

February 2008—Is Your Signature Alive?

I've been thinking about the "practical out-working" of my signature on CBM's doctrinal statements.

When I accepted the Lord as a 19 year old at Flint Creek Baptist Church in Philipsburg MT, I knew nothing about the Bible. Until that time I could not have located the Book of John. In fact, I didn't know "what" John was, much less being able to find it, yet I came to the Lord after hearing the Gospel for the first time.

When I trusted Christ, there was no careful study or evaluation of the authenticity or authority of Scripture (not that a dutiful study would be wrong). From my earliest days as a believer, I was convinced—in simple faith—that God's word was . . . well . . . God's Word! I simply believed the gospel and was saved. And I'm not over it yet!

As I began to study and grow, I was delighted to realize there was substance behind my belief. It still thrills me to see what the Bible says about itself:

- ⇒ I love the simplicity with which Jeremiah affirms that what came to him was *the word of God* (Jer. 1:4).
- ⇒ Paul "certified" to the Galatians that the gospel was preached, received and taught as *the revelation of Jesus Christ*; not from man (Gal. 1:11).
- ⇒ Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians because they *received the word of God, and it did an effectual work in them* (1 Thes. 2:13).
- ⇒ Peter makes it clear that our Bible came from God, *not the will of man* (2 Pet. 1:21).
- ⇒ Paul assured Timothy that all scripture was *breathed of God and profitable to equip us to go to work for Him* (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

All who have a formal association with CBM are required to agree that (among other truths) we still believe the Bible is inspired by God. So, at least on paper, we at CBM affirm the Bible is God's Word. When I sign that doctrinal statement, I am affirming that the Bible is not only the foundation of my intellectual conviction, but it is also my final authority for life and practice—and will therefore stabilize my actions and reactions.

As I evaluate, I have to realize what *I say* I believe should in fact affect my lifestyle. I've thought of (ok, sometimes experienced) some possibilities that *could have* more authority over my life than the Bible (go ahead and let that sink in before reading on).

I could let **my emotions** have more authority than God's Word. If I get shook up or depressed and lose my focus, stability or testimony, then my emotions have, in effect, more authority in my life than God's Word. Sad, isn't it?

Circumstances or **people** (it's usually a combination) could have more authority over my life and actions than God's Word! Even the psalmist allowed people and circumstances to affect him for the worst. If this is my tendency, a careful reading of Psalm 73 should convict and then encourage me to get back on track.

Here's a very brief overview of what the Bible teaches that allows us to serve Him more faithfully: God's **love** is shed abroad in our heart (Rom. 5:5), we have **peace** that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7), **strength** to accomplish what He wants us to do (Phil. 4:13), **grace** for any situation (2 Cor. 12:9) and fullness of **joy** (1 John 1:4). We are **complete** in Him (Col 2:10) and have **all things that pertain to life and godliness** as we get to know Him more intimately (2 Pet. 1:3). Wow, now that's what I call Biblical authority in my life!

I've preached for years that in authentic Christianity, you can tell what a person believes by the way they act. In His power—and for His glory, let's live the inerrancy of His Word.

Bill