

The Bible is the only Source and Standard for a Christian's Faith and Hope

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, God promised them a Saviour (Gen. 3:15). From Adam to Moses, God's precious promise of the Saviour was passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. This may be one reason why the patriarchs from Adam to Noah lived so long. After the time of the flood, people spread over the face of the whole earth. God repeated His promise of the Saviour directly to His people, as is evidenced in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 15, 26, 28). During the time of the sojourn of God's people in Egypt, the promises of God were kept before Israel, giving them comfort during their slavery. Finally, God directed Moses to write down the record of His revelation (Ex. 17:14). Once Moses had written the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch: Genesis through Deuteronomy), God, through Moses, directed His people to the written record of His revelation (Deut. 4:2; Jos. 1:7; 23:6). As the other writings of the Old Testament were added, God, through His prophets, directed His people to them also as the source of their teaching and for direction in their living (Is. 8:20).

In the New Testament, Jesus cited the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative to establish doctrine. He said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms," (Luke 24:44). For Jesus, the Old Testament was authoritative to establish doctrine.

Jesus' own words are authoritative for us in the New Testament. He declared, "The Words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life," (John 6:63). Peter said to Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life.⁶⁹ We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God," (John 6:68-69). Jesus also declared, "There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say," (John 12:48-50).

But how have the words of Christ been passed on to us? These words, which are authoritative for establishing doctrine and for guiding Christian living, have come to us by inspiration through the apostles and other writers of the New Testament. Jesus promised his apostles, "The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you," (John 14:26). "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you," (John 16:13-14). Jesus also said, "If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples," (John 8:31). Paul declared that "all Scripture is

God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work,” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The words of Christ, as they have come down to us in the four gospels, the epistles and Revelation, together with the Old Testament, are the sole source of salvation, the sole authority to establish doctrine and to direct Christian living. The warning with which the book of Revelation closes is applicable to the entire Bible: “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book,” (Rev 22:18-19).

Our Lutheran Confessions echo this truth of Scripture. Luther wrote, “This means that the Word of God - and no one else, not even an angel - should establish articles of faith” (SA II II:15). The Formula of Concord states, “We confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated” (FC SD Rule and Norm:3).