
Hermeneutic Study – 3rd Session

Agenda: for tonight – May 3rd, 2009

- Quick Review
 - Definition of Hermeneutics
 - Initial Issues for Interpretation
 - The Three main approaches to Interpretation
- General Principles for Interpretation
- Grammatical Principles for Interpretation

Definition of Hermeneutics:

“Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation.” Bernard Ramm

The Bible is the Foundation....

■ ***Understanding the:***

- Inspiration of the Bible - The superintending of God over human authors to write the very Word of God in the original manuscripts.
- The illumination of the Bible - The process by which the Holy Spirit enables a person to understand the things of God.
- The Integration of the Bible - The Canon of Scripture – Canon means “a rule or measuring rod” – idea that the Bible is the organized & completed standard for all faith and practice.
- The Integrity of the Bible -
 - The Bible is Infallible – which means it is unfailingly accurate (without error) in the original manuscripts.
 - The Bible is inerrant – which means it does not contain any error in a statement of fact – it is incapable of teaching deception.
- The Bible is to be trusted absolutely, completely, unquestionably, and unreservedly.

Other Initial issues for interpretation....

- The interpreter needs a convicted understanding of basic doctrines.
- The interpreter needs to be aware the Bible is all about Christ.
- The interpreter must accurately apply general truths - the Bible's reliance, the role of the books, progressive revelation, the understanding of God, understanding of man, and salvation by grace practically to every interpretation.
- Recognition the Bible is a human book - It was recorded in a written language by men, and followed normal, grammatical meanings, including figurative language. It was immediately understandable in its original context.
- Recognition the Bible is a Divine book & therefore has unity with no contradictions, absolute purpose, and perfect harmony.
- The interpreter must take different administrations into account as this is the larger Bible context.

The Three Main Approaches to interpretation....

- Allegorical Interpretation - is simply looking for a higher sense of meaning from a passage than the literal brings (beneath the obvious meaning is the real meaning).
- Spiritualizing Interpretation - The NT is the fulfillment of the OT. The NT is taken back into the interpretation of the OT instead of allowing the OT meaning in the context of its own setting.
- Normative Interpretation - The Scriptures are to be understood in the normative meaning of words. The words of Scripture are to be understood in the historical and grammatical situation in which they are found (their immediate context).

Allegorizing interpretative example:

2 Ki 6:4-7 So he went with them (Elisha); and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and made the iron float. He said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it."

"The incident which has been before us may, we consider, be justly regarded as broadly illustrating what is portrayed by the law and the gospel. It serves to give us a typical picture of the sinner's ruin and redemption. As the result of being dissatisfied with the position God originally assigned us – subjection to His authority – we (in Adam) appropriated what was not ours, and in consequence suffered a fearful fall. The inanimate iron falls into the Jordan – the place of judgment – is an apt figure of the elect in their natural state: dead in trespasses and sins, incapable of doing anything for their deliverance." A. W. Pink

"Elisha's throwing in the stick was aimed at helping those who stood by to realize that the coming up of the iron ax head was not a natural but a supernatural phenomenon brought about by God Himself, simply through the prophet's instrumentality...the stick was appropriate to the occasion. It indicated that iron could be made to float like wood by the sovereign power of the Lord, who made the world and established natural law, and who for special purposes could set it aside." Merrill Unger

Spiritualizing interpretation prophecy example:

Micah 4:1-2 And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“Today all nations come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb 12:22, which was formerly symbolized by earthly Mount Zion. With Christ’s ascension from earth to heaven the earthly material symbols were done away and the spiritual reality portrayed by the symbols supersede the earthly shadows.” Bruce Waltke

Idea – there is no future fulfillment by literal Israel, but only a present fulfillment by a Spiritual Israel – the church.

“The kingdom is the earthly millennial kingdom of the Messiah that will be established over Israel (Acts 1:6-7) in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and of the practically universal voice of Old Testament seers. This section of Micah’s prophecy presents Israel’s eventual glorious future in the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, despite the inglorious state of sin and apostasy into which the divided nation of God’s people had fallen at the time” Merrill Unger

Understanding the Normative Approach.

The **historical-grammatical** method is a literal process that strives to discover the Biblical author's original intended meaning by carefully considering the historical setting (including culture & geography), and ascribing normal rules of grammar to interpret.

The aim of the historical-grammatical method is to discover the meaning of the passage as the original hearers would have understood.

In the simplest words, we are to take the text at face value and interpret it in its plain or literal sense. Do not interpret it in a spiritual, symbolic, or allegorical way unless the context tells you that parables, symbols, or figures of speech are being used.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

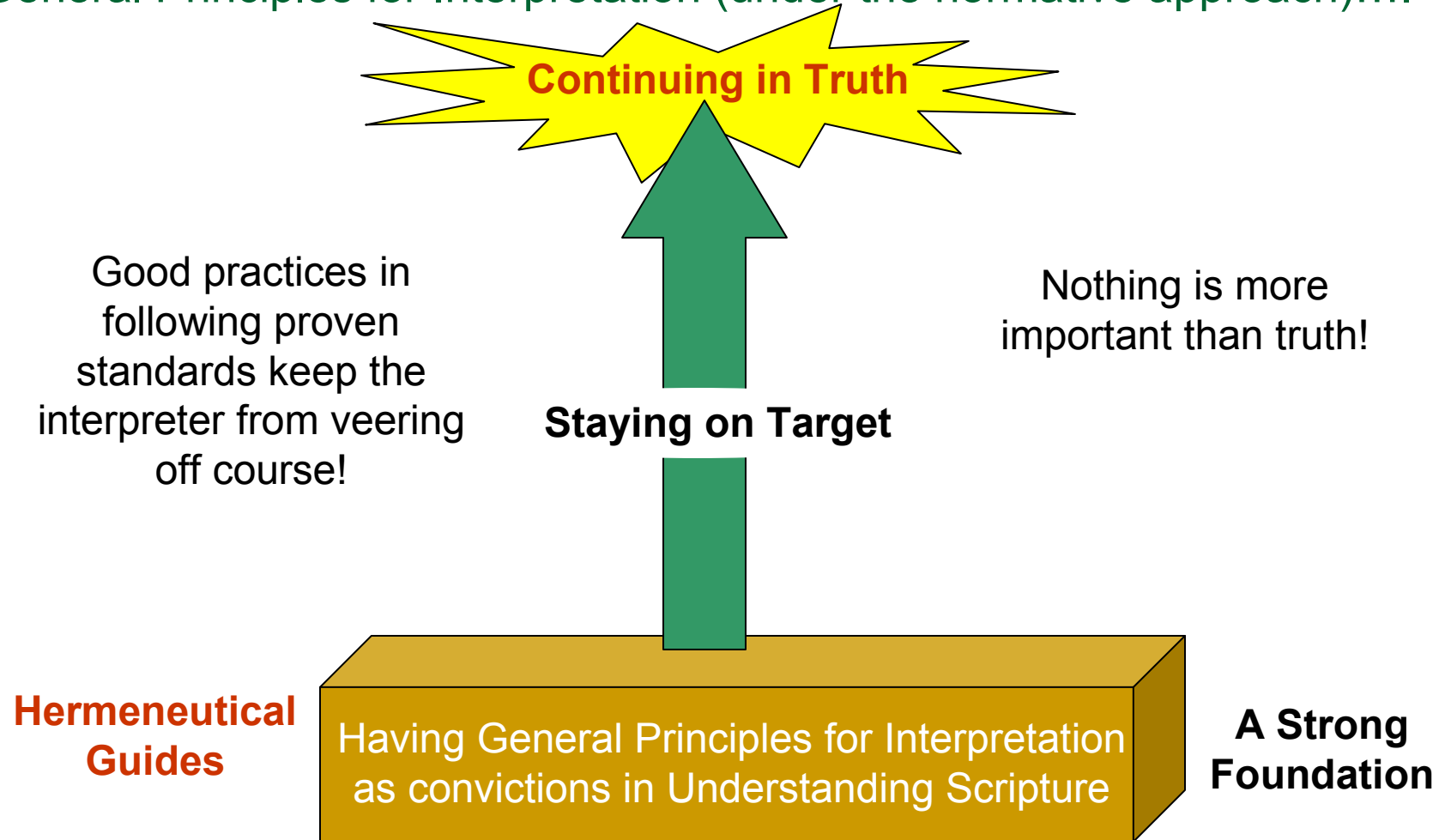
General Rules for Interpretation (under the normative approach)....

“The only way to clear the atmosphere and to determine what is right and wrong, proper and improper, orthodox and heretical, is to give one’s self to a careful study of the science of Biblical hermeneutics. Otherwise we deal with symptoms, not with causes; we debate about superstructure when we should be debating about foundations. It is important, therefore, to determine how God’s Word is to be understood that we may know what God has said. This is the chief and foremost need for hermeneutics.” Bernard Ram

The science of hermeneutics has been developed over time by men dedicated to the truth of Scripture. Like any other science there are guiding principles that have been determined and proven to honor the Word and guide the interpreter. Without these guiding principles, there is a continual drifting away leading to obvious error. Where these guiding principles are applied, there is fundamental consistency and harmony with the message of Scripture.

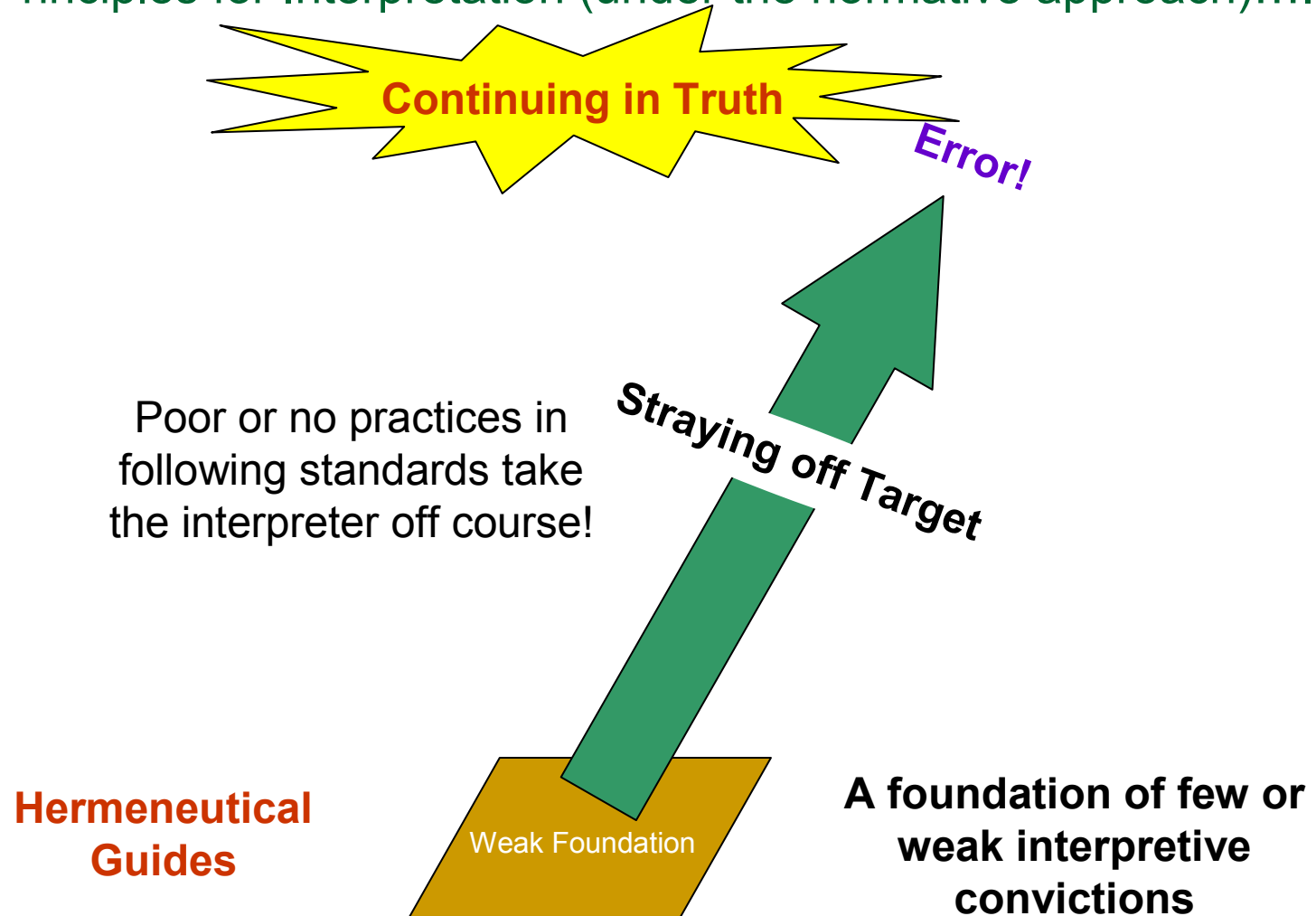
Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the normative approach)....



Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the normative approach)....



Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize the Bible being a divine book has mystery – it has many things hard to understand and especially in these categories: prophecy, miracles, and doctrine.*
 - **Prophecy** – the prediction of future events is supernatural & mysterious
 - **Miracles** – these are unexplainable humanly – supernatural & mysterious
 - **Doctrine** – the Trinity, the Incarnation, Omnipresence, etc.. – all are matters that are beyond the capability of human reason & understanding.

Pressure will be placed particularly in these areas of interpretation – why?

- As a mystery they are outside the bounds of human logic.
- Skeptics and liberals will assail them.
- The Bible is not a human book – it has a divine origin and is about a divine being. Much therefore that is written must be accepted and understood on the basis of faith.
- Even though mysterious – these truths are consistent with the Person & work of God throughout His Word – therefore they are predictable.

*Taken from "Interpretation" Roy Zuck

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must rest his theology on those passages that are clear and not upon those that are obscure – essential truth is not tucked away in some incidental remark in Scripture nor in some passage that remains ambiguous even after thorough research.*

Example: Act 16:15 “And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us.”

“Baptism signifies union with Christ. It is a symbol of God’s promise of salvation. As a sacrament, it can be understood as a visible representation of a heavenly reality. The New Testament teaches that the true, saving baptism is not one of water but one administered by Christ. And Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 11:16). But the “visible” baptism signifies this “invisible” one. Baptism, as a sign and seal of union with Christ, also acts as a sign and seal of membership in the church, which is Christ’s body. Since the Presbyterian Church baptizes infants, we have two classifications of membership in the local church – *communing members* (those who confess Christ and partake of the Lord’s Supper) and *non-communing members* (those who have been baptized but have not yet made a profession of faith)...Baptism, in the New Testament, signifies the covenant God has made with his people, just as circumcision signified it in the Old Testament. Therefore there is a direct link between circumcision and baptism – they both signify the very same promise.” Reed S. Dunn (Presbyterian theologian)

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The interpreter must recognize Christ is the center of Christian theology and all doctrines are to be related to Christ. Thus all doctrines are unified in their radial relationship (like spokes on a wheel) to Christ and not in terms of a network of dogmas forming a system.*

Example: “You see, everything--including healing--starts inside you. Your future is literally stored up in your heart. As Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).

That means if you want external conditions to be better tomorrow, you'd better start changing your internal condition today. You'd better start taking the Word of God and depositing it in your heart just like you deposit money in the bank. Then you can make withdrawals on it whenever you need it. When sickness attacks your body, you can tap into the healing Word you've put inside you and run that sickness off!” Ken Copeland

Context: The Pharisee’s had just accused Christ of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Christ is rebuking them – in John 12:30 He says “He who is not with Me is against Me.” The issue here is relation to Christ, not a system of curing my problems or diseases.

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- There is one system of truth or theology contained in Scripture, and therefore all doctrines must cohere or agree with each other. That means that the interpretations of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture on a point.*

Example: John 3:5 “Truly, Truly, I say unto you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

“‘Born of the water’ must refer to water baptism because: (1) Baptism is the only command in the New Testament that requires the use of water (Acts 8:35-39; 10:47; John 3:23; Heb. 10:22; etc.). (2) Many other passages, already cited, show that water baptism is essential to for-giveness. (3) Further, other passages, already cited, show specifically that water baptism is an essential element of the new birth. .. So Jesus here emphatically stated that baptism is essential to enter the kingdom of God. No one can be born again without it. When people seek to deny that Jesus ever taught the necessity of baptism to salvation, they need to consider carefully this passage along with Mark 16:16 and the other passages cited above.” David E Pratte (Church of Christ theologian)

Rom 11:6 “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

There is only one meaning to a passage of Scripture which is determined by careful study. But a given text or a given passage may speak to a number of problems or issues. Therefore, the interpreter presenting must always distinguish the primary meaning from particular applications.*

John 15:4 “abide in Me, and I in you.”

A good example: “What does it mean to abide? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit. This certainly involves being in the Word of God, and the confession of sin so that nothing hinders our communion with Him. It also involves our obeying Him because we love Him. How can we tell when we are abiding in Christ? Is there a special feeling? No, but there are special evidences that appear and they are unmistakably clear. For one thing when you are abiding in Christ you produce fruit.” **Warren Wiersbe**

One meaning – “it means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us” – the other things stated are from this main point!

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The basis for accepting a certain interpretation must be made explicit and clear. There must be demonstrated critical exegesis which means to bring into one's methodology the kinds of procedures that are characteristic of good scholarship.*

Gal 5:4 “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

Example: “**You should know that a child of God:**
Can be lost (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12-19)” **From the Church of Christ Official Website**

- There is a neglect of the context. Paul is not addressing the new birth – he is making an argument, “grace” is to be understood *as the gospel system of salvation in Christ*. They have exchanged the system of grace for a system of works and thereby nullified the system of grace.
- There is a neglect of all other passages that teach eternal security.
- No serious word study – using a verse to reinforce a preconceived idea
- “severed” katargeo – made void “useless”
- “fallen” – (Rom 9:6; Acts 27:26) ekpipto – to become inefficient

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter has as his goal to discover the original meaning and intention of the text. His goal is exegesis – to lead the meaning out of the text and shun eisogesis – bringing a meaning to the text.*

Rev 20:1-3 “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

Example: “The introductory phrase ‘Then I saw’ does not indicate that John is having a vision of events temporally subsequent to the events of the previous nineteen chapters... Thus Satan is currently in the pit, he is currently bound. This does not mean that Satan is not active in many other ways. We wholeheartedly believe that Satan tempts people and that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). But with respect to his deceiving the nations as he once did, he is bound. Put positively, the binding of Satan coincides with the progress and triumph of the Gospel among the nations. Consequently, this is a great missions text, giving the Church encouragement and confidence that the proclamation of the Gospel will bear fruit. The period of time during which Satan is bound and in the pit (and during which the martyrs reign with Christ) is a thousand years (a millennium). Numbers in the Bible are frequently symbolic. It would be natural to expect that in this, arguably the most symbolic book of the Bible, that we would find many symbolic numbers. Ten is a number of completeness. One thousand is ten cubed. Thus we would suggest that the thousand years is a long period of time of indeterminate length representing the present age in its fullness.” David Sherwood

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- All exegesis must be done in the original languages if it is to be competent and trustworthy exegesis.*

Isa 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

1Pe 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Example: “Years ago, a woman was carried into one of my services. She had not walked in four years, and doctors said she would never walk again. I sat down beside her and placed my open Bible on her lap. I said, “Sister, please read that verse out loud.” She read First Peter 2:24 aloud. And when she ended with “...by whose stripes ye were healed,” I asked, “Is ‘were’ past tense, present tense, or future tense?” I will never forget her reaction, “Were is past tense,” she exclaimed. “And if we were healed, then I was healed!” She accepted God’s Word with the enthusiasm and simplicity of a child - the way we must. And that’s how God records it in His Word. He doesn’t promise to heal us, because He’s already provided healing for us almost 2,000 years ago! Healing is something we already have in Christ.” Kenneth Hagin

Healed – (Hebrew) – “mend” or “thoroughly make whole”

healed – (isomai – Greek) – “to be made whole”

The object of both contexts of “to be made whole” has to do entirely with redemption.

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter can understand a particular passage only if he knows what the whole Scripture teaches; but can only know what the whole Scripture teaches by knowing the meaning of its parts – theological interpretation of Scripture is a rotation or spiraling from the parts to the whole, and whole to the parts.*

John 6:63 – “It is the Spirit who gives life, The flesh profits nothing, the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.”

Example: “By proposing to you a heavenly sacrament, in which you shall receive, in a wonderful manner, spirit, grace and life. These words sufficiently correct the gross and carnal imagination of these Capharnaïtes, that he meant to give them his body and blood to eat in a visible and bloody manner, but they do not imply a figurative or metaphorical presence only. The manner of Christ's presence is spiritual and under the outward appearances of bread and wine; but yet he is there truly and really present, by a change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of his body and blood, which *truly* and *really* become our spiritual food, and are truly and really received in the holy sacrament.” **Catholic commentary**

Heb 7:27 “who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must come to the Old Testament or the New Testament with the proper mind set which corresponds to the essence, the composition, the peculiar historical configuration, the place in the progress of divine revelation, of the Testament.*

Deut 28:13-14 "The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully, and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Example: "“Oh, Joel, I can't say that," you may be thinking. "None of that is true in my life." "Yes, it is true! That is what faith is all about. The world says you need to see it to believe it, but God says you must believe and then you'll see it. You must speak it by faith. Make a list of your goals, your dreams, the areas where you want to see change. Confirm your desires by Scripture, and then every day before you leave the house, speak those blessings aloud. Something supernatural happens when you speak those words aloud. Maybe you struggle with condemnation because of past mistakes. Each day, boldly declare, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. God is pleased with me. He is on my side." If you say something like that on a consistent basis, guilt and condemnation won't hang around.” Joel Osteen (Pastor Lakewood Church)

The passage is dealing with the blessing or cursing promised Israel by their obedience in the promised land under the Palestinian Covenant – no application to name & claim.

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The interpreter must come to the particular book in which the passage occurs and understand the time, culture, recipients, author, situation, and purpose of the writing.*

Mic 4:5-7 Though all the peoples walk each in the name of his god, As for us, we will walk In the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. "I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation, And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever."

Example: "Very precious promises these are, relating to the gospel church, which will be more and more fulfilled, for He is faithful that has promised. There shall be a glorious church for God set up in the world, in the last days, in the days of the Messiah. Christ himself will build it upon a rock. The Gentiles worshipped their idol gods; but in the period spoken of, the people will cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and delight in doing his will." Matthew Henry

Time – 735-710 BC, Judah, Time of northern captivity, Punishment and Promise for future restoration to the faithful in Israel, Purpose: Hope for those in the midst of the judgment of God (a reminder of the Davidic Covenant)

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must know the context of a particular passage by studying the materials immediately before it, and immediately after it. The material before the passage is the radar which guides the approaching, and the following material is the radar of the leaving. And if we can track the material approaching and leaving the particular passage, we have the framework in which the passage is to be understood.*

Example: Romans 7:14-25 – is the most controversial of all NT Scriptures among conservative theologians. Is it describing a Christian's experience, or Paul in his pre-Christian days as a self-righteous Pharisee?

Rom 7:4 “Therefore my brethren, you were also made to die to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Rom 8:1-3 “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did:”

*Taken from “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must pay special attention to the immediate context – not only the verse itself, but the paragraph of the verse.
 - This principle pays careful attention to the physical location of each word and verse and the relationship to other words and verses.
 - God sheds light upon a subject either through passages that are within the same paragraph (or nearby) that establish the theme for that section.
 - What is the setting and the main theme of the passage in light of its immediate context?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”

- This one verse has been used to teach universal atonement & love – a whole doctrinal position overshadowing the rest of Scripture.

What kind of thought patterns should shape our interpretation?

- What immediately precedes this passage?
- Who is speaking and who is He speaking to?
- What is the subject?
- What does the word “world” mean in this context?
- What is the theme of this paragraph?

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The interpreter must recognize that modern chapter and verse delineations in all translations should largely be ignored as they may or may not contribute to the correct understanding of the passage.*

Eph 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Eph 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

1 Co 10:31-33 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

1Co 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

We must be particularly careful how we isolate and use verses!

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize a real cross reference is that parallelism of words or expression where the content or the idea is the same and there is profit from the mutual study of the texts.*

Examples:

- Looking up all passages that contain a concept – such as “Son of Man.”
- When studying Ephesians examine parallel passages with the same word expressions or subject matter in Colossians.
- Studying Romans 9:8 and looking at all the references where Paul uses the word “flesh.”

Note: For these kinds of cross references there are a variety of software tools.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize conceptual cross references where there is a verse or a passage in one book of Scripture that has the identical substance or content of another part of Scripture even though there is no use of common words. The concepts in the passages are identical rather than just the words being the same.*

Examples:

- Heb 2, and Phil 2 discuss the character of the incarnation.
- Rom 3 and Heb 10 both discuss the atonement
- 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20 both discuss the resurrection

Note: A topical reference such as “Nave’s Topical Bible,” or “The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge” or software that has these or other topical helps will assist.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize when two or more books of the Scriptures describe essentially the same events, to obtain the whole picture, the interpreter must compare these parallel accounts, before determining the meaning of the initial passage.*

Examples:

- The events in the life of Christ must be compared as they are differently recorded in the four Gospels (*Harmony of the Gospels* – by A.T. Robertson)
- The life of Paul is recorded in Acts, and pieces of his autobiography are spread throughout his Epistles. The material in Acts will feed the understanding of the setting in his writings – (*A Harmony of the life of St. Paul* – by Goodwin)
- The same historical time frame is covered in the OT by Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize there are ways in which thought can be expressed which cannot be understood by ordinary grammatical examination. A special manner of expression is used, and these special kinds of expressions are called either the literary mold, where mold has the idea of a fixed or standard pattern or genre – genre meaning type, kind, style, or category.*

Examples: All passages must be interpreted within general genre.

In a general sense we divide the Bible as follows:

- Genesis-to-Deuteronomy – The Law and the Pentateuch
- Joshua-to- Nehemiah – The history of Israel
- Job-to-Song of Solomon – The poetic and wisdom books
- Isaiah & Jeremiah – The major prophets
- Lamentations-to-Malachi – The minor prophets
- Matthew-to-John – The Gospels
- Acts – The history of the early church
- Romans-to-Jude – Epistles to the church
- Revelation – The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- There are three circles of literary genre in Scripture, each circle being larger than the other – these are “figures of speech”, “special literary expressions,” or “specific literary genre.”
 - **Figures of speech** – a phrase or complete sentence where the author expresses himself in a manner beyond ordinary expression – three main kinds:
 - **Metaphor** – expresses something by direct comparison, similarity, or parallelism (**Hosea 7:8** “Ephraim is a cake”).
 - **Simile** – functions like a metaphor only uses the words “like” or “as” (**Ex 24:17** “the glory of the Lord is like a devouring fire”).
 - **Hyperbole** – means that some idea or event is stated in an exaggerated manner to show its importance (**John 21:25** “But, there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written”).

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

■ Circles of literary genre in Scripture – continued...

- **Special literary expressions** – used throughout Scripture within the text of a larger work. These include:
 - **Parables, allegories, fables, myths, and riddles** – the interpreter must take these types into account and make exegetical effort to understand them within their contextual purpose.
- Every book of Scripture is cast into a **specific literary genre**.
 - **Acts** – historical, and when not recognized as a transition book and interpreted as an epistle – error occurs.
 - **Job** – a dramatic epic – when statements made by Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, or Elihu are taken as righteous statements or commands used as support for belief – error occurs.
 - **Ecclesiastes** – a book of wisdom when in the context of “under the Sun” is not understood as a phrase for “living under the curse” great confusion exists.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- The interpreter must recognize the genre of a passage or book of Scripture sets the mood or the stance from which all the rest of the book is seen. No book can be intelligently assessed and interpreted without first noting its literary genre.*

Example: Song of Solomon – the most controversial book in the Scriptures. It is either taken allegorically as representing some sort of relationship between God and man (Israel and the Lord, Christ and the Church, Christ and the believer, God and the believer, etc.), or it must be taken literally as theological interpretation of appropriate human sexuality. However, the interpreter determines the genre will effect any effort to correctly interpret the writing.

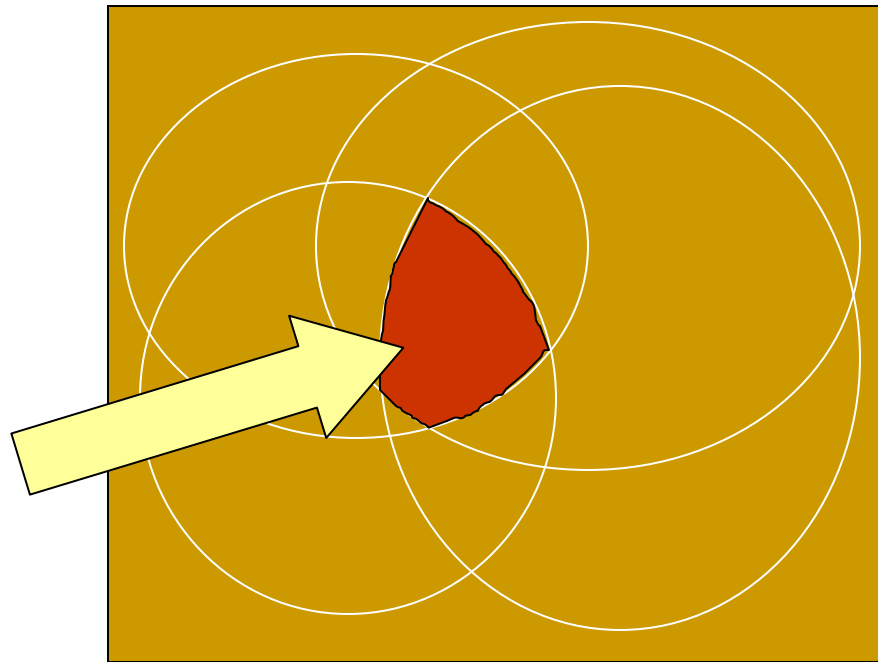
Song 1:4 "Draw me after you *and* let us run *together!* The king has brought me into his chambers." "We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine."

*Taken from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation" Bernard Ramm

Closing thoughts:

- The purpose of the principles is to guide us into the truth – they should become intuitive.
- There is no single principle or rule that will provide us everything we need to understand the truth – it is the combination of the whole working together that narrows us to the truth.

Applying all
tools we find
the glorious
purity of
God's truth!



Foundation of:

- Inspiration
- Illumination
- Integration
- Integrity

Closing thoughts:

There is nothing more important than truth!

- Associated with God – He is the truth!
- Used to set us free – it is liberating!
- It sanctifies – it is enabling!

But, we must mine it! It doesn't come through leisure!

