

Josiah & The Authority of God's Word

By: C.H. Mackintosh

“In studying the history of Josiah and his times, we learn one special and priceless lesson, namely, the value and authority of the Word of God. It would be utterly impossible for human language to set forth the vast importance of such a lesson — a lesson for every age, for every clime, for every condition — for the individual believer and for the whole Church of God. The supreme authority of Holy Scripture should be deeply impressed on every heart. It is the only safeguard against the many forms of error and evil which abound on every hand. Human writings, no doubt, have their value; they may interest the mind as a reference, but they are perfectly worthless as authority.

We need to remember this. There is a strong tendency in the human mind to lean upon human authority. Hence it has come to pass that millions throughout the professing Church have virtually been deprived altogether of the Word of God, from the fact that they have lived and died under the delusion that they could not know it to be the Word of God apart from human authority. Now this is in reality, throwing the Word of God overboard. If that Word is of no avail without man's authority, then, we maintain, it is not God's Word at all. It does not matter, in the smallest degree, what the authority is, the effect is the same. God's Word is declared to be insufficient without something of man to give the certainty that it is God that is speaking.

This is a most dangerous error, and its root lies far deeper in the heart than many of us are aware. It has often been said to us, when quoting passages of Scripture, 'How do you know that that is the Word of God?' What is the point of such a question? Plainly to overthrow the authority of the Word. The heart that could suggest such an inquiry does not want to be governed by Holy Scripture at all. The will is concerned. Here lies the deep secret. There is the consciousness that the Word condemns something that the heart wants to hold and cherish, and hence the effort to set the Word aside altogether.

But how are we to know that the book which we call the Bible is the Word of God? We reply, It carries its own credentials with it. It bears its own evidence upon every page, in every paragraph, in every line. True, it is only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the divine Author of the book, that the evidence can be weighed and the credentials appreciated. But we do not want man's voice to accredit God's book; or, if we do, we are most assuredly on infidel ground as regards divine revelation. If God cannot speak directly to the heart — if He cannot give the

assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, then where are we? whither shall we turn? If God cannot make Himself heard and understood, can man do it better? — can he improve upon God? Can man's voice give us more certainty? Can the authority of the Church, the decrees of general councils, the judgement of the fathers, the opinion of the doctors, give us more certainty than God Himself? If so, we are just as completely at sea — just as thoroughly in the dark as though God had not spoken at all. Of course, if God has not spoken, we are completely in the dark; but if He has spoken, and yet we cannot know His voice without man's authority to accredit it, where lies the difference? Is it not plain that if God in His great mercy has given us a revelation, it must be sufficient of itself; and on the other hand that any revelation which is not sufficient of itself cannot possibly be divine? And further, is it not equally plain that if we cannot believe what God says because He says it, we have no safer ground to go upon when man presumes to affix his accrediting seal?

Let us not be misunderstood. What we insist upon is this: the all-sufficiency of a divine revelation apart from and above all human writings — ancient, medieval, or modern. We value human writings; we value sound criticism; we value profound and accurate scholarship; we value the light of true science and philosophy; we value the testimony of pious travellers who have sought to throw light upon the sacred text; we value all those books that open up to us the intensely interesting subject of biblical antiquities; in short, we value everything that tends to aid us in the study of the Holy Scriptures: but after all, we return with deeper emphasis to our assertion as to the all-sufficiency and supremacy of the Word of God. That Word must be received on its own divine authority, without any human recommendation, or else it is not the Word of God to us. We believe that God can give us the certainty in our own souls that the Holy Scriptures are, in very deed, His own Word. If He does not give it, no man can; and if He does, no man need. Thus the inspired apostle says to his son Timothy, 'Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' ([2 Tim. 3: 14-15](#)).

How did Timothy know that the Holy Scriptures were the Word of God? He knew it by divine teaching. He knew of whom he had learned. Here lay the secret. There was a living link between his soul and God, and he recognized in Scripture the very voice of God. Thus it must ever be. It will not do merely to be convinced in the intellect, by human arguments, human evidences, and human apologies, that the Bible is the Word of God; we must know its power in the heart and on the

conscience by divine teaching; and when this is the case, we shall no more need human proofs of the divinity of the book than we need a rushlight at noonday to prove that the sun is shining. We shall then believe what God says because He says it, and not because man accredits it, nor because we feel it. 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' He did not want to go to the Chaldeans, or to the Egyptians, in order to find out from them if what he had heard was in reality the Word of God. No; he knew whom he had believed, and this gave him holy stability. He could say, beyond all question, 'God has established a link between my soul and Himself, by means of His Word, which no power of earth or hell can ever snap.' This is the true ground for every believer — man, woman, or child, in all ages and under all circumstances. This was the ground for Abraham and Josiah, for Luke and Theophilus, for Paul and Timothy; and it must be the ground for the writer and the reader of these words, else we shall never be able to stand against the rising tide of infidelity, which is sweeping away the very foundations on which thousands of professors are reposing.

However, we may well inquire, can a merely national profession, a hereditary faith, an educational creed, sustain the soul in the presence of an audacious scepticism that reasons about everything and believes nothing? Impossible! We must be able to stand before the sceptic, the rationalist, and the infidel, and say, in all the calmness and dignity of a divinely wrought faith, 'I know whom I have believed.' Then we shall be little moved by such books as, 'The Phases of Faith,' 'Essays and Reviews,' 'Broken Lights,' 'Ecce Homo,' or 'Colenso.' They will be no more to us than gnats in the sunshine. They cannot hide from our souls the heavenly beams of our Father's revelation. God has spoken, and His voice reaches the heart. It makes itself heard above the din and confusion of this world, and all the strife and controversy of professing Christians. It gives rest and peace, strength and fixedness, to the believing heart and mind. The opinions of men may perplex and confound. We may not be able to thread our way through the labyrinths of human systems of theology; but God's voice speaks in Holy Scripture — speaks to the heart — speaks to me. This is life and peace. It is all I want. Human writings may now go for what they are worth, seeing I have all I want in the ever-flowing fountain of inspiration — the peerless, precious volume of my God.”

Excerpted from C.H. Mackintosh, *The Life & Times of Josiah*, found here:

<http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/mackintosh/Bk4/JOSIAH.html> Accessed on 5/15/11.