

Our Ultimate Authority

By Jesse Larsen

When someone does not consider the Bible to be the Word of God, we can certainly expect that they will look elsewhere for an ultimate authority. There is something else that is just as troubling as those who frankly admit that they do not consider the Bible to be inspired by God. Some who consider themselves to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:10-11 are more diligent to defend their favorite *teachers* than the Bible itself. This does **not** leave a good witness!

There are many examples of this, but the following is just one example I have come across: there are some self-proclaimed Bereans who are so diligent to defend the teachings of the early "church fathers" that one might think they read an erroneous translation of Acts 17:11 that says the Bereans "searched the writings of the church fathers daily to find out whether these things were so." I have also come across a Catholic who has used the teachings of the "church fathers" to try to prove that the Catholic church is the one true church. So apparently, there are both Catholics and professing Bereans who adhere to these teachings. I do not intend to offend anyone by writing this. However, if anyone is angered by those words, then perhaps they need to sincerely examine if **spiritual pride** is their motivation. Are you proud to be adhering to the teachings of certain individuals? Or is your motivation compassion for lost souls? Please think seriously about that. You cannot have it both ways, since "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6).

If God's Word is our ultimate authority, then we should be more concerned about how His Word is represented through the teachings of any man or woman.

When atheists see self-proclaimed Bible-believers who are more diligent to defend their favorite teachers than the Bible itself, they may feel like they have a valid excuse to live like there is no God, since they see no ultimate authority in that case (i.e., God Himself!) – rather just Christians debating over which teachers have the best opinions. That is the kind of thing that has led some people to conclude that there is no absolute truth. However, if God's Word is our ultimate authority, and if "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, then it "*is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" This can only mean that truth comes from Him rather than **ANY** human, including myself. We come to know the truth simply by abiding in His Word: "*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'*" (John 8:31-32).

So, if someone has become more diligent to defend their favorite teachers than the Bible itself, perhaps they have developed more of a fondness for their favorite teachers than an intimacy with God Himself. I can share with people what I have learned from God's Word, and other people can share insights from God's Word with me that I have not seen yet. But we need to remember that His Word is our ultimate authority. Remembering this should keep us from becoming overly defensive of any human teachers, because it will mean that our focus is more on defending God's Word than "teachers." There is nothing wrong with contending for the faith (see Jude 1:3), but it is not truly "the faith" that we are contending for if our focus is mostly on contending for our favorite teachers. In that case, we may only be contending for the pride that we have in adhering to the teachings of certain individuals. For your sake and the sake of others, please be sure that this is not the case. James 4:14 says, "*For what is life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*" And I want people to understand that there are

far more important things to be defending than our pride (which is vanity) during the little time that we have on this earth.