

# The Canonization of Scripture

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[ 0 : 01 ] As I said last time, the story of the Bible is really the story of God's providence. It's the story of Him working throughout history to reveal His will to us in writing.

! And now that we have an understanding of how He inspired the Word, let's consider the process of canonization. When we talk about the canon of Scripture, we're talking about what belongs in the Bible versus what doesn't.

Obviously, the 66 books of the Bible were not the only things ever written throughout biblical history. Perhaps you've heard of books such as the Gospel of Thomas or the Book of Enoch.

When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he indicates that he wrote at least two more letters to them that are not contained in our Bibles. Unsurprisingly, many things have been written about God, about Israel, about Christ, and so on, throughout the course of history.

And these books, these letters, these various writings were never added to the 66 books of our Bible. So, when we talk about the canon of Scripture, we're talking about those books that actually belong in the Bible.

[ 1 : 25 ] Now, the word canon comes from a Greek word that actually comes from a Hebrew word that quite literally refers to a reed. That's R-E-E-D.

We're talking about a reed plant. These are plants that grow very straight, usually by the water. A bamboo, for example, is considered a reed plant. And in ancient history, a reed was used as a measuring stick.

It could also be used to determine whether or not something was level. So, when we refer to the canon of Scripture, we're talking about those books that measure up, if you will.

Do they meet the criteria? Do they belong in the Bible? Well, what is the criteria? What did God's people look for in any given book or writing that would indicate that it belongs in the canon of Scripture?

Well, it should come as no surprise that they were looking for books of divine authorship. They were asking themselves, did God write this?

[ 2 : 33 ] Now, they were well aware that the words would be transmitted through human authors, but they still needed to be of divine origin. And that's really what it came down to.

Did God write this? If so, it belongs in the canon. If not, well, it could be a helpful resource, but it does not belong in the canon.

Now, let me make a really crucial distinction from the start of this. The canon of Scripture was not created by men.

It was recognized by men, but not created by men. In recent years, it's become a popular conspiracy theory to assert that a secret cabal of men meeting behind closed doors decided what belongs in the Bible and what doesn't.

And usually, this theory implies that these men had maybe nefarious purposes or less than noble purposes. Maybe they were choosing books that would be most favorable to their king and scrapping those that might, I don't know, undermine his power.

[ 3 : 47 ] If you've ever read the Da Vinci Code, you probably know what I'm talking about. In that book, Dan Brown portrayed the most popular version of this theory where the Council of Nicaea in 325 decided collectively what books belonged in the Bible.

And it was really Emperor Constantine who was pulling the strings telling those men what he wanted in the Bible and what he did not. Well, sadly, many people have run with this theory despite the fact that it has no historical evidence at all.

It is purely fiction, and Dan Brown himself would admit that it's fiction. It may sound plausible, but that's not what happened. In fact, the canon of Scripture was not really the agenda of the Council of

Nicaea.

They weren't discussing the canon. They met together to address the Arian controversy, which claimed Christ was scripted. That Christ was created by God the Father and not co-eternal with him.

So, if you remember nothing else from today, remember this. The canon of Scripture was not created by men. It was simply recognized by men.

[ 5 : 01 ] In other words, the canon existed well before men recognized and identified the various books of the canon. As one author said, the church never canonized books by its own authority.

Instead, it recognized books' inspiration and canonicity, and it had a functioning canon long before it attempted to define the canon. Maybe an illustration would help.

Think of a federal agent who specializes in detecting counterfeit money. And let's say he's given a couple of dollar bills to examine, and after looking at them very closely, he determines that one is genuine and one is counterfeit.

Now, he does not give the genuine dollar bill any value whatsoever. He doesn't have that authority. He doesn't have that power. All he is doing is recognizing the value of the genuine bill while also recognizing the worthlessness of the counterfeit bill.

And the same is true with the Bible. God's people are not choosing books and bestowing authority on them. They are simply recognizing the intrinsic authority of God-inspired books.

[ 6 : 19 ] They discovered them, they recognized them, and they submitted to them because they already carried the authority of God's Word. Now, the big question is, how did they know they were reading God's Word?

What were they looking for that would clearly identify a book as God-breathed? Well, we'll talk about a few of their considerations, especially regarding the New Testament, but at the heart of it was the Bible's own affirmation.

Now, that's not to say each genuine book of the canon has this declarative statement that emphatically says, this is the Word of God, I belong in the canon.

But each book is self-attesting, meaning each book bears witness to its own divine origin. And when the Spirit of God works within believers, we can know we are reading the very words of God.

In John 16, verse 13, Jesus said, When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. It's like that federal agent who's been trained to distinguish between genuine currency and counterfeit money.

[ 7 : 41 ] He knows the real thing when He sees it. Well, God's Spirit gives God's people that same kind of discernment regarding Scripture.

Paul tells the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 13, We also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the Word of men, but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers.

So God inspires the Word, and then He equips His people with the ability to recognize it as His Word.

As Jesus said, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. So, with that in mind, where did the canon begin?

How did the Bible begin to develop into the 66 books we now know? Now, this is somewhat of a trick question. You see, it's believed that the book of Job is actually the oldest book of the Bible.

[ 8 : 54 ] It's believed that it was written around the time of Abraham, so before Moses. But if we're following the biblical account of when God's people actually recognized the various books as part of the canon, we'd have to start, not with Genesis even, but in the middle of Exodus.

So, in Exodus chapter 20, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. Then at the end of Exodus 31, we read in verse 18, God gave to Moses, when He had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, the Ten Commandments, tablets of stone written with the finger of God.

So, God personally inscribes the Decalogue into these stone tablets. And what does He tell Moses to do with these tablets? Well, several times throughout the book of Exodus, He tells them, tells him to put them in the Ark of the Covenant.

Of course, those original tablets were destroyed. So, in Deuteronomy 10, we read, At that time, the Lord said to me, Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood.

And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark. So, this is really the first time in the biblical account that we see God not only giving man his words in written form, but we also see Him insisting that these words be held on to, that they be preserved.

[10:41] I mean, He wrote them in stone, after all. You can hardly preserve words better than writing them in stone. And when they were inscribed, He instructed Moses to put them into the ark, which, of course, was to be kept with them from that day forward.

So, these were to be permanent, as permanent gets in this world. So, at the very least, we know the Decalogue belongs in the canon. But we also know that God continued to give His word, specifically His law, to Moses.

And when we come to Deuteronomy chapter 31, we read, So, this is clearly God adding to the canon.

And none of the Israelites would have disputed that. They were all well aware that God was giving Moses His words. It may have taken them 40 years to embrace that, to really accept all of that. But at this point in the timeline, they know that the words Moses is writing are of divine origin. So, they belong in the canon, and they were placed right alongside the ark where the Ten Commandments were held.

[12:16] So, now we have not only the Decalogue, but now we have, basically, the five books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

And let me point out something else that the Israelites would have clearly understood. This is what God says to them in Deuteronomy 4, first two verses.

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

So, as the Israelites move into the land of Canaan, they will take with them the current canon of Scripture, which includes those five books of Moses. And within that canon, God very explicitly tells them, do not add to or remove from the words that I have given you.

[13:27] And yet, what happens once the Israelites cross the Jordan into Canaan? Well, Joshua begins adding to the canon. Here's what we read in Joshua chapter 24.

Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law. That is, the book of the law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

And Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Well, this seems pretty brazen.

God says, don't add to my law, and here is Joshua adding to his law. And it's not as though Joshua was the only one who knew that God's law wasn't to be added to.

All of Israel knew this. So, how could Joshua get away with this? Well, God's prohibition was against men adding to the canon, or adding to his word, or adding to his law.

[14:34] He, as the author, he can add to it whenever he likes. And both Joshua and the Israelites recognized that Joshua was recording divine words.

What he was writing was of divine origin. Therefore, it belonged in the canon. So, they took these words, and they included them in the book of the law of God. And, of course, this process would continue throughout Old Testament history.

When the people of God recognized the voice of God, they included these books in the canon.

Now, we don't necessarily know the details of every book's inclusion along the way, but we do know that by the first century, God's people recognized 22 books as belonging to the canon.

The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the latter part of the first century, says this, Now, if you were paying attention when I read that, you might be thinking, wait, we have more than 22 books in the Old Testament.

And that's right, we have 39. However, the Hebrew Bible was organized differently from our Bibles. And let me show you. Do we have that slide, Ben?

[16:13] Hope that's not too small that you can't read it. As you can see here, they grouped together books that we, I should say we grouped together books, they grouped together books that we have now separated.

So, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are the most obvious. But in the Hebrew Bible, Judges and Ruth were together in one book, Jeremiah and Lamentations were together, Ezra and Nehemiah were together, and all of the minor prophets were grouped together in one book.

And some of this was for very practical reasons. They had to utilize scroll space, which meant combining shorter books into one scroll. Now, you'll also see here that the books of the Old Testament were grouped into three categories.

And this is significant. The law, the prophets, and the writings. And I think these categories are pretty straightforward, with a few exceptions. For example, we might wonder why some of the historical books are included in the prophets.

Or we might ask why Daniel is not in the prophets. Well, we have to understand that these categories are not based merely on literary genre, but on a book's function and a role within God's revelation.

[ 17 : 39 ] The books we might call historical are placed among the prophets because they present Israel's history through a prophetic lens.

In other words, they're not merely recording events like our history books might do, but interpreting those events according to God's covenant, showing how obedience to God brings blessings and disobedience brings judgment.

On the other hand, a book like Daniel, though clearly prophetic, is placed among the writings because part of it's its literary character, part of it's its historical setting.

Daniel was written after or during the Babylonian exile with apocalyptic visions, and there are some wisdom elements in Daniel, and it functions differently from those earlier prophetic books like Isaiah or Jeremiah, which spoke to Israel before the exile.

So the prophets contain the covenant's enforcement throughout Israel, throughout their history, while the writings gather those books that really reflect on life with God in a broader context.

[ 18 : 56 ] But I mention these categories because when we see Jesus referring to the Old Testament, in the New Testament, he uses this threefold division. Of course, since the New Testament had not yet been written, when he refers to the Old Testament, of course he's not going to call it the Old Testament.

Instead, he refers to the law, the prophets, and the writings, or what was sometimes simply called the Psalms. For example, in Luke 24, verse 44, he says to his disciples, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, must be fulfilled.

You see? Those 22 books, identified by Josephus, and others during that time period, are the very same books that Jesus recognized as the Old Testament canon.

And this is significant because those 22 books were not the only books ever written. For example, there was a book commonly known as the Book of Enoch that circulated between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. Now, this book was not actually written by Enoch of the Old Testament, and it was never considered part of the Hebrew canon for multiple reasons. But as I said, it was commonly known, and it was circulated among the Jews along with many other extra-biblical, non-canonical writings.

[ 20 : 35 ] In fact, both Jude and Peter referenced that book in the New Testament. Now, you'll see that they do not cite it as Scripture. It's not one of those as-it-was-written statements.

They use it similar to the way that Paul uses Greek poetry. They just borrowed from it because their Jewish audience would have been familiar with it.

They do not quote it as Scripture. Now, Jesus' affirmation of those 22 books is also significant because Jewish literature shows that some of the books of the Old Testament were actually disputed at one time or another, at least by some people.

And I should mention that these disputes always came well after the books were already recognized by nearly everyone as part of the canon.

So it's similar to people today who would love to throw out Paul's letters from the New Testament. Well, they don't have a very strong argument, especially after the church as a whole has recognized them as inspired Scripture for 2,000 years, right?

[ 21 : 53 ] Well, the primary books that people disputed were Ezekiel, Proverbs, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Esther was probably the most disputed.

one of the complaints was that the book never explicitly mentions God. And maybe you've noticed that yourself. Even so, as the vast, vast majority of people recognized, the entire book is the story of God's providence.

So despite a few people here and there complaining that maybe these books should not be included in the canon, they were recognized by nearly everyone as God's inspired Word. And more to the point, Jesus himself recognized them as God's inspired Word.

So Jesus, Josephus, and the majority of the Jewish people recognized those 22 books and only those 22 books as being the Old Testament canon.

Now, this is also significant because many Bibles have been printed with a section between the Old and New Testaments called the Apocrypha. These were books much like the Book of Enoch which were written between 400 B.C.

[ 23 : 16 ] and A.D. 100. So we're talking about that time period between the completion of the Old Testament and the start of the New Testament. When Jerome, whom we'll talk about later, published his Latin translation of the Bible in A.D. 405, which soon became the most used Bible throughout the world for more than a thousand years, he included the Apocrypha.

When the King James Bible was first published in 1611, it included the Apocrypha. The Catholic Church still includes the Apocrypha in its Bibles considering those books actually canonical. However, Jesus in the early church did not. Jesus and the Apostles never cite or reference any books of the Apocrypha as Scripture.

They cite the Old Testament as having divine authority nearly 300 times, but never the Apocrypha. And even when we see early church fathers talking about the Apocrypha, this is following the Apostolic Era, they are always careful to distinguish it from the inspired writings of the Old Testament.

Even Jerome, he made this distinction. He referred to the Old Testament as the books of the canon, and he referred to the Apocrypha as the books of the church, meaning they could be useful to the church, especially for its historical components.

[ 24 : 57 ] there's some history there, but not for the basis of our theology or doctrine. Frankly, it wasn't until 1546 that the Roman Catholic Church formally identified the Apocrypha as canonical.

It was often used before then, but it was never treated as Scripture before then. Here's what Josephus said in the first century.

From Artaxerxes to our own time, the complete history has been written, referring to the Apocrypha, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, that is, the Old Testament, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.

In other words, it was clearly understood by the majority of people that God had stopped sending prophets. Therefore, the canon of the Old Testament must be closed.

God had gone silent. And even though Jesus didn't quite frame it that clearly, His identification of the Old Testament canon as those 22 books would suggest the exact same thing.

[ 26 : 22 ] That's it. The canon was closed. And if you want to know why there was ever any confusion among anyone about the Apocrypha, whether it belonged in the canon, whether it was part of Scripture or not, it's because I think in large part the method for copying and transmitting Scripture on scrolls changed to writing in codices or what we might think of as a primitive book format.

So the codex, it actually had pages that were bound together, allowed more books, more print, more writing. So you could have multiple books in a single volume.

And that made it much more convenient to carry than individual scrolls which could be laid out for feet upon feet, you know what I mean? But this led some people to maximize the space and include extra biblical books, namely the Apocrypha, in the same codex as parts of the Old Testament.

And you can imagine how someone would naturally get a hold of this and think, oh, that must be part of the canon. In fact, Jerome thought it was part of the canon until he went to Bethlehem to study Hebrew copies of the Old Testament and realized, wait a minute, the majority of Jews do not recognize this as canon.

They do not include it. So even though he went on to include it in his Latin translation of the Bible, he made it very clear in the preface that he did not believe it was part of the canon.

[ 28 : 03 ] And with that, let's move on to the New Testament. Now, if the Old Testament canon was closed, what would it take for any Orthodox Jewish person to think more could be added to the Scriptures?

God had been silent for 400 years. They had already rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture, so what would it take for them to think, hey, God is adding more to the Scripture.

He's adding more to the canon. Well, it would take a significant act of God in the history of redemption. And what was that act?

Well, it was the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah. But there's a problem, because even if one believed Jesus was the Messiah, he didn't give us any books.

He didn't write any books. He didn't personally add to the canon of Scripture. In fact, the only evidence we have of him writing anything ever was when he wrote in the dirt, in the story of the woman caught in adultery.

[ 29 : 11 ] So, if Christ himself is not giving us additions to the canon, how can we accept the supposed additions to the canon by other men, like the apostles?

How could a Jewish person accept them after the canon had been closed for 400 years? Well, Jesus seems to anticipate this dilemma, and he sets a precedent for the apostolic authority.

In other words, he positions and he equips the apostles to write, or at the very least, approve of the next books in the canon.

And we really see this happening throughout the Lord's ministry. For example, in Matthew 10, verse 44, he says, whoever receives you, the apostles, receives me.

And whoever receives me, receives him who sent me. Then in John 14, he promises, these things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

[ 30 : 16 ] But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

So in Matthew 10, we see him passing authority on to the apostles. And in John 14, we see him equipping the apostles for their task, namely, writing the rest of the canon.

And let's not forget that these men are all eyewitnesses. In Luke 24, when he opens his disciples' eyes, what do they see? Well, he shows them himself throughout the entirety of the Old Testament.

And then he says, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.

To remember what he said, to recall, to be taught everything they need to know.

[ 31 : 25 ] So while the Messiah himself would not add to the canon, he personally chose, and he authorized, and he empowered through his spirit the apostles to write on his behalf, or in some cases, approve of the writings of close associates to the apostles, such as Mark or Luke.

And what's interesting is that sub-collections of the New Testament became canonical units even before the New Testament was complete.

For example, the four Gospels were widely circulated and identified as canon even as the New Testament was still being written. By approximately AD 110, writers such as Ignatius and Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, quote the four Gospels as authoritative.

Only 70 years later, Irenaeus wrote, it is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. There are four.

In fact, even before Irenaeus, someone created a Gospel harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So the church was very quick to recognize the four Gospels as part of the canon.

[ 32 : 43 ] And what about Paul? You may remember that he was a pretty controversial figure after his conversion to Christ.

Initially, the church wasn't sure whether to accept him at all. Yet he has 13 letters in our New Testament, plus it was his close companion Luke who wrote the Gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts.

Acts. And it's quite possible that Paul or maybe one of his associates, maybe it was Luke or maybe it was Barnabas that wrote the book of Hebrews. So how did the church come to accept his writings as part of the canon?

Well, once again, it was happening even while the New Testament was still being written. Listen to what the apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 3.

This is verses 15 and 16. Count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

[ 33 : 51 ] There are some things in them, that is Paul's letters, that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures.

Now, I don't know about your translation, but the ESV capitalizes scriptures in this case. Why? It's to make clear that Peter is actually using a word that always refers to the divinely inspired scriptures.

In other words, Peter very readily and very publicly classifies Paul's letters as divinely inspired scripture. So, even if someone in the church felt unsure about Paul's apostolic authority, and those people did exist, the apostle Peter affirms it.

And more than that, he explicitly refers to Paul's writings as scripture. Now, if you're curious about this and wonder which of Paul's letters maybe were already written by the time Peter wrote 2 Peter and made that statement, the answer is all of them.

All of them. It's estimated that all of Paul's letters were written by A.D. 68, and that 2 Peter was written in the 80s A.D. Speaking of 2 Peter, there were at least seven books in the New Testament that were adopted by the church considerably slower than the Gospels or Paul's epistles.

[ 35 : 25 ] And those were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

And the church had various reasons for their apprehensions about these different books. 2 Peter, for example. It concerns some people because its writing style is noticeably different from that of 1 Peter.

In the third century, the man's origin writes, Peter has left one acknowledged epistle, perhaps also a second, but this is disputed.

And this was disputed because 1 Peter is written in koine, common Greek, a very simple form of Greek, while 2 Peter is written in a more sophisticated form of Greek.

Well, that could be explained pretty easily by maybe Peter using a scribe. Or maybe he had a scribe for both letters, and they wrote in different styles.

[ 36 : 30 ] Maybe Peter the fisherman, and I would not rule this out, improved his Greek between the two letters. There was some debate over Hebrews, simply because the author never identifies himself.

James was called into question because they thought it was possible that he was contradicting Paul's teachings on justification. John's epistles, they just seemed too short.

The hesitation over Revelation was due to its wild apocalyptic imagery. People didn't know what to make of it. Now, to us, these may seem like disputes over very trivial details, and they are, but it goes to show you not the controversy surrounding these books necessarily as much as how careful the early church was before adopting new books into this canon of divinely inspired Scripture.

They were not grabbing every book that claimed to be written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle and just adding it to the Bible.

Yeah, let's fill this thing up. No, they wanted to be sure that each book was truly God breathed. As God had said, you shall not add to the word that I command you.

[ 37 : 59 ] Well, when we look at early church witnesses outside of the Bible itself, we see that most of the books currently in our New Testament were recognized as canon by the end of the second century.

And by the end of the fourth century, the church had clearly recognized all 27 books of the New Testament. They were listing them as canon, and they were commonly using them in their preaching and in their worship.

And just like we saw when it came to the inspiration of Scripture, we don't see God dropping this out of the sky. We don't see Him dropping a list of these books from the sky that has a little note attached that says, here's your New Testament.

Instead, we see the providence of God leading the church to read and recognize these 27 books as the word of God and rejecting all others.

It didn't happen overnight, but God's faithfulness soon led the church to possess the complete New Testament. Now, very briefly, let me ask a hypothetical question.

[ 39 : 15 ] What would we do if, let's say, an archaeologist digs up an old letter that was supposedly written by the Apostle Paul? Should we consider adding it to the canon?

I believe the answer is no. Consider how the book of Hebrews begins. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

So remember that the Jews believed the Old Testament canon was closed when God stopped sending prophets. That is, until the Messiah came.

And even though Christ Himself did not write any books, as we've seen, He authorized others to write the books of the New Testament. But now that the apostolic era has ended, those authorized authors are gone, just like the prophets stopped.

[ 40 : 30 ] In other words, Jesus the Son is no longer speaking to us through new revelations. And no one today has the authority to add new ones.

And let's not forget how the last book of the New Testament ends. John writes, I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

While that warning obviously applies to the book of Revelation specifically, it's also fitting that it would come at the end of the biblical canon.

Much like God's people regarded the Old Testament as complete until the next major event in redemptive history, which was the birth of Christ, we should treat the New Testament the same.

[ 41 : 39 ] And what is the next major event in redemptive history? Well, according to the book of Revelation, it's the second coming of Christ.

In short, the canon is closed until the end of the age. God willing, next week we'll talk about how that closed canon got to us over the course of these last 2,000 years.

For now, let's pray. Father, we thank you for not leaving your people in darkness, but for speaking by your Spirit and preserving your Word by your providence.

We praise you that the Scriptures are not the words of men, the inventions of men, but your own voice given to your church and recognized by your people throughout the centuries.

Give us a deeper confidence in your Word, a greater discernment to hear, our shepherd's voice.

Give us humble hearts to submit to all that you have spoken.

[ 42 : 44 ] Let your Word dwell richly among us. Make us wise unto salvation and fix our hope more firmly on Christ, to whom all the Scriptures bear witness, both Old and New Testaments.

And it's in his name we pray. Amen. Amen.