8. Understand the multi-faceted nature of Scripture.
 9. Understand the relationship between Old and New Testaments.
 10. Learn to assess the hearer, keeping in mind his darkened heart.

D. *What About the Larger Issue?*

1. What about unresolved issues at this point in my personal studies?
 - a. Remember that Scripture's proofs are far more weighty than the accusations brought against it.
 - b. Remember that when Scripture has been given “the benefit of the doubt” it has been conclusively proven in the end. (People once thought the Hittites were a myth, until they were discovered at a later point in time, proving the Bible to be accurate, in spite of unbelief at the time).
2. How the existence of difficulties proves the Christian worldview.
 - a. It verifies that men are blind, as Scripture predicted.
 - b. Contradictions are not what we would expect them to be. They are always explainable and contribute to the precise nature of Scripture.

V. **The Foundation of Our Faith: Scripture's Infallibility**

- A. *Scripture Cannot be Broken; But Rather, It Breaks*
 1. John 10:35 – “... the Scripture cannot be broken.”
 2. Jeremiah 23:29 – “Is not my word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”
- B. *Scripture is Complete and Reliable for God's Purposes with Man*
 1. Psalm 19:7 – “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”
 2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

3. John 17:17 – "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your Word is truth."

C. *Scripture is Unwavering in the Scope of Its Purpose*

1. Isaiah 55:11 – "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."
2. Isaiah 44:26-28 – "That confirms the word of his servant, and performs the counsel of his messengers; that says to Jerusalem, You shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, You will be built; and to the temple, Your foundation shall be laid."

D. *Scripture Defines What Reality Looks Like and Cannot Be Annulled*

1. John 12:39 – "Therefore, they could not believe, because Isaiah said..."
2. Luke 16:17 – "It is easier for heaven to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail."