Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God Has Spoken--But Why?
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1342

As we look again at our subject of is the Bible believable, tonight we're continuing to talk about the subject of revelation. And by that, I don't mean the book of Revelation, I mean, the subject of revelation. Basic to Christianity is the fact that the Bible is revealed book. That this Book was not written by men. It may have been put down on paper or whatever was used by men, but it was written and authored by God.

This is our commitment, this is our confidence, this our belief, this our assurance. And so basic, I believe, to the Christian is the fact of the inspiration and authority of the Scripture that it is God's own revelation to men. The truths regarding God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and man and sin and all of the facets of information revealed in the Scriptures are the disclosure of God. They are the revelation of God.

Now if we do not believe that this is the revelation of God or if we question that it is, we have no foundation for our faith. Unhesitatingly week in, week out, Sunday after Sunday and then all through the week we teach the word and the teach the word and teach the word and study it and share it and discuss it and minister it. And we must beginningly at the bottom of all that have absolute confidence in its authority and its inerrancy.

But more than ever before the truths of the word of God have been questioned in recent years. The dogma of the authority and inspiration of Scripture is being questioned. It is being challenged. Seminaries challenge the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Pulpits and pulpiteers are set up to fight against the concept of biblical inspiration and authority. And it's an amazing thing, but we shouldn't be surprised.

Because if you went all the way back to the very beginning, you would find that the very first attack on the part of Satan was aimed at discrediting the revelation of the God. In Genesis Chapter 3, in verse 1, Satan said to Eve, "Hath God said?" The first...the first attack of the tempter was to question the word of God. Nothing different. It's still going on.

It'll be that way at the end. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "every Scripture is inspired of God." Later on in that same epistle, he said, "Preach the word for the time will come when they will not endure," what, "sound doctrine. But having itching ears will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts and turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables."

So says 1 Timothy 3 and 4. What about the Bible? What about this dilemma? Is it resolvable? Can we really say what Jesus Christ, who said in John 17, "Thy word is truth." Or do we have to stand along side of Pilate in John 18:38 and say "What is truth?" It will be the purpose of this study as we pursue it to show that we can say with Christ "Thy word is truth."

Now to begin with we've been studying the subject of revelation. Revelation by definition is the act of God by which He has made known what was otherwise unknowable. This information that is herein in terms of its spiritual content, in terms of the revelation of God and His self disclosure is unknowable unless God reveals it. Revelation then is that act by which God makes known what is otherwise unknowable.

And this book is just that. Now we've seen five things to be considered in revelation. The revealer, the revelation itself, the reason for it, the result of it, and our response to it. Now just reviewing very quickly we started talking about the revealer. Who is the revealer? God is the revealer. Hebrews 1, "God has spoken in sundry times and diverse manners." This is the word of God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by," what, "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

God then is the revealer. And we find that in His revelation He reveals Himself to be personal, moral, the source and stay and end of all things and He reveals Himself to be, praise Him for this, available, available to us. And so we met the revealer who is God.

Secondly then, we looked at the revelation itself. And we said that revelation as God has revealed Himself comes into broad categories. God reveals Himself in what we call natural revelation. Now natural revelation as we have seen is made up of two parts, creation and conscience. And the result of natural revelation is a consciousness of God. Natural revelation then is designed by God to give men the consciousness that He exists. And more than that, some idea of His character.

Now we said that natural revelation comes also in two parts. First of all, creation. Creation itself is the revelation of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God," Psalm 19. Romans Chapter 1 and verse 19 and following tells us that the things of God are revealed in the world by the creation so that man is without excuse. He can know His eternal power, His God head, that is absolute deity, and he can know something about the wrath of God, because he finds that God is a moral God.

So God has revealed Himself in two areas of natural revelation. Creation, which is external and conscience which is internal. And through that revelation there is the consciousness of God. And men in the world today, because of what they sense inside and because of what they see outside are conscious that God is, and that's the beginning. "For he that cometh to God must believe," what, "that He is."

And so God by natural revelation establishes in the consciousness of man that He is. Like Einstein said, you have to believe in a cosmic power. A man who does not believe in a cosmic power who is the source of all things is a fool. You have to believe in that. You say well, he's sort of biblical. Yes, because the Bible says "The fool says in his heart," what, "there's no God." That's the word of a fool.

Interestingly enough, the word fool can also be translated to wicked. You know atheists are usually wicked. That's how they get to be atheists. They have wickedly reduced God to non-existence in order to entertain their sin with a sense of moral obligation. A fool denies God because he reasons against his own innate knowledge. He reasons against the most simple and obvious fact and his existence that something had to make everything.

In order for the fool to say the word God, he had to have a concept of God. And if he had to have a concept of God, that implies that God is. So when an atheist comes along and says there is no God, maybe the best answer is there is no, what? There is no God. What's that? I mean, if there isn't one and you've got the thought of one that you had to eliminate. You say well, that's the old analogical argument. Yes, you see, it's impossible to think of something that isn't.

You say well, what about the people who may have dreamed in the future about an airplane. That's simply the putting together of mechanical devices. That's just a modified bird. That's not something that isn't. That's a mechanical thing and that's just putting together the pieces of what is. But to think of an absolute non-existent thing is impossible.

Were the fool to work hard enough to try to eliminate God is testimony that God must be or he wouldn't have to worry about getting rid of Him. You say well, how would a person ever come to that. Romans 1:25 says he develops futile thinking patterns and they result in the rejection of God's existence. Now a natural revelation reveals the consciousness of God. And it tells us that God is glorious. That He is also powerful. You have to believe that when you look at the universe. That He is sovereign. Whoever He is, He's running the show.

And that He is moral, because people can see in the world that generally speaking evil brings evil results and good brings good results. There is a moral entity somewhere in the universe. And only a very wicked man denies it. You can call him a full or a wicked man. It's the same thing. Nature then is God's self-disclosure in man and around him.

Herschel, the astronomer said and I quote, "the broader the field of science grows, the more manifold and irrefutable become the proofs of the eternal existence of a creative and omnipotent wisdom." Van Nadler, the professor of astronomy in Dorpat in Europe said, "No true scientist can be an atheist. Whoever has looked as deeply into God's workshop as we have and has had as much opportunity to admire omnitions and eternal ordering of nature must bow the knee in humility before the rule of a

holy God."

Manausthe professor of medicine and botany at Upsulasaid, "I have seen the footsteps of God." Keplerthe astronomer said "In creation I grasp God as it were in my hands." One of the outstanding Christian leaders of the third century, long time ago, was widely known for his wisdom. And he was once asked where he got all of his wisdom. This is what he said. "The source of all that I have learned is in two books. The one book is outwardly small, the other is outwardly large. The former book has many pages, the latter only two. The pages of the former are white with many black letters on them. One of the pages of the big book is blue and the other is green. On the blue page there is one big golden letter and many small silver ones. On the green page there are enumerable colored letters in red and white and yellow and blue and gold. The small book is the Bible, the large book is nature. These two books belong together. Both testify to the revelation of the one living God. Their testimonies are in harmony and point to the power greatness and love the Lord of the world."

So natural or general revelation gives to man the consciousness of God. But that isn't enough. God went further than that and gave to us what we call special revelation. Now special revelation really came in two parts. First of all, special revelation appears in the Holy Bible, verbal revelation. This is God's verbal disclosure of Himself. Special revelation. Now I want you to notice one thing, only in the Garden of Eden was natural revelation sufficient.

Only before the fall was natural revelation sufficient to lead men to a total knowledge of God. Because you see, they had an absolutely unclouded mind. They had a crystal clear perception. There was no sin. There was no barrier. They could live with God out of the depths of a pure heart before there was sin and so God didn't need to write anything down in the Garden. God didn't need any special revelation.

Natural revelation, the disclosure that all of creation was the work of God that that which was in the man revealed God was sufficient before sin clouded his mind. Cut the cord of life, darkened his intellect and alienated him from God. And once that happened, natural revelation wasn't enough because man was alienated. Oh it was good for him to have the consciousness of God, but the consciousness of God was only to lead him to the word of God.

It isn't enough just to know that God is unless you know who He is. And unless you know what it is that He desires. And so the consciousness of God is to lead men to the searching to find the revelation of God that is specific. And by slow steps and gradual stages, God revealed Himself in special revelation. We say that special revelation as it comes in the word of God was progressive revelation. You know, if you were to read the book of Genesis would you get all the revelation of God? No.

Very limited isn't it? Say if you were to read only the Old Testament, would you get all the revelation of God? No, it's very limited. It isn't that it's wrong, it's that it's progressive. It isn't that it's in error, it's just in progression. You don't get it all until you get it all. God slowly and in stages revealed as much as He desired and finally when the fullness of time was come, He revealed Himself totally in Jesus Christ.

But the revelation was progressive. Did you know that some of the Old Testament prophets according to 1 Peter used to look at what they read and try to figure out what it meant? And they had written it. They would search in their own prophecies to determine the fulfillment regarding the Messiah. So special revelation was a process. First God would reveal Himself in just a small frame, then larger, then larger sometimes to a family, then a tribe, then a nation, then a race, and then the world. And so God's progressive revelation came.

Now, let me add a footnote. You say how were people saved in the Old Testament if they didn't have the whole thing? I mean, if they were somewhere between the consciousness of God and the compilation of the Bible, let's say all they had were the books of Moses, how were they saved? You know what the requirement for salvation was? What is it in every age? Faith. Well, what was it that they had to believe then? Did they have to believe what God hadn't said? What did they have to believe? What He had said. So in any generation of time, the requirement for salvation was that a man believed what God said.

Abraham believed, what, God and it was count unto him for righteousness. In any period of time up until the totality of Scripture was compiled, a man was to live up to that revelation which God had granted. And finally the revelation was complete. Now in special revelation, how did God reveal Himself? Well, I'm just going to review quickly. I told you, first of all in theophany. From phinoand theaswhich means a visible form of God.

Often in the Old Testament God appeared in a visible form. For example He appeared as a burning bush didn't He? The Lord Jesus Christ appeared as an angel, the angel of the Lord. There were times when God's presence was there, such as the Shekinah glory. There was a form to it, Exodus 33. So sometimes God's special revelation was in the form of a theophany. Or an actual appearance of God in some form. Now mark this, God's not a man. "God is a," John 4, "Spirit." And Jesus said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have." So God is not a man. But God could take on any form that He wanted to take on. That's no problem for Him, for the purpose of manifestation.

So God revealed Himself through theophany. Secondly, through prophecy. Now what do we mean by that? Prophecy just means speaking forth, telling forth, announcing, proclaiming, God spoke. How did He speak? In many, many ways. Why I listed for you last week a whole lot of ways. God spoke through the casting of lots. He revealed His will through casting lots. Then He spoke through dreams. And He spoke through visions. And He also spoke directly and verbally. How many times

have you read the prophet saying "Thus saith the Lord." And sometimes He spoke face to face, like He'd come down nose to nose with somebody and in a verbal confrontation in private way He would communicate. Doesn't mean that God was literally there in a body, but God came down and spoke verbally, face to face.

Now the last two that I mentioned, God's direct verbal speaking, God's said and the face to face seem to be the dominant ways that God revealed Himself in terms of prophecy. Now you can study throughout the Old Testament and you'll find this to be a very common thing. Let me show you just a couple of verses to show you what I mean by God speaking or God confronting face to face.

Deuteronomy 18:18, "I will raise them a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee and put My words in his mouth. And he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." Now here's the prophecy of Christ, but it is a perfect picture of a prophet. "There's coming a prophet and I will put My words in his mouth. And he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

Now that was the characterization of a prophet in general. He spoke God's words. So God's self-disclosure, God's special revelation was a verbal revelation. In Jeremiah 1:9, listen to this, the commissioning of Jeremiah the prophet. "Then the Lord put forth His hand," and of course this is an anthropomorphism, that means it's putting God in human terms, God doesn't have a hand. "The Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth." Jeremiah said something touch my mouth. God place His hand, as it were, on my mouth. "And the Lord said unto me behold I have put My words in thy mouth."

Now when old Jeremiah opened up his mouth you know what came out? God's word. God used human instruments to be the vehicle of revelation. Now this becomes very much a pattern and a standard procedure for the prophets. Look at Ezekiel, you find the same thing in Chapter 3, verse 4. "He said unto me, Son of man, go get thee unto the house of Israel and speak with My words unto them. Speak with my words unto them."

That was the characteristic of a prophet. He spoke with God's words. Verse 26 and 27 of the same passage in Ezekiel 3, "And I will make thy tongue cling to the roof of thy mouth that thou shalt be dumb and shalt not be them a reprover for they are a rebellious house." He will put words in his mouth and sometimes He won't. And He'll leave them without words to here.

But verse 27, "But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth and thou shalt say unto them thus saith the Lord God." And so there was the very stringent characterization of a prophet. He spoke God's words and only God's words. God could silence him or God speak through him. Now do you remember the first great prophet that we know about? The man by the name of Moses.

In Exodus Chapter 4 we find an interesting account. The Lord has said to Moses that he is to go out and preach, proclaim. And Moses said to the Lord, "Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant, but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." What he was saying was I have a speech impediment. You know, he was saying God, I...I...I...I...I stutter.

I've got a problem. And I love this answer. "And the Lord said unto him who made man's mouth?" Isn't that tremendous. Who do you think made your mouth? I think if I made it, I can make it go. Or who makes the dumb, the deaf, or the seeing or the blind, have not I the Lord. Now therefore go and I'll be with your mouth." Oh what I promise. I wish to God that I was a prophet, but I'm not in the day of prophets. I have to dig it out and I praise God for His truth in the word of God, but how fantastic it would be to have no preparation.

And then when people come to me afterwards and say I made a mistake I'd sorry fellow, no way. Now I have to say yeah, right I probably did. So He says who made your mouth, I did. Verse 12, "Now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." What a tremendous promise.

Well, you go on further. Moses the great hero, you know, that we think he is was really a weak character. He said, "Oh my Lord send I pray thee by the of Him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of Lord was kindled against Moses and He said is not Aaron the Levite they brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold he comes forth to meet thee and when he sees thee he will be glad in his heart, and thou shalt speak unto him and put words in his mouth and I will be with thy mouth and his mouth and teach you what you shall do."

You know, Moses messed up by not believing God and had to go through his whole life whispering everything in Aaron's ear and Aaron announced it to the people. "And he shall be the spokesman unto the people," verse 16. God said I made your mouth. This was standard procedure. This was the way God spoke His word through the mouths of His servant. This is special revelation, verbal revelation. The Spirit of God came upon them and they spoke the word of God. That's the standard procedure in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament with the apostles who are responsible for the writing of Scripture.

And so God spoke through human instruments. That's prophecy. So you have theophany and prophecy and thirdly miracles. And I want to speak to this a minute. God revealed Himself in special revelation in terms of miracles. Now watch this, those three areas make up the testimony compiled in the Bible. The Bible includes the appearances of God, right? And what is the ultimate theophany? The ultimate incarnation of God, what is? Jesus Christ.

The Bible also has all the prophetic statements that God wanted recorded and the Bible also records thirdly the miracles. So the visible presence of God, prophecy or the spoken word of God and miracles are the composite disclosure of God that then was put together in the word of God to make up the Bible. You say well, how John do miracles reveal God?

You see any miracle is a revelation that God exists. Anything that violates the human order. Anything that alters the normal human course of events indicates an intervention by a higher power. Do you see? It's no problem for God to do a miracle. He made the world a miracle just like sticking His finger in the pond and making waves. C. S. Lewis points out so very well in his book on miracles, which is something every Christian really ought to read, that when God makes a miracle, it doesn't go bouncing through the world and create havoc all the rest of the time until Jesus comes. It has a way of just flowing back in.

For example, Jesus stands at the grave and says Lazarus come out. And you know Lazarus came out, took his grave clothes off him, he went over had dinner, and a few years later died. You see the miracle occurs and then goes right back into the natural stream again. It doesn't go pounding and bouncing through chaotically. God just makes ripples and the ripples go and they hit the shore and they're done.

God can intervene any time He wants. If there's anybody out there, He can stick His finger in the pond and make a wave. That's a miracle. And every time a wave was made, God was saying I'm here. Do you recognize that? I'm up here. Now the unregenerate world has difficulty accepting miracles because they don't like to accept God. The liberals, amazing, David Hume, don't recommend that you read David Hume, it's really bog you down. But he's written thing called the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding.

He says that experience shows the laws of nature to be absolutely unalterable. So he says, therefore, miracles are ruled out. Furthermore, no miracle has ever been observed in any age by any person. Isn't that interesting? It's nice of David Hume to tell us that. And he said, those who did testify to miracles were not telling the truth. He stands on his square inch in his own little century and lives his own 60 years and tells what happened all throughout history. You see he just says there were no miracles, no one ever saw one, and everybody who said they saw one in the Bible lied or were misled.

Renan in his book Life of Jesus, regards Bible miracles as legends. For example, he explained the raising of Lazarus this way. Lazarus faked being dead. You know why? He was so much a lover of Jesus Christ and people were being critical of Christ and he wanted people to really believe in the power of Christ, so he faked being dead and set up a phony resurrection. And he got himself laid in the tomb and then he had Mary and Martha pull off the deal. Jesus came down, everybody was gathered around, a big deal, come out and he came out and he never was dead.

Jesus never healed anybody, Renan says. He only aided people who were sick by His gentleness and they felt better. And His followers tagged them miracles. At the see of Galilee, for example, Jesus was not walking on the water, but standing on a very heavy growth of lily pads. At the feeding of the five thousand a large quantity of food was stored in a nearby cave and Jesus knew about it, got some guys to sneak it out and the disciples thought it was a miracle.

Now friends that is denial of biblical authority and it takes more faith to believe a stupid explanation like walking around on a heavy growth of lily pads. How stupid? From a responsible mind. Jesus' miracles were for the sake of revealing that He was God. He said, "Believe me for the very," what, "works sake." Miracles are the self-disclosure of God.

They're not amusement. That's why Jesus wouldn't do them when people demanded them all the time. They are revelatory and the point to redemptive truth. Mark those two terms. Miracles are revelatory and redemptive. They are revealing of God and they are to point to redemption. I'm going to say something that somebody might misconstrue, it's a guarded statement and I've thought it through. Biblical miracles, because they are revelatory, are not for this age. The cannon of Scripture is closed, and we'll get into that, the revelation of God is closed. God is not revealing Himself today apart from His word.

This is His revelation. And as I said earlier, this is the danger in people running around saying God revealed Himself to them and God spoke to them and they had a vision and etc., etc. This is the cannon and it's closed. All revelation came through the holy prophets of the Old Testament or it came through the apostles and those people who were near Jesus Christ, they were the biblical writers. The cannon of Scripture is closed. Revelation is closed. All that God intends to say, He has said in His word.

So in the truest sense, biblical miracles don't happen today. Now this doesn't mean He doesn't work in wonderful ways. It doesn't mean that God doesn't work in unusual ways. It doesn't mean that God doesn't heal. But the label miracle should be applied only to those special extraordinary ways in which God has operated in the past in His universe which is both revelatory and redemptive and then is recorded in the pages of the word of God.

And these three areas, theophany, prophecy, and miracle make up the totality of God's special revelation and then God took all that He wanted of that information and put it in the word of God. And so this Bible is a composite of theophany, prophecy, and miracle, and in it God is revealed.

Now that gives to man notice. The intellectual knowledge of God. More than just a consciousness that God is, he reads the word of God, the Bible, the verbal revelation and then he understands the facts about God. This is to give to man the intellectual knowledge of God beyond just the sense that

there is a God. This defines Him more clearly.

But what is the purpose? What is the purpose of all of this? To lead to the next step. Who is that? Christ. You see the consciousness of God is meant to lead you to the word of God, which gives you the intellectual knowledge of God which leads you to Christ. What did Jesus say to the Jews? He said, "search the Scriptures and who will you find there? You'll find me there. For they are they which," what, "testify of me."

And so God has not only given a verbal revelation, but a verbal revelation to lead to a living revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's standard. When a man comes to Jesus Christ, it isn't just the consciousness of God, it isn't just the intellectual knowledge of God, it's the spiritual knowledge of God that equals what? Salvation, and that brings man right back to God. And that's the pattern of God's revelation.

If the revelation doesn't lead you to Jesus Christ, it's incomplete. Isaiah even with all God said wanted more, did you know that? Isaiah heard a lot. God said a lot, but he wasn't satisfied. He says, Verily, God I've heard everything you've said so far, but you're still a God who hides yourself. Listen to what Isaiah said, I love this. He said, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down." God you're hiding, why don't you split the heavens and get down here?

Did He? That's exactly what He did. Jesus is not the bringer of revelation, He is the full and living revelation. "God who at sundry times and diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Jesus is the revelation of God. And so God's written revelation is to lead to God's living revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ. God in human flesh.

Oh there's so much we could read about that. There's a marvelous statement in John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath," what, "declared Him." Yes, and so God's special revelation two sides, the Bible, the living Christ. And so God discloses Himself to man.

Jesus talking to His disciples in John 14 and gathered around for the last time, the night before He was betrayed and executed. Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And He said, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father." And Philip said, "Lord, could you show us the Father?" What did Jesus say? "Have you been so long with me Philip and you don't know that if you've seen me," what, "you've seen the Father." He is the revelation of God. He is the self-disclosure of God.

And all this is to bring men to that knowledge which gives them the spiritual knowledge of God equals salvation and places them back in a relationship to God. So there's the revelation. Now let me go a

step further. Thirdly, in our little look at this is the idea of the reason. Why was the revelation given then? In one word it starts with S. Salvation. That's why it was given. God wants to restore man.

You say well, God is self-sufficient. What does He need? I mean, Acts 17:25 says "As though He needed anything." Why the Old Testament? Why the New Testament? What does God need? You know what God needs? God needs to fulfill His love and He loves us. And the fulfillment of His love is to bring us to Himself.

You know as I thought about this and just kind of thinking about the simplicity of what our salvation is, I thought there are really things God wants from us in the New Testament. He wants us to be friends, to have fellowship, and to be family. Friends, fellowship, family, that's what God wants.

Abraham was called a friend of God, wasn't he? Jesus wants to bring us into personal intimate relationship with God because that is God's desire. God wants us to be with Him. John 4:23, "The hour comes and now is when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." Listen, "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

Did you know that God seeks you? Why? The Son of man has come into the world to do what? "Seek and to save that which is lost," Luke 19:10 says. God desires first of all that we be friends, not enemies, not rebels, not foes, friends. And this is what He said. "This is my commandment that you love one another," John 15:12. "Greater love hath no man than this than a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call ye not servants for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." In other words, a servant isn't in on the decision-making. "But I have called you friends." Not servants, not slaves, friends.

It's exciting to thinking about God wanted us to be a friend. In the purest sense of all that that means. And secondly, He wanted us to be a fellowship. He wanted to create a something even closer than friendship. Now in my judgment, friendship is here, family is here, and fellowship is even closer. Fellowship is the epitome of friendship, because fellowship means the intimate interchange of life. God wanted us to be friends. Jesus used the idea of friends in the gospel.

And then when you come to 1 John, you find out that John uses the concept of fellowship. "That which was from the beginning," concerning Christ, "which we've heard and seen with our eyes and looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of life. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

You know what that means? That means partner, koinonas, means a partner. First we're just a friend and that's good and that's fulfilling. Then all of a sudden we become a partner. And then you move a little further along and you find out that as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:19, "God's made us

family." We are part of the household of God. And the Bible says in Hebrews Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and over and over and over and over again we're called children in 1 John.

So friends, fellowship, family, God desires us. He wants us for intimacy. The Bible even looks to a day when the fullness of all that that means is going to happen. I think about 1 John, "Beloved now are we the sons of God, but it doesn't yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." I mean, it's nice to be a friend. It's better to be in fellowship. It's better to be family, but oh to be like Him. This is God's desire to bring men to Himself.

Mr. Standfast, one of the great characters of John Bunyan in Pilgram's Progress dying said these words. "I am now going to see that head that was crowned with thorns. To see that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight and I shall be with Him in His company I delight myself." I think that's the anticipation of every Christian, isn't it?

But did you know that's the anticipation of God? Did you know that the Old Testament says "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints?" Do you know why? Because He wants them. God has spoken to bring man to Himself. But you know it isn't to accomplish this because men are sinners and there's a big barrier in the way.

I mean, it's a case of paradise regained isn't it? Because paradise was lost. Men were alienated. Man is a rebel. I mean, man is really a rebel. Ecclesiastes 9:3 says, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart of the man is deceitful of all things and desperately wicked." You know, you can back...you say well, they got more evil toward the end there. No, no. You can go back to Genesis 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." That's in Genesis friends.

And nothing's changed, except evil men are worse and worse. And you start reading in the New Testament, you find the same thing. You come to Romans Chapter 3 and you get a characterization of men that really just lays them bare. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one." And that's for the one who say there is no righteous, but me. So he says, there's none righteous, no not you.

Verse 11 says, "There's none that understands. There's none that seeks after God. They're all going out of the way there become unprofitable." That's sour milk. It's a term used to turn sour. They've all gone sour, the whole human race. "There is none that does good, no not one. There throat is an open sepulcher with their tongues they've used to seek the poison of snakes is under their lips." Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. There's a progression. You start with the throat and then the tongue and then the lips and then it comes out of the mouth.

And Jesus said in Mark 7, "Whatever's inside is going to come out." It's the things that come out of a man that defile him. So men are evil. Men are wicked. Their devices are against God. Titus 1:15, have you ever thought about this verse? "Even their mind and conscience is defiled." God has given them a mind to think with and a conscience to be convicted by, but those things don't even function they're so tainted with sin.

And so God looks at man and says I want you for friends and fellowship and family and ultimately I want you to be like Jesus, but you've got a problem. And so God had to come and it had to be more than just the revelation of Christ, there had to be the atoning death of Christ. You see? To pay the penalty for sin. Listen, the word God as it goes out this word right here has power to transform lives, doesn't it?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by a speech or the word about Christ. Boy you read this book and it can save. It does all the time. It's powerful, for the word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It's powerful.

I never knew anybody that really gave themself to reading that book that didn't see the power in it. Boy it's potent. I mean, it changes my life daily. And when God puts something in here it has the power to accomplish. Listen, Isaiah 55:11 God said, "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth. It shall not return to me void. It shall accomplish that which I please. It shall prosper in the thing where unto I send it." God said, if I say it has the power to accomplish what it's intended to accomplish. The power of the word.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto," what, "salvation." To everyone that believes. Listen, this word can bring a man to Christ and this word can transform a man into a child of God. That's the reason. The reason for revelation is to bring men to God. This book is the revelation about salvation in Christ. That's what it's about.

God didn't write it as a bunch of...sort of an almanac of spiritual clichÃ©s. God didn't write this to be a whole lot of little religious curiosities. This is a guide book to bring you to Christ which is to bring you to God so He can have you as friends and fellowship and family. The whole Bible's all about Christ. The whole thing is meant to bring you to Christ.

You know there are people who study the Bible for it's literary value. That's what Anita Lukesaid on television the other night. Oh I read the Bible every day for it's literary value. You can go to Hell doing that. That's right, because that's not what it's for. Listen to what Paul said to Timothy. He said, "Timothy you continue in the things that you've learned and been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them and that from a child you have known the holy Scriptures." Listen, the holy

Scriptures, right here. "Which are able to make you wise unto salvation." That's right, that's what it's for.

This will make you wise unto salvation. It's to lead you to Jesus Christ. It doesn't do any good to have a Bible if you don't come to Christ. Listen to what John said. John 20:31, "These are written." Why John? Why is all this stuff written down? What's the reason? "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through His name." That's why it's written.

In fact, in Revelation 19:10, it says, "The spirit of all prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." That's what it's all about. So the reason for revelation redemption. Fourthly and quickly, what are the results? What are the results of revelation? Well, number one just saw salvation. As the results of this word...do you know what this word does, it saves people.

The result is, first of all, salvation. Have you ever listened to these words from Peter? "Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God which lives and abides forever." 1 Peter 1:23. Peter says you're born again by the word. One of the purposes of the word is salvation. And he says "all flesh is like grass, you know, and the glory of man is like the flower of grass, the grass withers and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

Salvation, did you know Peter says it's for something else too? He said "As new born babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may," what, "grow by it." It's not just for salvation, it's for growth. You know, you can be saved by the word and stay a spiritual infant all your life or you can grow. The word is for growing.

Long for it. I love Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants after the water brook, so pants my heart after thee." What a verse. Well, you think about David and somebody asked me yesterday what made David a man after God's own heart? That's what made him a man after God's own heart. He panted for God like a deer for water. "So pants my heart for thee." But you know it isn't just for salvation and just for growth. The word is also for holiness. The word of God is the thing which purifies you.

Listen to the words of James in James 1:21, "Wherefore, put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness and receive with meekness the engrafted word." The word is that which purifies and is able to save your lives. John 15:3, Jesus said that "My word is like a pruning instrument, it purges you." Remember He said "I am the vine and you are the branches." And He talked about how important it was that the Father tend the branches and he said, "now are you clean through the word which I've spoken to you." The word is the cleansing agent. The word is the knife that prunes off the suckling branches, the sucker branches.

Spurgensaid it is the word that purges the Christian. It is the truth that purges him. The Scripture made living and powerful by the Holy Spirit effectually cleanses the Christian. He said affliction is the handle of the knife. Affliction is the grindstone that sharpens the word. Affliction is the dresser that removes the soft garments and lays bare the diseased flesh so that the surgeons knife may get at it. And the knife is the word.

And so the word is for salvation and for growth and for holiness. And you know something else, just general the word is for blessing. It is. You study the word, and I'm telling you you're going to get blessed. Let me take you back to James 1. He says, verse 22, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves." Nothing more self-deceiving than to think that you just hear. And you know, that can happen in a situation like this you come and say wasn't that nice, we heard the word and take all your little notes and go out and live like you always live?

Don't kid yourself. You haven't learned it until you've done it, did you know that? You haven't learned it until you've done it. You haven't learned it because you heard it. You've learned it when its part of you. So he says, "Don't be hearers of the word, but doers." For if you're a hearer of the word, you're like a guy who looks at his face in the mirror and walks away and forgets what he looked like.

You've had that happen. You got to work and forgot men that you had a cowlick sticking up in the back and didn't know until you took your coffee break. Oh have I looked like that all day? Maybe you ladies have realized that too if one of those things was crooked and or your lipstick started here and ended here, you know.

But listen to this, "But who so looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it." "Whoever is saturated in the truths of the word of God," particularly in this text it regards love, but "whoever is saturated in the word of God he is not a forgetful hearer, he is the doer, this man shall be blessed."

See, blessed. I don't know about you, but I like to be blessed. Oh listen the word will accomplish its purpose. It can save, it can give growth, it can purify, and it can bless. And you'll let it, it can accomplish that. Isaiah 40 says this, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God shall stand forever." Isn't that great.

And Jesus said "not one jot and not one tittle shall ever be removed from this Book." It stands. Close with this, John, what should by my response? This is revelation. How should I respond to it? Let me just tell you simply. One, believe it, believe it. You say, well, I know that. Well, just I want to remind you. Believe it. You know, our response should be like Peter. We should say "Lord to whom shall we go thou hast the words of eternal life." We should be open to receive every word. It's enough. It's sufficient.

Jesus said in Luke 16:31, "If they don't hear Moses and the prophets they won't be persuaded until someone rises from the dead." Miracles isn't the route to go if they don't believe they word, they wouldn't believe miracles either. Believe it as is. Take it as the revelation of God receive it.

Second, study it. You know, you ought to be like apolis. You ought to mighty in the Scriptures and so should I. You know, when you study it, it has its fruits. I always think of the guys on the road to Emmaus and Jesus opened the Scriptures and taught them the things concerning Himself. And you know, when He finally showed them who He was and left, they said hey, "Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us." When we study the word, man it just sets your heart on fire. Study it. And Paul said to Timothy, "Study to show yourself," what, "proved of God."

Let me give you a third one, honor it. Honor the word. The image of Diana was honor in Ephesus because they thought it fell from Jupiter out of heaven. So they worshiped a ugly, gross, black, horrible looking thing. But it fell from Jupiter they said, so they honored it. You want to know something, this beautiful thing fell from God. Honor it, honor it. It's worthy. Job honored it. Job 23:12, the Psalmist honored it. Said it was better than gold, more priceless than rubies.

Let me give you another one. Along with honor it, love it. Remember Psalm 119:97, "Oh how I love thy law." Love it. If you haven't learned to love it yet, you haven't really arrived. That's where the joy is, love it. Fifth, what have I said? Believe it, study it, honor it, love it, fifth, conform to it. That's obedience friends. Do what it says.

Remember in Isaiah, the key to a revival, Isaiah 8:20, remember what the battle cry was? "To the law and the testimony." That was like a battle cry. Going to storm the fort. "To the law and the testimony." The revival in Nehemiah's day started when the man came up and said "bring the book." Nehemiah 8.

Conform to it, obedience. Let me give you another one, sixth, are you ready for this? Contend for it. You know something folks, we've got something, let's fight for it. I'm not willing to let some liberals take the Bible out of my hand. I'm not willing to let them take the Bible away from the people and I'm going to continue to preach that the Bible is the authoritative word of God as long as I have breath. And I'm willing to fight for it.

Jude verse 3, "Beloved, when I give all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This is the faith. This is the composite, contend for it. Fight for it. The word is epoganonizomifrom which we get agony. Agonize for it. Struggle for it. Fight for it. That's why I'm so protective, you know, when somebody says well, what do you think about such and such a school or such and such a seminar? If I don't believe that they really believe in the authority of the word of God, I wouldn't send anybody there.

Sending people those kind of schools isn't guarding the word of God in its sanctity. Isn't fighting and contending for it. Last, preach it. Believe it, study it, honor it, love it, conform to it, contend for it, proclaim it, preach it. Paul said to Timothy "Preach the word in season and out of season." That means all the time folks. And my prayer for you is as I mentioned earlier that you would preach it.

When it says that we are to preach the word it means just that. Like back in Ezra's day he got up and he read it and it says he read it and gave the sense of it. That's preaching the word. Not entertainment, not stories, not gimmicks, doctrine. Preach it. And my prayer for all of you as I said earlier 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "We thank God continually because when you receive the word, you heard it from us, you received it not as the word of man, but as it is in the truth the word of God which is at work in your that believe."

What a blessed promise.

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