

Chapter 2: Fundamentalism vs. Inerrancy

Bible-believing Christians are often called “**fundamentalists**” because they are said to take the Bible “**literally**”

- However, there is a problem with the word “**literal**” which means: “following the exact words of the original, word-for-word; based on the actual words in their ordinary meaning; **not figurative or symbolic**” according to Webster’s New World Dictionary
 - Much in the Bible is **figurative** and **symbolic**. For instance, Jesus’ parables were not literally true, but rather simple stories that revealed an underlying principle. The Book of Revelation and the visions in many of the prophetic books are full of symbolism and metaphors that also represent principles. And surely we don’t want to take the advice of Job’s well-meaning but incorrect pals literally.

So, then, what does fundamentalism really mean? It means that we believe the Bible to be “**inerrant**” or **without error** in regard to the principles it espouses.

- Fundamentalism also means that God’s Word (the Bible) is the **foundation** of all that we believe. When questions and issues arise, we go back to the Word for understanding. When prophets tell us a direct word from God (called “**rhema**” words from the Greek), we see if it lines up with the principles in the Bible. When we receive a direct word from God, or think we do, it must line up with the written Word.

Interpretation of Scripture is another area of great contention. Theologians argue endlessly over differences in interpretation, some significant, many trivial. The end-time rapture, for example. Or whether “once saved, always saved.”

- These are addressed in subsequent chapters, but an important point must be made here. There are enough **essentials** to agree upon without allowing disagreements to cause **divisions**. Jesus prayed that we would be “**one**” or else the world would not believe that He came from the Father. Because we emphasize our differences rather than **celebrate our common bond in Christ Jesus**, the world does indeed disbelieve. They dismiss Christianity because if we can’t agree on things why should we expect them to discard their own beliefs?

Translations are another area of disagreement and contradiction, causing division and again leading unbelievers to question our faith.

- Many claim the authorized King James Version (date) is the only translation to use, being the “true” Word of God. But what did people use beforehand? The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Greek with a little Aramaic, so only the original manuscripts are the “true” Word of God.
 - There are many “**original**” **manuscripts** and only minor differences therein. Finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947-1956) corroborate that these manuscripts are true to their original written form.
- The issue, then with translations, is that there are always some things that are **misinterpreted** or **mistranslated** from one language to another. Idiomatic sayings in one language don’t make sense in another. The implications and connotations of various words are not apparent unless one lived and spoke those languages at that time in that place.
 - We who speak the **English language**, the only one that I’m fully familiar with, are at a distinct disadvantage because the richness and depth of the Hebrew language and the precision of the Greek language do not translate well into English, a very poor spiritual language.
 - For example, **Hebrew** has at least **six words** that most English versions translate as “**man**” – however, some of the words refer to all of humanity, while others specify a male or female person.

- **Greek** has **three words** that are translated “**love**” in our English Bibles, but which are very different (see Appendix xx for full details). Greek has **six verb tenses**, ours only three, so some things stated in past tense actually mean they began at some point and are still evolving.

For those who believe the King James Version to be devoid of translation error, I will offer but one of many concrete examples.

- In Ephesians 1:18-23 there are **three different Greek words** that are translated “**power**” but which have different meanings: **exousia** means authority; **kratos** means strength; while only **dunamis** really means power. So, to really be sure about certain English passages, we often need to go back to the Hebrew or Greek to see what the underlying meaning/principle is.

Another objection of unbelievers is that the Bible was **written by fallible men**, not God. While this is “literally” true, Christians believe that they were “**inspired**” directly by God.

- Here is where the first step of **faith** is: do we truly believe the Bible to be the Word of God or not? This cannot be proved one way or another. The Bible says such faith comes by “**hearing**” and “hearing” by the Word of God.
 - What most Christians don’t realize is that the Greek word here for “**hearing**” is “**rhema**” not “logos” – i.e. the **spoken Word** of God, not the written Word. Only when God speaks directly to our spirits do we come to believe and have faith (this is called the “born again” experience, which is described fully in Chapter 4).

So, then, a **fundamentalist** is someone who believes that the **Bible** is the **inerrant Word of God**

- And a “**radical**” **Christian** is someone who puts that believe into **practice** (James 1:22)