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Question 53 - What are some serious consequences which surface as a result of denying inerrancy?

Harold Willmington
Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

53. What are some serious consequences which surface as a result of denying inerrancy?

Note the words of the following five authors:

A. Wayne Grudem observes:

“The problems that come with a denial of biblical inerrancy are not insignificant, and when we understand the magnitude of these problems it gives us further encouragement not only to affirm inerrancy but also to affirm its importance for the church. Some of the more serious problems are listed here.

1. **“If we deny inerrancy, a serious moral problem confronts us: may we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters also?** This is similar to the point made in response to objection #4, above, but here it applies not only to those who espouse objection #4 but also more broadly to all who deny inerrancy. Eph. 5:1 tells us to be imitators of God. But a denial of inerrancy that still claims that the words of Scripture are God-breathed words necessarily implies that God intentionally spoke falsely to us in some of the less central affirmations of Scripture. But if this is right for God to do, how can it be wrong for us? Such a line of reasoning would, if we believed it, exert strong pressure on us to begin to speak untruthfully in situations where that might seem to help us communicate better, and so forth. This position would be a slippery slope with ever-increasing negative results in our own lives.
2. **“If inerrancy is denied, we begin to wonder if we can really trust God in anything He says.** Once we become convinced that God has spoken falsely to us in some minor matters in Scripture, then we realize that God is *capable* of speaking falsely to us. This will have a detrimental effect on our ability to take God at his word and trust him completely or obey him fully in the rest of Scripture. We will begin to disobey initially those sections of Scripture that we least wish to obey, and to distrust initially those sections that we are least inclined to trust. But such a procedure will eventually increase, to the great detriment of our spiritual lives. Of course, such a decline in trust and obedience to Scripture may not necessarily follow in the life of every individual who denies inerrancy, but this will certainly be the general pattern, and it will be the pattern exhibited over the course of a generation that is taught to deny inerrancy.
3. **“If we deny inerrancy, we essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God’s Word itself.** We use our minds to

pass judgment on some sections of God's Word and pronounce them to be in error. But this is in effect to say that we know truth more certainly and more accurately than God's Word does (or than God does), at least in these areas. Such a procedure, making our own minds to be a higher standard of truth than God's Word, is the root of all intellectual sin.

4. **"If we deny inerrancy, then we must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrine as well.** A denial of inerrancy means that we say that the Bible's teaching about the *nature of Scripture* and about the *truthfulness and reliability of God's words* is also false. These are not minor details but are major doctrinal concerns in Scripture."

(Systematic Theology. Zondervan Publishing, 1994, pp. 99, 100)

- B. Harold Lindsell shares a similar concern regarding the denial of inerrancy:

"It is my contention that once biblical infallibility is surrendered it leads to the most undesirable consequences. It will end in apostasy at last. It is my opinion that it is next to impossible to stop the process of theological deterioration once inerrancy is abandoned. I have said that it is a theological watershed just as the Continental Divide is the watershed for the United States and Canada. The water that flows on one side of the divide ends up in the Atlantic Ocean. The water that flows on the other side of the divide ends up in the Pacific Ocean. But once the water starts down one side or the other, it continues until it reaches its oceanic destination. Errancy and inerrancy constitute the two principles, and which one a person chooses determines where he will end up.

"No matter how sincere a man may be, and however carefully he guards against further theological concessions, they are inevitable once inerrancy is given up. Francis Schaeffer has told conferees at L'Abri that 'the generation of those who first give up biblical inerrancy may have a warm evangelical background and real personal relationships with Jesus Christ so that they can 'live theologically' on the basis of their limited-inerrancy viewpoint. But what happens when the next generation tries to build on that foundation?' I am saying that whether it takes five or fifty years any denomination or parachurch group that forsakes inerrancy will end up shipwrecked. It is impossible to prevent the surrender of other important doctrinal teachings of the Word of God when inerrancy is gone."

(The Battle for the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1976, p. 142)

- A. Gleason L. Archer writes:

"We are faced with a basic choice in the matter of biblical authority. Either we receive the Scripture as completely reliable and trustworthy in every matter it records, affirms, or teaches, or else it comes to us as a collection of religious writings containing both truth and error. If it does contain mistakes in the original manuscripts, then it ceases to be unconditionally authoritative."

(*The Foundation of Biblical Authority*. James Montgomery Boice (ed.), Grand Rapids. Zondervan Publishing House. 1978. p. 93)

B. D. Paul Fineberg adds:

“Suppose for a moment that I am an unbeliever. You have just told me that the Bible has numerous inaccuracies of a historical, scientific, and possibly even ethical nature, but that it is absolutely without error in all of those wonderful, ‘unbelievable’ things about God and heaven. Being a bit cynical, I would likely respond that you stretch the bounds of credulity in asking me to believe all these things that I have no possible way of confirming while at the same time allowing that there are numerous errors in areas that I *can* confirm. Can you blame me? It seems that our Lord sees more connection between the believability of earthly things and heavenly things (Jn. 3:12) than do those who defend limited inspiration.”

(*Inerrancy*. Edited by Norman Geisler. Zondervan. 1981. p. 180)

C. Millard Erickson concludes:

“It is as if we were to hear a lecture on some rather esoteric subject on which we are quite ignorant. The speaker might make many statements which fall outside of our experience. We have no way of assessing their truth. What he is saying sounds very profound, but it might simply be just so much high-flown gibberish. But suppose that for a few minutes he develops one area with which we are well acquainted. Here we detect several erroneous statements. What will we then think about the other statements, whose veracity we cannot check? We will doubtless conclude that there may well be inaccuracies there as well. Credibility, once compromised, is not easily regained or preserved in other matters.”

(*Christian Theology*. Baker Book House. 1986. pp. 227, 228)