

Roadblocks to Faith – the Bible

If you're a Christian then this book here is of immense value to you. Not necessarily this particular book, or the book itself, but what it contains. Because to us. THE BIBLE..... is God's word. Which testifies to who he is and what he's like. And how we can relate to him. Our denomination holds to the Bible as its SUPREME STANDARD. The Presbyterian Church Constitution from 1901 says this.

SLIDE

Supreme Standard - The Supreme Standard of the Church is the Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and which this Church regards as the only rule of faith and practice.

Now, in a way. God speaks through the world he's made. Ps 19 and Romans 1 point that out. It's called GENERAL REVELATION. God reveals something of himself by what he's made. But it's only in the Bible. He Communicates in words. What it is to know him and to please him.

Slide

| [Sola Scriptura](#) | [Soli Deo Gloria](#) | [Solo Christo](#) |

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You might be aware of Calvin's five great sola's. GRACE ALONE. FAITH ALONE. FOR GOD'S GLORY ALONE. CHRIST ALONE. And sola Scriptura. SCRIPTURE ALONE. He said this:

SLIDE

If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that it is necessary to begin with HEAVENLY TEACHING, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture. (Inst. 1.6.2)

He says. We can't know God at all. Without God's own self revelation. Without God MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN.... In the words of the Bible.

And if we try. Calvin puts it a bit more bluntly than this. He says we end up in a mess.

SLIDE

Mingled vanity and pride appear in this, that when miserable men do seek after God, instead of ascending higher than themselves as they ought to do, they measure him by their own carnal stupidity, and neglecting solid inquiry, fly off to indulge their curiosity in vain speculation. (Inst. 1.4.1)

Calvin fortunately didn't have to suffer the scrutiny of political correctness.

But you get the point. You can't know what God's like. Unless God makes himself known. For Christians. What HE'S LIKE. What WE'RE LIKE. What the WORLD'S like. The way we see things is as much shaped by these words. More shaped by

these words. Than what we see with our eyes. The Bible IS GOD'S WORD. Our immense treasure.

We could do without. Church buildings. We could do without pews. We could do without just about anything. But we can't do without God's word. It's our supreme standard.

But at the same time. This book here. Is one of our BIGGEST PROBLEMS.

In a way the bible is the focal point for just about every objection people have to Christianity.

SLIDE – ROADBLOCKS TO FAITH

We've looked at a couple of objections so far earlier this year. The doctrine of Hell and God's judgment. We've looked at the issue of Exclusivity. As a roadblock. And we'll look at some other things a bit later on. Science and the Bible.

And if we had time we could make a very long list I'm sure. Of the things in our book. That are Roadblocks for people. Things in the Bible. People object to.

That if we maybe took them out...might make following Jesus more acceptable.

Now... if you're a Christian. It's actually not such a bad idea to listen to people's objections. There's a website called Evil Bible.com. And if you're game....you can read all sorts of different things people object to. Some of them are clearly rants. But some are worth thinking about.

There's one article entitled why I'm not a Christian. Here's the first line of the conclusion.

I don't think I could ever complete a whole list as to what I find objectionable regarding the bible. There are many more topics in which to tackle such as sexism, infanticide, homophobia, and the likes.

The Bible's the focus. Of so many objections.....

So it's worth taking a bit of time. To get a handle on it.

Our greatest treasure is at the same time our greatest liability. What to do?

Biblical Authority

Well I think it's worth starting with two key things the Bible says.

Because it's not just the content that's a problem. It's the very NATURE OF THE THING. That MAKES THE CONTENT so confronting. See we call the bible God's word. Because that's what it says about itself.

SLIDE – 2 Tim

See 2 Timothy you can read it there, says all Scripture is GOD BREATHED (and is useful for teaching etc.). The BIBLE SAYS. God's the one who wrote it. Which puts it in a unique position.

If God's the author. If it's written by the CREATOR. Then we sit under it.

It's more than just useful information. If a professor writes a book. Then it's got some authority. The authority of an expert. But if God writes a book. Then it's got the authority of God.

And that's what the Bible claims about itself.

So straight away you can see. That if you disagree with something in it. If you have a PROBLEM WITH IT. Then there's a fairly significant roadblock to faith. Because a problem with the content of the bible is a problem with the God who wrote it.

That's a fairly obvious point but it's important to make it.

The Bible claims to be written by God and to carry his authority.

That's the first thing I want to point out from the bible.

The second thing is this.

The Bible says something about us. The bible says. That you and I.

Aren't God. That's a revelation isn't it. You're NOT GOD. That's important because if I'm not God. Then I have the perspective. Of a created being.

I have the limits of a created being. Limits of power and knowledge and all sorts of things. But not only that. Not only am I created. I've also got a certain bias.

And it's a bias - Against God. That's what you see in the first part of Genesis.

Genesis 3. Men and women doubt God and his goodness. They act on their doubts. And from that time on. Sin lives in men. And that means. We're inclined to NOT TRUST, to NOT SERVE, to NOT SUBMIT to God the way we were made to.

So put those two things together. The Bible claims to be written by God and to carry his authority. It also points out that we're naturally biased against him.

And so before you even open page one. You'd expect us to have a tendency to reject the word of God. And as it turns out, we do.

Now I'm not trying to prove the Bible's written by God at this stage. I'm not even trying to prove we're biased. I just make that first point. It's a helpful starting place.

Because if you're someone on the one hand, who's coming to the bible. If you're asking questions about it or if you've got some problems with it. Then just be aware that if what it says about itself and you is TRUE. Then the hurdle isn't JUST a rational one.

It's entirely reasonable to ask if it's true. If it IS GOD'S WORD. It's reasonable to put it to the test. Historical test, factual test, truthful test. Is it, reasonable, believable. Is it internally coherent. You can put it to all those tests.

But it's helpful to just be aware that your objections may not come from the totally unbiased perspective. That you think you have. And to also just be aware. And be reminded. That you're perspective. Is that of the creation. It's limited.

And as well. If you're someone. If you're a Christian and you're pulling your hair out because you're trying to prove the Bible to someone else. And they're not having it. If you're knocking down all the arguments against it. And they're still

not moved. Then don't be that surprised. Because if it's true. Then their objections go beyond those things. It's not purely a rational argument.

If our real problem is our bias against God then you can have a knock down argument for every question about the bible. But it won't make a difference.

So it's worth just making that point.

But I do just want to go through a few good reasons in favour of the Bible's claims about itself. Because I want to try to take away... some of those roadblocks. The apostle Paul says I'm not ashamed of the Gospel because it's the power of God for salvation.

And that's what God's word is about. In fact we looked at 2 Tim before. But we jumped in at verse 16. But if you backtrack one verse. You'll see something else.

SLIDE

Paul's writing to Timothy. HE's urging him to keep going in the faith, to keep believing what he's been convinced of, because from when he was a kid he's known the Scriptures...and you can follow it there. You've known the holy Scriptures. Which are able to make you WISE FOR SALVATION through faith in Christ Jesus.

So roadblocks in relation to the Scriptures. The real tragedy is that they're roadblocks to the salvation that comes through Jesus.

So how do you know it's true?

The question of HISTORICAL RELIABILITY is really important. It's not that exciting I have to say, you don't have to line up for hours to get into a biblical history lecture. But it's important. And it's important....Because biblical faith. Is historical faith. Biblical faith. Christianity. Is rooted in real time and space.

It's not ethereal. So if Jesus didn't live, didn't die. Didn't rise. If those things didn't actually happen. Then it's a sham.

So it's not surprising. That you'll find attack after attack after attack.... on the historical facts of the bible. Every year. Conveniently round about easter. There's another theory about Jesus. And the records about him as well. There's another theory about how our gospels are all a part of a conspiracy theory. They're chipping away from every angle they can. It didn't happen the way the bible says. And there's a problem with the records.

And because of that. You might think the bible's a bit shaky on historical grounds. But the reason it keeps standing up to attack after attack. Is because it's actually very strong when it comes to historical accuracy. And reliability if transmission as well.

Archaeologists use the Bible as a tool to verify and to find some of the things they're looking for. BECAUSE it's been shown to be reliable in it's accounts.

I don't want to spend much time on that point. I'll just give you a quote.

SLIDE - QUOTE

Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish archaeologist said,

"It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."

Evidence from other places keeps matching up, verifying biblical accounts.

SLIDE

Here's a Babylonia clay tablet turned up this century, dating from 595BC confirms details of Jeremiah. King Nebuchadnezzar, an officer called Nebo Sarsekim.

The lines of verification are geographical and political, cultural, military, religious, languages, customs.

And the more archeology progresses. The more those things seem to be stacking up. Which shouldn't surprise us. If it's true.

Not only is the evidence strong for accuracy. But also transmission. Prior to the dead sea scroll discovery, the oldest old testament scriptures we had were dated to something like 800AD. Then the dead sea scrolls were found. They were dated at something like 300BC. So something like 1100 years between the two. And the texts were examined and found to be 95% the same. Incredibly accurate transmission over such a long time.

Which gives you confidence in the transmission process.

That's the old testament. And when it comes to the new testament. It's still ancient history I guess. But we've got lots more extra biblical ways to verify the biblical accounts.

Jewish and Roman historians. Like Tacitus and Josephus and Eusebius who independently confirm details like Jesus death, the reports of his miracles and his resurrection. The growth of the church. Again they confirm political leaders and events, geography, background detail what they call indirect or incidental evidence for the truth of the biblical accounts.

And of course then there's the number of different biblical documents. What they say. How they say it. The detail. When they say it.

There's plenty of books you can get on this sort of thing that go into the detail. But I'll run through a really quick summary.

I'll start with a comparison

Alexander the great died in 323BC. The historian who wrote about him. From which we take our history of Alexander the Great. Wrote in the 130's BC.

Something like 200 years later. We have only one manuscript of that writer. And it dates to the 12 century BC.

But we're willing to accept that as reliable history. The New Testament documents, by comparison.

Jesus died something like 33AD. Apart from the non-biblical writers. WE have the multiple biblical accounts. Independently written. Four Gospels. The Acts of the Apostles. All the letters by different authors of the New Testament. All written and some of them as early as AD 50, but all of them well and truly in circulation by the end of the first century.

SLIDE – P52

We have thousands of manuscripts. The earliest of those we have. A fragment called P52. 125AD. And Codex Vaticanus. A full NT dating around 300AD.

And apart from the odd miss-spelling and dropped out line or word. Or something like Lord Jesus as opposed to Lord Jesus Christ things like that. There's no major doctrinally or problematic differences.

So there's the fact the documents were written early. By the witnesses themselves in most cases. There's a number of them. We've got lots of manuscripts. But there's also the nature of the material.

They have that ring of authenticity for a number of reasons.

One. There's different perspectives on the same events. That seem contradictory in one way. Because it's a different person who saw and heard the same thing from a different point of view. That you wouldn't have if you'd colluded.

Two. They also paint the warts and all picture of Jesus and his followers. Jesus seems to have a go at his mum at one point. He curses a fig tree. In the garden he asks God if he can get out of going to the cross. His disciples don't come out looking all that bright or faithful a lot of the time. The epistles air out all the dirty laundry of the church. The fights. The sins. All the grubby stuff.

Three. There's so much detail. Too much of you're not writing the truth. And that detail helps us cross check with the non-biblical data.

They're some of the major features for the bible's historical reliability. As I said. There's plenty you can read. It is fascinating stuff. But the point is. It's more than reasonable to trust the historical accuracy, and the reliable transmission. Of what we've got in our Bibles.

And if you can trust that. That gives all the more credibility to the content. Because in the content. You'll find the God's word of prophecy.. of the Old Testament. Over and over again. Being fulfilled. You'll find the covenant God keeping his promises. Demonstrating his power. Showing his wisdom. Defeating his enemies. Those internal things that pile up the evidence. That these are actually God's words. The way Jesus fulfils the predictions of the messiah. The miracles of Jesus. His claims. The resurrection. You add it all up. And you come to your conclusions about whether or not it is what it says it is.

And that's no small thing. But obviously it's not everything.

You might accept that. But your problem with the bible is. You just cant get over it's view of gender roles. Maybe you just can't agree with it's take on sexual orientation. You might get caught up on something like whether or not the bible condones slavery.

And there's a couple of things to say about that.

Number one. You might have misunderstood what the bible's saying. That can happen. The bible might just be reporting something that happened in a narrative. You might think it's condoning it.

Number two. You might also be reacting to your own cultural bias. The bible's talking about a different culture in a different time. And it's foreign to you. And you just can't get your head around it.

But even if it's not either of those things. You need to make sure you deal with things in the bible in their proper order. Because gender roles are not the central issue in the bible.

We read it before the Scriptures make you wise for salvation. And salvation's not so much concerned with the roles of men and women. As it is with the rebellion of men and women. And the work of Jesus Christ. His life and death and resurrection. To save us.

So make sure you consider things in their proper order. Make sure you consider the central issue of the bible. Before you reject it on the grounds of something else. That's really secondary. I mean ...are you going to say that because you don't agree with the bible's view of marriage..that you don't believe Jesus is God's son who rose from the dead? Because that's the big question isn't it.

And of course. Back to the first point. Don't forget. If the bible's true. And you're a rebel at heart. The bible's going to say a few things that sting a bit.

You ought to expect it.

Conclusion. It's a fact. The bible's a road block to faith. There's a strong temptation to minimize it, downplay it. And some churches have gone down that path.

But if it's true. If it is God's word. Then it's the world's only hope for salvation. It's our only hope for the knowledge of salvation.

We won't solve our problem by denying it, or shelving it, by re-defining it.

Solve it by answering people's objections best we can. By reading it, knowing it, and living under it. Solve it by being obedient to it. By treating it as God's precious word of life. Solve it by holding it out. Thessalonians hold out the word of truth.

Philippians 2:14-16 Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶ as you hold out the word of life.