



## Trustworthy Psalm 1

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Are the \_\_\_\_\_ we have today in Scripture really what came from the prophets and the apostles? Can we \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible to tell us the truth? Today we'll explore the trustworthy \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scriptures. From the days of \_\_\_\_\_, more than 3000 years ago, we have copies of the sacred Scriptures given to us by God. No \_\_\_\_\_ in all of ancient literature has been as preserved, as revered, or as translated as has the Holy Bible. Moses wrote, "The \_\_\_\_\_ things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are \_\_\_\_\_ belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). The Bible is a book of truth, wisdom, commandments, and promises. When God gave us this book He knew just what we needed to live as His children and to have \_\_\_\_\_ life.

Jesus promised, "If you abide in my \_\_\_\_\_, you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you \_\_\_\_\_" (John 8:31-32). By saying this Jesus assured us that we could truly know what the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is for our lives and those truths would set us free from sin and from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world. His insistence that freedom came from abiding in His word causes us to ask if we can \_\_\_\_\_ on the texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament as we have them today.

Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly \_\_\_\_\_ in the heavens." We can trust the Scriptures because we can trust God and the Lord Jesus. God loves us and has always \_\_\_\_\_ us the spiritual guidance and wisdom that we need. We \_\_\_\_\_ His truth, His wisdom, His laws, and His promises. We are utterly \_\_\_\_\_ for the Bible.

### **Our reading today comes from Psalm 1.**

We can have confidence that both the Old and the New Testaments are God's \_\_\_\_\_ writings. We can be confident that what we possess \_\_\_\_\_ is what the prophets and the apostles wrote by inspiration thousands of years ago. Those who copied the sacred Scriptures with great \_\_\_\_\_ gave us what was originally written through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest \_\_\_\_\_ that we can trust the Old Testament comes from the Lord Jesus Himself. He trusted the sacred writings as the authoritative and unbreakable \_\_\_\_\_ of God. In Matthew 4 the Lord Jesus faced down the \_\_\_\_\_ three times with quotations from the Old Testament, from the book of Deuteronomy, saying, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4-7, and also in verse 10). Jesus regarded what was written by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God as true and binding. He trusted its truths so strongly that He refused to \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture and yield to temptation. Again, the Lord Jesus said, "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). When challenged by the Jews, Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ to the Scriptures

written hundreds of years before. He said, “You \_\_\_\_\_ the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to \_\_\_\_\_ to me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40) . Because Jesus regarded the Scriptures as the sole standard of spiritual truth, He told the Sadducees, “You are wrong, because you \_\_\_\_\_ neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Jesus implied that the Scriptures are inerrant and authoritative.

He placed Scripture \_\_\_\_\_ the traditions of men in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. There was nothing more important than the need for men to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the written Word of God. In every instance where Jesus cited the Old Testament, He regarded it as utterly \_\_\_\_\_. For these reasons we can \_\_\_\_\_ with Jesus and hold to the accuracy and the unchanging character of the Old Testament.

In his book, *Can I Trust My Bible*, Old Testament scholar R. Laird Harris affirmed that, “We can now be \_\_\_\_\_ that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 BC ... indeed, it would be rash skepticism now to \_\_\_\_\_ that we have our Old Testament in a form that’s very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity.” Again, Sir Frederic Kenyon said, “the Christian can take the \_\_\_\_\_ Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that what he holds in it is the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”

Some are \_\_\_\_\_ whether we’ll ever be able to know what the Lord Jesus said or what any biblical author actually wrote. In the book *Five Gospels*, skeptic Robert Funk said, “Even careful copyists make \_\_\_\_\_, as every proofreader knows. So we will never be able to claim certain knowledge of exactly what the \_\_\_\_\_ text of any biblical writing was.” Bart Ehrman, a skeptic, challenged our ability to \_\_\_\_\_ what the Scriptures actually are. In his book, *Misquoting Jesus*, he argued that the textual variants make knowing what the Bible actually says \_\_\_\_\_. But these skeptics are not looking at \_\_\_\_\_ the facts. We can know what the New Testament says. In fact, we have a trustworthy New Testament. It is the most well-attested book of all ancient literature; there is \_\_\_\_\_ like it!

Sir Frederic Kenyon, an authority on ancient manuscripts, summed up the status of the New Testament this way, "It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_: Especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically \_\_\_\_\_ that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities.” This scholar said, “this can be said of \_\_\_\_\_ other ancient book in the world.”

Daniel Wallace, a biblical scholar noted, “If someone were to \_\_\_\_\_ all those manuscripts, we would not be left without a \_\_\_\_\_ because the church fathers wrote commentaries on the New Testament. To date, more than one \_\_\_\_\_ quotations of the New Testament by the fathers have been recorded.” Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman agree. They said, “If all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations, that is of the early church fathers] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the \_\_\_\_\_ New Testament.”

Wallace reflected on how many manuscripts we have from the first few centuries after the completion of the New Testament. He looked at the \_\_\_\_\_ and his conclusion is truly startling! Today we have as many as 12 manuscripts from the second century, 64 from the third, and 48 from the fourth—a total of 124 manuscripts within 300 years of the completion of the New Testament. Most of these are fragmentary, but the \_\_\_\_\_ New Testament text is found in this collection multiple times. If you add all the other manuscripts of the New Testament from later days we now have over 5800 manuscripts! We also have thousands of Latin, Coptic and Syriac versions of the New Testament.

How does the average Greek or Latin author \_\_\_\_\_ up? If we are comparing the same time period—300 years after it was first composed—the average classical Latin or Greek author has \_\_\_\_\_ literary remains. More than that, if we \_\_\_\_\_ all the manuscripts of a particular classical author, regardless of when they were written, the total would still average at less than 20 and probably less than a dozen—and they would all be coming much more than three centuries later. In terms of existing manuscripts, the New Testament textual critic is confronted with an embarrassment of \_\_\_\_\_. If we have doubts about what the autographic New Testament said, those doubts would have to be multiplied a hundredfold for the \_\_\_\_\_ classical Latin or Greek author. When we compare the New Testament manuscripts to the very best that the classical world has to offer, the New Testament manuscripts still stand \_\_\_\_\_ above the rest. The New Testament is by far the best attested work of Greek or Latin literature from the ancient world!

Someone asks, “Well what about \_\_\_\_\_ those textual variants?” You may have read where someone says there are \_\_\_\_\_ of variants in the New Testament. Scholars count as a textual variant any place that there is a variation in spelling, wording, word order, or the omitting or adding of words. Scholars count even the most \_\_\_\_\_ changes. Even when all the manuscripts \_\_\_\_\_, if one manuscript differs in the slightest way, this counts as a textual variant.

### **Read Notes 1 and 2 in the text.**

Let’s say that we had fifty people in a room and we asked them to \_\_\_\_\_ one book of the Bible, Matthew, by hand. Could you write out by hand the whole book without any \_\_\_\_\_ of any kind? But if we have fifty people copying the same book, they wouldn’t likely make the same mistake at the same place, unless one of them \_\_\_\_\_ that mistake from the other. If we compared all the fifty copies, we could easily spot where someone \_\_\_\_\_ from all the others in spelling, or whether they varied in word order, or in omitting or in adding something. In such a case we would know the 49 copies were \_\_\_\_\_ and the one made a \_\_\_\_\_.

Professor Jack Lewis of Harding University, one of my own teachers, said, “While recognizing variants in manuscripts, scholars are reasonably well \_\_\_\_\_ on what the reading of the bulk of the New Testament should be. The major \_\_\_\_\_ of the New Testament about God, Christ, and the church are not based on textually disputed passages. The major \_\_\_\_\_ of man toward God and his fellowman are not solely laid out in textually disputed passages. The questions of which we speak are not new in the church; they have been under debate for centuries; they need not be disturbing to \_\_\_\_\_.” You can trust the Bible to be the words that God intended for us to \_\_\_\_\_, to \_\_\_\_\_, and to \_\_\_\_\_.

New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace, notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very \_\_\_\_\_. Most of the differences are \_\_\_\_\_ inconsequential—spelling I errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement in a full \_\_\_\_\_ percent of the time. Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. That means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually \_\_\_\_\_. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in \_\_\_\_\_. That’s about 400 words, and none of those affects any significant \_\_\_\_\_.

Greek scholar, D. A. Carson, sums it up: “The \_\_\_\_\_ of the text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing that we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants.” Even a skeptic like Bart Ehrman has had to admit that, “most scribes, no doubt, tried to do a faithful job in making \_\_\_\_\_ that the text they reproduced was the same text that they inherited.”

Someone may ask, “Well Phil, why are you discussing this?” Occasionally some article comes out in a major magazine that suggests the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_ of mistakes. This information misleads many to \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible as if it weren’t true. But, there simply is \_\_\_\_\_ other book in all of ancient literature that is as copied, as correct, and as trustworthy as the Bible! Because the Bible is God’s sacred word, those who copied it revered it as the very word of God. They copied it because they knew how important it was for us all to know the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. You can \_\_\_\_\_ your Bible to be from God and to teach what God wills for you to know about life and about eternity. Since the Bible is trustworthy, shouldn’t you \_\_\_\_\_ its teaching, follow its commands, and accept its promises?

From the beginning God has always provided for us what we \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus knew how badly we needed to know the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Father. The Lord said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). God has kept this \_\_\_\_\_. We have the Bible more abundantly \_\_\_\_\_ today than ever. Through the centuries authorities have tried burning manuscripts, but the Bible \_\_\_\_\_. Some have done everything in their \_\_\_\_\_ to keep the Bible from being translated, but the Bible survives and is now completely translated into 531 languages; there’s another 2,883 languages that have at least some portion of the Bible. Americans especially have access to the Bible. Eighty-eight percent of the American households own at least one copy, with most owning multiple copies. The average is 4.4. The words of Jesus have not \_\_\_\_\_ away, and they will stand longer than heaven or earth.

The Word of God is available and trustworthy; now what will you do with it? Will you \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word or ignore it? Will you \_\_\_\_\_ its precious promises or close your ears? The Bible will only \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ you when you study and meditate on its teaching, and its instructions, and its promises.

To become a Christian, \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament, \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, \_\_\_\_\_ of your sins, and be \_\_\_\_\_ into Christ Jesus. One is baptized into Christ by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Do it today!