

These are Written

John 20: 30 – 31ⁱ

Not “The Good Parts” Version

If you’ve ever read William Goldman’s book, The Princess Bride, then you may remember that he structured the story throughout as if it were really an abridgement of a much longer work by another author, pretending that the parts we care about, and the parts that made it into the film by the same name, were really, “the good parts version.”ⁱⁱ This was a fiction, of course, a device that he used merely to insert humorous commentary into a text that he himself wrote, but I wonder if we sometimes do in reality to the Bible what Goldman fictitiously claimed to do to S. Morgenstern’s classic tale of true love and high adventure. We take a book like the Gospel of John and focus on the parts that we like. John 1, verse 12:

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: John 1:12 (NKJV)

John 3, verses 16 and 17:

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:16-17 (ESV)

John 6, verse 35:

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. John 6:35 (ESV)

And the list could go on and on. There are so many “good parts” in the Gospel of John, and, for that matter, in all of Scripture. We may even be engaging in a particular variety of this when we publish Bibles with the words of Christ in red, as if the surrounding words, printed in black, were somehow *not* the words of Christ.

Just the other day I heard someone tell a joke about one of the major Grand Rapids publishing houses putting out a special version of the Bible in which all the words of the Holy Spirit would be set off by being printed in black ink... That’s why you have the whole Bible in front of you, and what John said at the end of this amazing book really applies to all of Scripture.

³¹ ...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

And John wasn’t just referring to the good parts, or even “the gospel parts” that we might often go to in evangelistic settings. He was referring to the whole book. At the very end, in John 21, verse 25, in a striking bit of hyperbole, he wrote:

²⁵ Now there are also many other things that 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. John 21:25 (ESV)

So, not everything that Jesus said or did is in here, but again:

³¹ ...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

And by “these” he meant all of these. The good parts, like the one in which Jesus said,

³⁷ ...whoever comes to me I will never cast out. John 6:37 (ESV)

and the difficult parts, like six verses later where He said:

⁴³ ...“Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one *can* come to me

(no one is capable of coming to me)

unless the Father who sent me draws him... John 6:43–44 (ESV)

The first text is suitable for evangelism; so is the second. They are all “the salvation parts” as some are wont to say about certain texts.

³¹ ...**these** are written...

(all of these are written)

so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

The source of these things.

Why is this so? Consider first of all **the source of these things**. This was identified by John in a follow-up letter to the Gospel. 1st John, chapter 1, verses 1 – 3:

¹ That which was from the beginning, **which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands**, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and **we have seen it**, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ **that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you**, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:1–3 (ESV)

So, John makes clear that he was an eyewitness to “these” things. He wrote what he had “seen and heard”. He proclaimed the message of Christ based on his own experience of Christ, as did Peter who wrote:

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty**. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your

hearts, ^{2 Peter 1:16–19 (ESV)}

But if we're paying attention, the reason that we know the substance of their experience is because they wrote it down, and it's worth noting that they did not say, "Now that I have shared *my* experience of Christ with you, go and do thou likewise..." In the very same text just quoted, Peter went on to say,

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. ^{2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)}

So, when we talk about the source of "these" things that have been

³¹ ...written so that you may believe... ^{John 20:31 (ESV)}

we're talking about the **inspiration** of Scripture. We're talking about the Holy Spirit. Article 3 of the Belgic Confession puts it like this:

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit, as Peter says.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is the source of Scripture.

...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. ^{2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)}

The authority of these things

And that explains the authority of these things. The word "authority" itself says it all. It comes to us by way of Old French from the Latin, "auctoritatem", which is itself derived from from the word "auctor", meaning "master, leader," and especially, "author".^{iv} So, the authority of Scripture is derived from the author of Scripture. The authority of the Word of God rests simply in the fact that it is indeed the word **of God**.

Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures... And we believe without a doubt all things contained in them—not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God.^v

²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. ^{2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)}

Afterwards our God—because of the special care he has for us and our salvation—commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit this revealed Word to writing.^{vi}

To which we, as Peter said,

¹⁹ ...will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ^{2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)}

Earlier in the Gospel of John, when many of Jesus' early disciples were turning back and not

following anymore, He turned to the twelve and said, “Do you want to go away as well?”
Then:

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life,** ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”
John 6:68–69 (ESV)

The sufficiency of these things

Which brings us to our third and final point this morning: the sufficiency of these things. We just read about this in Peter’s reply in John 6:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life...**” John 6:68 (ESV)

It was in our text this morning too.

³¹ ...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

But the word “life” in this text is not limited to salvation after you die. In John 10, verse 10, Jesus said:

¹⁰ ...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10 (ESV)

Paul stated the principle as well, in 2nd Timothy, chapter 3, when he wrote to his “true child in the faith”:^{vii}

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted **with the sacred writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

But again, that “salvation through faith” is bigger than simply heaven when we die. Paul went on:

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

(all of this, so)

¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, **equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:14–17 (ESV)

See, the word of God is not found merely in “the salvation parts” of Scripture—it is found throughout—and the life that we receive when we believe in Christ’s name is eternal—yes—but it is also comprehensive.

¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, **equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:14–17 (ESV)

As it says in article 2 of the Belgic Confession:

he [God] makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, **for his glory** and for the salvation of his own.^{viii}

And in article 7:

We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it. For since the entire manner of service which God requires of us is described in it at great length, no one—even an apostle or an angel from heaven, as Paul says—ought to teach other than what the Holy Scriptures have already taught us...Therefore we reject with all our hearts everything that does not agree with this infallible rule...^{ix}

So, the Word of God is inspired, authoritative, and sufficient, and not just the salvation parts, all the parts. As A. W. Tozer once said, “Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian..”^x Or, in the words of John the Apostle:

³¹ ...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 (ESV)

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- i All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).
 - ii William Goldman, *The Princess Bride* (New York, NY: HarperCollins. Kindle Edition), loc. 840.
 - iii Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1988), 79.
 - iv <https://www.etymonline.com/word/authority>
 - v Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds*, 81.
 - vi Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds*, 79.
 - vii Cf. 1st Timothy 1: 2
 - viii Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds*.
 - ix Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds*, 82 – 83.
 - x A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men: Cultivating the Divine/Human Relationship* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2015), 67, quoted at <https://www.reviveourhearts.com/blog/it-takes-whole-bible-make-whole-christian/>