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

The Battle for the Truth, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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As I said earlier, I had the opportunity to be in Florida to be part of a conference on the subject of The War on the Word and to address the issue of biblical truth and its attack by the enemy, Satan. And, of course, this is a great opportunity because this is such a critical issue to deal with. And understanding the critical aspect of that I really have been pressed to bring it before you this morning. It's a little bit more of a Bible study and a lecture than it is a sermon and we'll have to set Luke aside for a little while but I think this is really important.

What makes it important is the instruction of Jude verse 3, which say, "Earnestly contend for the faith, once for all, delivered to the Saints." And the faith, once for all, delivered to the Saints is talking about the Scripture and the content of sound doctrine, the revelation of God committed to us. We are to earnestly fight for the faith, to contend for that faith. If we're going to contend for the faith we need to understand where the battle is coming from.

A couple of weeks ago Tom Pennington gave me a quote from Martin Luther that I found very interesting. This is what Martin Luther said, "If I profess with the loudest and clearest exposition, every portion of the truth of God, except that little point, which the world and the devil are, at that moment, attacking. I am not confessing Christ. However, boldly, I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, said Luther, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved. And to be steady on all the battlefield, besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point," end quote.

Luther was saying if you're gonna call yourself a Christian then you have to fight the battle where the battle rages. And where it rages today, and I think all through history, is at the very point of the truth of Scripture.

The Bible is under incessant assault from the enemy. It's pretty easy to understand, from the biblical prospective, God is the source of, author of, truth. Satan is the source of, author of, lies. And, therein, is the battle, God's truth, Satan's lies. And Satan attacks God's truth relentlessly with his lies.

In fact, in John 8:44, Jesus, himself, said that Satan is the father of lies. Jesus said, "He is a liar from the beginning and he's the father of lies." Oh, we can find out how he fathered lies by turning in our Bibles back to the 3rd chapter of Genesis. Let's go back and find out how this assault on the word of God really began.

Genesis chapter, this is a familiar chapter and an absolutely critical chapter in the Bible because it is a chapter that chronicles for us the fall of humanity. It is in this chapter that mankind is catapulted into depravity and sin and death and judgment and hell. And it all began in a conflict over who's telling the truth. Is it God or is it Satan? Eve decided it was Satan. Eve decided that God was lying and Satan was telling her the truth. I suppose most people that the human race failed because Eve ate something. It didn't. The human race failed because Eve thought something. The eating was only the byproduct of the thought. And what Eve thought was, God doesn't tell the truth, Satan does. And that same dichotomy has existed through all of human history. There are people who believe God and there are people who don't. There are people who believe the Bible and people who don't. And it's that clear.

Well let's go back to the story and find out how this all unfolded in Genesis chapter 3. And remember just one thing about Satan, at least for this time, and that is that only in lying is Satan consistent. If you study Satan, if you study demons throughout the Scripture you're gonna find all kinds of inconsistencies. I've often asked, "The devil seems very inconsistent, demons seem inconsistent. Is that true?" And it is true. They're only consistent in one thing, they hate the truth, they tell lies, they attempt to deceive. And here we find where the father of lies gave birth to his first lie and his first liar, which resulted in the whole human race being born with a propensity to lie; to love deception and hate truth.

Verse 1, "The serpent, identified, of course as Satan, " says to the woman, "Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" He finds Eve when she's unprotected. Adam is not there, Adam her protector, Adam her head, Adam her covering and she is alone. And there is greater vulnerability at that point and Satan chooses his moment very carefully. He's got a pretty simple two-step strategy that will unfold so rapidly it makes your head swim. It's a progressive deception. It begin with an apparently innocuous question, by what somebody might assume is sort of a neutral observer. "Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" The idea of the question is did God really say that? It could be translated in the Hebrew as, "So, God has said, has he, that you shall not eat from some tree of the garden? Has God said that?" What is he trying to do? He's trying to introduce the thought into her mind that there's something wrong with that prohibition. It's sort of like, "Did God really tell you that?"

Now this is the first question in the Bible. This might be the first question in all of human history. This is the first dilemma. There's never been a dilemma, there's only been answers. Everything has been clear. And the question is designed to start Eve on the path to doubting God's word, which is the essence of sin. And for the first time the most deadly spiritual force in the world has covertly been smuggled into human life. It is the assumption that what God has said is subject to human judgment.

Eve was very clear at what God had said, absolutely unmistakable what God had said. God had said, "You can eat anything except, verses 16 and 17 of chapter 2, "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat: for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die," very clear, unambiguous and obvious statement. But now all of a sudden Satan is very subtlely asking Eve to make a judgment on what God said. "Did God really tell you not to eat from any tree of the garden? Did God really say that?" And the implication here. . . follow this, is, "Why would God put that restriction on you? Why would God do that? Why would He be narrow? Why would He limit you? Doesn't God want you to be free? Isn't God for free will? Isn't God pro-choice? Isn't God for freedom? Doesn't God want you to do whatever you wanna do, whatever looks good, feels good, whatever brings you pleasure, whatever brings you joy, whatever brings you satisfaction, whatever brings you freedom? Why is God limiting you?"

And you notice that in the question Satan asked, "He said from any tree of the garden," as if the prohibition was very big and extensive. Even though it was only one tree. But the subtle suggestion is this: God tampers with our freedoms, God restricts us, God is very narrow; God takes away our rights. God may be even unkind so restricting us, taking away the things that might bring us pleasure and satisfaction. He may even be cruel, is the possibility. And you might not be able to trust him. Why would he ever say that? This is a perfect world. Why would he ever do that? Why is he unnecessarily limiting?"

And Satan plants the thought in her mind that God is narrow, God is limiting, God is restraining, God is, maybe, unkind, less than fully good. But he (she doesn't even know who he is yet) but he is devoted to her freedom and her choice and her happiness, more so than God. The snake is sort of like saying with a little bit of incredulity, "I can't believe that God told you you couldn't eat of any tree of the garden. Why would he ever do that?" So Satan plants in her mind that there is this one possibility that God has a flaw in his character. That God's goodness is suspicious.

Eve weakly defends God is verse 2, "Well," the woman said to the serpent, "from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat." And she narrows it down, "He's saying from any tree." She narrows it down verse 3, "But from the fruit of the tree, which is in the middle of the garden." And so she narrows it down to that one tree. "No, it's not that we can't eat from any tree. God is not that restrictive. God is not so restrictive that he puts all those kinds of limits. It really is just this one tree that we can't eat. And you know what? God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it." Did God say that? No. "Lest you die." God didn't say you couldn't touch it. He didn't say that at all. She's already falling victim to Satan's progressive temptation. "Yeah, you know, it is only one tree but he said you shouldn't eat from it and you shouldn't even touch it." And she's assigned to God something God did not say. She's putting words in God's mouth that she's decided emphasize his narrowness. "You can't even touch it, let alone eat it." God never said that. So now you get the picture. Satan is trying to get her to the point where she understands that Satan is for freedom and liberty and rights and freewill and choice, and God is for limits and narrowness and constraint, taking away your

freedom and your choices and your rights and your joys and your satisfaction and your fulfillment. "Yeah," she says, "it is only one tree but you're right, he said we couldn't eat of it and we couldn't even touch it." That little phrase indicates that she's buying in to the narrowness of God.

She should have defended God. She knew God. She knew God's perfect goodness. She had a clear command from God. It wasn't hard to understand. And, frankly, she should have been suspicious of the talking snake. At this point she should have made some kind of emphatic defense of God's goodness. But her reply is a partial kind of reputation, "Well he only did say one tree, but you know what? We can't eat it and we can't even touch it." That indicates that she's buying in to suspicion about God's narrowness.

Let me tell you something. As soon as someone doe not completely and wholeheartedly and unreservedly trust in the Word of God as true and the source of our highest joy and fulfillment then mistrust has gained a foothold and sin has entered the heart. This is where the fall came. It didn't come when she ate, it came when she thought, "God is narrow, God is withholding something good." She accepts the unnecessary restriction as a fact. And she agrees it's unnecessary and she even makes it worse by adding, "Or touch it." God's word then has been judged unacceptable to her. It is limiting and it is a needless limitation and that's when the fall happened. Right there. And what follows is just the evidence of the fall. She was done in at that point.

Step two is very straightforward and very clear. Step one was, "You have a right to sit in judgment on God's word." That was step one. She said, "You know, you're right, you're right. It is narrow, it is unnecessarily restriction, it is limiting." And that points up some kind of flaw in God's character.

Step two follow immediately in verse 4, the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die." What's that? He says, "God lied. When God said the day you eat of the fruit of the tree you'll die, he lied. God is a liar and I tell you truth. Don't believe the Word of God, believe me." That's the same old stuff. "Don't believe the Bible believe this person or that person or this holy book or that prophet or whatever," and on and on it goes. And Satan is disguised as an angel of light in a thousand costumes. But his message is always the same, "Don't believe God. God doesn't tell you the truth. He's a liar. You won't die. There is no judgment. There are no consequences if you eat. You won't die. You can't trust God to tell you the truth. You can't believe God's word. It's needlessly narrow. It's needlessly confining and restraining and you should be free to do whatever you want to do. God is flawed. God limits joy. God takes away freedom. And then God says we're gonna die if we do what he tells us not to do. Boy, how harsh is that?" Satan says, "You just can't trust God. He doesn't tell you the truth and he's needlessly legalistic. And then he scares you by telling you you're gonna die. You're not gonna die, God's lying to you. Be free from those restraining constraining narrow words of God. It's your life, you live it anyway you want. You can do what you want. You're free; make your own choices. No limits, no boundaries." That's the metaphor for the Ford Motor Company lately. "No rules," Outback Steakhouse. "No judgment, no consequences." Hey that's old

stuff isn't it? But it's very contemporary. "You can live any way you wanna live. Don't believe the Bible. Don't believe God. Don't take him at his word. And, by the way, any God who would put those kind of restraints on you, any God who would limit your freedom, take away your rights, your choices, any God who would tell you you're gonna die if you did something like that is not a God of love. He's a God of law; he's law." Satan says, "But I'm love. I love you. I want you to do whatever you want and be satisfied with whatever it is you wanna do. I love you. God doesn't love you."

The question comes into Eve's mind, "Why would he do that? Why would God be like that? Why would God tell me I was gonna die if I wasn't gonna die? Why would it be so important that I not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Why would God tell me not to do that? If it's not because I'm gonna die, if he lied about that then what's gonna happen that he wants not to happen? He's got to have a reason for telling me not to eat and if he's lying to me about the fact I'm gonna die, what's the reason? Why is the prohibition there?" And Satan's got a strategy for that.

Verse 5, "He doesn't want you eat, not because you'll die, not because he loves you and doesn't want you to die, not because he loves you and doesn't want you to go into sin and death and hell, no, God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be open and you'll be like God." Boy, Satan could say - and I'll tell you from personal experience - he hates competition. I've been there. Remember Satan when he was in heaven the anointed cherub Lucifer decided that he wanted to be like God, remember, equal to God? Satan knew that didn't sit too well with God and God through him out of heaven and he became Satan. And so Satan lies and says, "God isn't restraining you from eating that because you'll die and he loves you too much to let you die and perish and fall into sin. He's restraining you from eating that and threatening death to scare you because he knows if you do eat you'll become like him and he hates anybody to be like him. He's that jealous."

Some people think, you know, that the fall of man happened because Eve ate an apple. No. The fall happened because Eve stripped God of his glory, because Eve made a twisted assault on the holy perfections of God. She didn't trust what he said and she didn't trust his character. She blasphemed God. The eating was just the evidence. Because when she ate she was saying, "God lied, I'm not gonna die. And Satan told me the truth. I'm gonna be like God. And even if he doesn't like it I'm gonna do it anyway." So it was disobedience to what God said. It was the conviction that God was a liar, that God was motivated by selfishness, and it was open rebellion. So the father of lies brought down the whole human race on the premise that you can't trust what God said. He doesn't tell the truth.

Now folks I can put it simply. Either the Bible is true or it's not. There's no in-between. It's not part of it's true and part of it's not. It's not whatever is true to you is true and what ever is not true to you is not true. It's either true or it's not.

Thirty eight hundred and eight times the Old Testament claims to be the Word of God. The New Testament writers repeatedly claim that it is the Word of God. Jesus claimed that Scripture could not be broken, that it was the Word of God. Not one jot or tiller would ever in any wise fail until it had all come to past, even though heaven and earth would pass away. You can say it's a lie or you can say it's true, and there's really nothing in the middle. And so at that moment the whole human race was catapulted into sin. A stone was removed at the base of the mountain and an avalanche drowned all of humanity.

Without taking time to go through the Scripture this then becomes the pattern for the whole Scripture, the conflict between the truth of God and lies of Satan. You find it reaches a pinnacle in the New Testament when Satan comes to Jesus. He was very successful with Eve and he thought maybe he could be successful with Jesus. So you remember he caught Jesus at a weak point also? After 40 days of fasting in the wilderness he came to him and he gave him three temptations and every temptation that he presented to Jesus, Jesus answered with this statement, "It is - what? Written." And he affirmed that the truth of God stood. He would not violate the Word of God. And he conquered Satan and vanquished him. But this is the strategy that Satan has had ever since, never changed. All through biblical history there's this endless array of false prophets, false teachers, liars, false apostles, deceivers, all the way from Genesis to Revelation. And always there's been this battle for the truth of God to defend the truth. And it seems as though no matter how well it's been fought in the past, how noble have been the victories, how triumphant have been the men of God in defending the Bible against the tax, they just never stop. Because, essentially, as long as Satan is outside the lake of fire, as long as he's moving around like a roaring lion seeking whom it may devour, his way of devouring is through creating mistrust in God's word.

Well I was asked at the conference if I would address how the Bible is being attached today? And I could tell you, folks, this is today and another five years from now it'll be being attached - probably from some of these same areas but in different ways. It just continues to go on and on and on. But if we're gonna earnestly contend for the faith we need to know how it's being attacked. So let me talk about that a little bit.

First of all I want to talk about friendly fire, you know, the most deadly fire in a war is the friendly fire. You know what that is; it's when you get shot by your own troops. And that's really hard because you can't see it coming, you don't expect it. And that's what's happening in Evangelicalism today. The friendly fire is coming against the Word of God. I could give you lots of illustrations, but here are some that I found pretty compelling.

I picked up a very Evangelical theologically sound periodical and I saw in it an article entitled, "The Insufficiency of Scripture." That got my attention. "The Insufficiency of Scripture." I began to read the article written by a minister and I was amazed to see in the article that it actually was designed for the reader to understand that Scripture was not sufficient for everything. This is what the article said,

"Whereas Scripture teaches us that marriage is a lifelong commitment, Scripture is manifestly not sufficient to teach people how to attain that end." Scripture is not sufficient to teach you how to have a good marriage? "Oh, yes," he writes. "Scripture contains some broad principles, such as those encountered in Ephesians 5 or Proverbs 29. But for all the Evangelical talk about roles of men and women such talk has obviously not produced happy or successful marriages," end quote. So he's saying it's obvious that the Bible doesn't help you have a good marriage because there are so many bad marriages among Christians.

He went on to say ten years ago he affirmed the sufficiency of Scripture in harmony with the standard reformed position on that matter. Now he suggests that those who drafted the first chapter of the Great Westminster Confession of Faith might have stated the case better if they had changed the language. This is what that Westminster Confession says and it's a reflection of what Scripture teaches, "The whole council of God (that is Scripture) concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man, salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture," end quote. That's what the Westminster Confession says - accurate statement.

This writer said, "The entire matter would have been better expressed had the writers articulated a more manifestly covenantal statement, indicating that the Scriptures are a sufficient guide to the various covenants God has made with various covenant people," end quote. In fact, he particularly suggests that the expressions faith and life could only be interpreted in the most narrow religious sense, point being, Scriptures not sufficient for life, marriage being an illustration.

And in the article . . . I'm reading with great interest now. . . in the article he said he backed away from an unqualified affirmation that the Bible contains all things necessary for God's glory, man's salvation, faith and life, and why? Listen to this; he changed his mind about biblical sufficiency when he saw a survey. A survey? A survey. What does a survey have to do with the Word of God? Absolutely nothing. A survey? What did the survey say? Survey says. The survey said the divorce rate among Evangelicals is worst than the divorce rate among unbelievers. I knew about that survey because when it came out I was called by a newspaper and they asked what I thought I said, "I don't believe it." They said, "Well it's in the survey. The statistics are there." I said, "I don't believe it. I do not believe that more true Christians get divorced than non Christians, I don't believe that." And they printed that.

Well then I had to go support that so I did a little research and which I'll share with you in a minute as to where that statistic came from. First of all you need to know this, the statistic originally was 27% of born-again people get divorced, 24% of non born-again people get divorced. I found out that there was no distinction between, whether the 27% of born-again people had had a divorce before or after they were born-again. And since that's not included it makes the statistic pointless. But, be that as it may, even if we grant that the latest statistic from the same organization now is up to 33% of born-

again people get divorced. Or anyway, that was the survey.

And he writes in response to that survey, "The large practical matter that has influenced my thinking about the sufficiency of Scriptures has been the publication of findings that the Evangelical divorce rate is the same as that of the general population. How is the world can a survey change your view of the sufficiency of Scripture? In fact, he went on to say, "Believing in the sufficiency of Scripture might work against your marriage. I would suggest that part of the reason our unbelieving friends succeed as often in marriage as we do is that they are never hoodwinked by any misunderstanding of the sufficiency of Scripture," end quote.

I wanted to know more about the survey so I got to the source of the survey, the original statistics, the original information because I started seeing more people changing their view of Scripture from this one survey. I just made a miniseries on video and I'm just now watching it to make sure it represents what I wanna say. It's a 4-hour video miniseries on, "Does the Truth Matter Anymore?" And at the end of video number 1 they have included (unbeknownst to me) this survey. It showed up in theological journals, pastors everywhere have just bought it as a true statistic. So I decided to find out if it, in fact, is true. So I wanted to know how you determine whether somebody's born-again first, right? Since the survey said 41% of Americans are born-again, 41%. I needed to know what born-again meant. So they had two questions to determine if someone fit in the born-again category.

Question one; have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today? Well that's so bland that it wouldn't indicate anything, other than that you made some commitment to Jesus Christ. If you answered yes to that then there were seven answers and a multiple-choice question. And if check this answer, "When I die I will go to heaven because I've confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior." If you said yes to that one you were then considered born-again. Even though accepting Jesus Christ, as we all know, in our culture, has become a clichÃ© and it could be said by anybody in any form of Christianity from Catholicism through Greek Orthodoxy to the cults.

I said this when I was doing that thing on. . . that interview of that newspaper, I said, "Look, they don't know who's born-again. They don't know who's born-again. You can't say that because they don't have any way to know who's really born-again." Well this stirred some small furor. So I went further to the same survey. Listen to other things that came out of the same survey of the born-again people.

Forty-five percent of these born-again people who get divorced more than non born-again people, 45% of them say Satan is not a living being; he's only a symbol of evil. So we know they don't believe the Bible cause that's pretty clear in the Bible that Satan is not a symbol of anything, he's a living being. Thirty-four percent believe that if a person's good enough they can earn their place in heaven. Can you believe that and be born again? Twenty-eight percent say that while Jesus lived on

earth he committed sins just like everybody else. Fifteen percent of these people said that after he was crucified and died he did not return to life physically. Twenty-six percent believe it doesn't matter what faith you follow they all teach the same thing. Are these people born again? No. So the statistic is useless. So why in the world would you change your view of Scripture from that? Why do you believe what you believe about the Scripture because of what the Bible says or because of a survey?

That's what I call friendly-fire, in the sense that these are people, probably well intentioned, people who wouldn't wanna attack the Word of God but fall victim to these kind of subtle things.

I've talked to you in the past about things that are said by well-known evangelists and TV preachers about the wider mercy that people, who've never heard the gospel, never heard the name of Jesus are going to heaven and things like that. Those are all assaults on the Scripture from friendly fire, from people within the Evangelical world, whatever now that may mean. There's a new effort afoot now among Evangelicals to be able to embrace Roman Catholicism and the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. In order to do that you have to reinvent Paul, so they have a new paradigm called, "The New Prospective on Paul." They have to reinvent the whole legal paradigm to get the doctrine of justification out of the paradigm it's in in the New Testament to make sure it's big enough to embrace Roman Catholicism. People that once stood shoulder to shoulder in the defense of the Scripture moved on to that side.

And then one of the big things that happened down in Ligonier Conference was R.C. Sproul spoke on the issue of the new NIV; called Today's NIV. You've been seeing it. It's the New International versions newest update. Today's NIV is the gender sensitive edition, which tampers with the text of Scripture, plainly. R.C. Sproul gave a very passionate presentation of the fact that two years ago when they started to release this thing, Evangelical leaders had a big meeting together with the people from the International Bible Society, who own the rights to the translation and Zondervan is the publisher. They had a meeting together. They got the publishers to agree they would never produce that Bible because they saw it as tampering with the truth of Scripture to meet a contemporary agenda. And, you know, if you look at who supports it you can see it's all the sort of politically correct feminist side that supports this.

And so, anyway, these people agreed that they wouldn't produce it. They bowed to the pressure of the Evangelical leadership and they said, "We won't produce that Bible." Well, two weeks ago they released it. And the day before they released it they sent a letter to the people who signed the original document, saying, "Integrity demands that we take our name off that document." How's that for a spin on integrity? "Integrity demands we don't keep our word." And, of course, everybody knew that they had to have been working on it to release it since long ago so the signing of it meant nothing. Well, R.C. Sproul was deeply exercised over that lack of integrity, over that breach of a pledge and a commitment, and over the tampering of the Word of God, as are other Evangelicals.

There were six of us. Speakers were sitting there, some of who have preached out of the NIV for years. One of them said, and they all affirmed and agreed, that he would never preach out of any form of the NIV again if they don't have any more concern for the Word of God. And if they would tamper with it for the sake of money then we're not gonna use it at all. It was really very interesting. I wouldn't be surprised to see a lot of NIV's showing up at Zondervan mailed back. Not a bad idea.

But, how can that happen? Well Rupert Murdoch owns Zondervan, Fox Television. I don't think that the Bible should be in the hands of the same person who runs the Simpsons. So how did that ever happen? You know, Doug Wilson, in an article said, "Whoever sold the rights to the Bible to Rupert Murdoch outta be taken out and flogged." How does that happen? So, you know, this, "Oh, no, it's not bad. It's not bad." Luther said, "At that little point where they begin to tamper with the truth if you don't wage war there then you may profess Christ but you're not truly confessing him." Scripture cannot be broken. Every Word of God is pure.

Well that's the friendly fire, then there's the unfriendly-fire. That was the introduction. I was part of the introduction. I have some things I wanna say to you know about where the war is coming. . . where the attacks are coming from. I'll give you two and I'm gonna finish tonight, maybe.

Number one. . . you gotta know this isn't notes this is heart so you never know. But the first attack comes from the critics. The first attack comes from the critics. Not long after the great reformation, the reclaiming of the Word of God, the precious truth of God, the Scripture coming out of the Dark Ages, brought back into the light by Luther and Calvin, Melanthan, and others. The Word of God began to shine brightly and it wasn't long after that that you had the, you know, the renaissance and awakening of humanism and the French Revolution and all of that. And the birth of criticism came out of that, higher criticism, which was German scholasticism that went back and in the passionate love of mankind and his mind, the advent of humanism. They went back to the Bible and said, "We've gotta take everything out of the Bible that doesn't fit our minds. The mind of man is ultimate." Thomas Paine, "The Age of Reason," was at that same time. "The mind is ultimate. If it's not rational, if it's not reasonably, then it's not true."

So the German critics went back to the Bible and they massacred the text of Scripture. They said Moses didn't write the Pentateuch and Paul didn't write his epistles and Jesus didn't do what he said he did and didn't say what is said that he said. And you can't believe the Bible. And we've got to take out the miracles and we've got to take all the supernatural out and it's a human book written by religious people. And that was the legacy of the graph well has in school of higher criticism, a very sophisticated way that fools design (fools in terms of 1 Corinthians 1) fools designed to emasculate the Bible of its truth. And Liberalism just destroyed the Bible, eliminating all the supernatural elements. It's still around. It literally took over and ate up every seminary in every major denomination around the world . . . of the historic denominations.

In an effort to sort of rescue that a guy named Carl Bart came along and Carl Bart said, "You know, we can't have religion. If we don't have the supernatural all we've got is philosophy. We don't have any religion. We've got to have a supernatural." So Carl Bart tried to put all the miracles back. Do you believe in a miracle? Sure. Do you believe in the resurrection? Yes. But is it real history? Did it really happen in actual time, in actual history with real people? No, it happened in hilika shikda lick. It happened in super duper history. And he invented some. . . I don't know what? . . . some fantasy land where these things did happen in a spiritual reality that, again, you couldn't accept the straightforward facts of Scripture.

This legacy of criticism toward the Bible infected the major denominations, destroyed their seminaries, their colleges, and created Liberalism all over the world. It's still around. It's still around. You saw evidence of this kind of stuff when you looked at Peter Jennings' Search for the Real Jesus about a year ago. They're trying to find the real Jesus by asking people who don't know him, have no idea who he is or where he is, that parade themselves as scholars. The people they were asking belonged to a group called The Jesus Seminar. They're the self-appointed scholars on Jesus. There are 200 of them. Once in a while in silly religious sections of newspapers you'll read about the Jesus Seminar. Religious sections of newspapers are pretty bad for the most part; usually list all the places you wanna avoid and all the things you don't wanna believe. Certainly the LA Times is that way.

But they decided to vote on whether Jesus said what he said. They're gonna vote on whether the Word of God is true. And the way they vote is with a bunch of little beads. Red bead means probably true, pink bead means possibly true, gray bead means added/altered by somebody else; some early Christian or some disciple. Black bead . . . nope, didn't reflect the truth at all. And the results are astonishing. There are more than 700 sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. They said 31 of them are true. And of the 31, 16 have duplicates in parallel passages, so you have 15 that they accepted as true. All total they rejected 80% of the words that Scripture attributes to Jesus. They rejected the entire Gospel of John. One verse got one pink bead. The whole Gospel of John. Why? Because it's all about the deity of Jesus Christ and his miracles. The one verse that got a pink one is John 4:44, "A prophet has no honor in his own country." They thought that was a cute little axiom I guess. How ironic.

"The Jesus Seminar is the decaying flotsam from the shipwreck of Liberal theology that continues to wash ashore." I'm quoting myself there. It's bad to do that. It's like Jerry Vine said, "A guy preached such a great sermon he signed his own Bible."

So, you know, you're asking, "What is the criteria? On the basis of what criteria did they make those judgments?" One criteria alone; political correctness. If, in their minds, it didn't seem to square with what they think should be _____. So, they are God and they will determine truth. If it doesn't fit Egalitarianism for women, homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle, environmental activism, animal

rights, racial quotas, hard line anti-war doctrine, on and on and on and on, then it's not true. By the way, they did the words of Jesus now their working on the works of Jesus. Don't get the idea that I think the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar should be discarded lightly. On the contrary I think they should be thrown away with as much force as possible. Liberals say that other religions are lesser lights. That's what Carl Bart said. "They're lights but their just lesser lights."

Paul Tillich, the theologian, I studied in seminary, said that, "They are Christians incognito." A theologian named Rayner said, "They are anonymous Christians." And we know what the Bible says about who's a Christian. Dr. Joseph Huff. . . recently in the Wall Street Journal I read this president of Union Theological Seminary in New York - a seminary that's been decimated by this liberalism. He was asked, "Are you saying that all religions are equal?" "No, all religions are not equal for me. For my faith Jesus Christ is decisive. I'm a Christian who strongly believes that God has always been and now is working everywhere in every culture to redeem the world. I believe that there is ample evidence in the best of the world's religions, including our own, that God's work is effective. Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and others have been and are being transformed by a powerful vision of God that redeems them with hope and infuses their religious practice with compassion, justice and peace. Wherever there is peace and movement toward peace, wherever there is justice and movement toward justice God is present and working." Just double-talking, it denies what the Bible says. And he thinks he's the authority.

There is an effort to develop in Evangelicalism what's called, "The New Model Evangelicalism. The New Model Evangelicalism." But somehow we've all been victimized by Agustin and Tertullian, and Calvin, and Luther who created this legal motif of God as a judge and man as a guilty sinner brought into the courtroom of God and indicted by God and sentenced to die. An advocate steps in and provides a propitiation or a satisfaction to the judge and, therefore, on the basis of that satisfaction God declares the sinner righteous and that is the great reformation doctrine of justification. The New Evangelical model says, "That's too narrow, that's too exclusive. That's not gonna include people who don't believe that." So we've got to get rid of that.

We can't be victimized by Augustin and Tertullian and Calvin and Luther who gave us that. We've gotta get rid of these what they call law court models. We've gotta redefine things. For example, hell, we have to understand is not a judicial sentence of God to punishment. Faith is not a decision. It's a continual progressive looking onto God that produces a progressive justification. And we've got to get the idea of judge out of the picture and see God, not as our judge, but as our defender. And wrath, not as angry punishment, not a law court term but just bad consequences. And when God speaks in what appears to us to be wrath it's really loving encouragement. And sin, we have to redefine that. Not as a legal violation of God's law demanding a just punishment but bad behavior needing correction from a loving parent whose purpose never is to exclude the child from the family. And forgiveness, oh, that's not dependent on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ because the cross was not a judicial payment to an offended judge and a broken law. This is new model Evangelicalism?

More familiar is the new openness of God theology, which is running rampant through church. Openness of God theology says, "God doesn't determine the future." They say, "Well, you know, we don't wanna make God responsible for everything that's going on in the world. It's all bad stuff. It's bad press for God. So if we wanna save God from getting a bad reputation because everything's such a mess what we ought to do is just let people know, he didn't do it because he's not in charge. Not only does God not determine what's gonna happen," says Openness theology, "He doesn't even know what's gonna happen. He doesn't know any more about the future than you do." That's the Openness theology. And if that's their God that's not the God of the Bible.

Isaiah 46:9 and 10, "I am God, there is no other. I am God; there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done." Saying, "My castle shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." God knows the end from the beginning. From the very beginning he knew the end and everything in between. This is a denial of divine sovereignty. This attacks the Word of God. It makes God just a reactor who's saying, Wow, I didn't expect that to happen. That's bad, that's good. I can work with that. I don't know how I'm gonna work with that.

Open theism is a revival of an ancient heresy, 16th century heresy, known as socinism. Socinists virtually got every error there was and packaged it all in one package, one great abomination. And these open theist's, not only deny that God is sovereign over the future, that God knows the future, purposes the future, works his plan in the present and the future, they deny the substitutionary atonement as well. I wrote an article for a book on that; a chapter in a book, an anthology on Openness theology and the denial of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. They deny that the salvation of sinners is entirely God's work on the sinner behalf. And they redefine God so that if God is not sovereign then he can't sovereignly save. He can't not only predict the future and plan the future and purpose it and work his work, he can't save on his own if he's not sovereign. And Open theists say, "Well, we're not really socinian, we're . . . you have to twist the Bible to work all this in, as you know? But they say, "We're not socinian because we don't deny the deity of Jesus like socinists did. We don't deny the deity of Jesus." And my response to that is, "You do worst than that you deny the deity of God." If God is not the God he says he is in the Bible then Jesus is not the God of the Bible either.

To attack any doctrine in the Bible is to attack the Bible. To attack the heart and soul of the Bible, the character of God, the deity of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, is to hit the truth at its heart. Every assault on biblical truth is an attack on the Word of God. So, the critics. . . we could say more about that.

Let me just give you a second one briefly, the attack from the cults, the cults. That's another thing we have to battle. You know, for years ever since higher criticism came out there have been great scholars who have battled against the critics. And I'll tell you folks I fought that battle. . . a lot of us

have fought that battle through the years. I was ten years on the Inerrancy Council, lead by Jim Boice, with 100 scholars and battling against the attacks of criticism against the Scripture, fighting for inerrancy, inspiration, authority of Scripture. From 1980 to 1990 that battle was waged and tremendous amount of work was done to answer those questions and to try to protect the church from the critical onslaught. But it's still going on today. The Openness theology is a huge issue attacking the Bible and its presentation of the character of God and Christ. Our seminary faculty are in the forefront of that fight. They have produced in our journal a whole series of articles answering Openness theology. We have a great core of men who teach in the seminary who are first-rate scholars who are dealing with these issues on that level. It's wonderful to be a part of that, to have a team like that battling for the Word of God on a critical side in answering those compelling questions.

But, secondly, it's the cults. Some of you grew up in the days when almost every preacher preached against the cults because we were trying to wage war against the Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science and the Mormons and Theosophy and Unitarianism, and whatever other cult, answering all their bizarre twistings of Scripture. Cults pervert the Bible and inevitably they all deny the deity of Jesus Christ and they all deny the Gospel of Grace alone. They have extra revelation, whether it's the writings of Mary Baker-Eddy-Glover-Fry, she had a problem with men, obviously. Whether it's Annie Besant, Judge Rutherford, Madam Blavatsky, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, whoever it is that writes these extra biblical documents, by which the Bible is singularly interpreted and it spawns these bizarre cults that twist the Scripture.

Drove down to the store yesterday and then back home, went by the Mormon church that's near us, saw a couple hundred people out on the lawn, mostly young couples and little children, and my heart just sunk as I realized being drilled into their heads is the fact that Jesus is not God and that salvation is a combination of God being good enough to let you work your way to salvation and you doing enough good things to earn it. What damnable doctrines.

We have to protect people, we have to defend the truth, we have to know the truth to help the people in the cults. To say nothing of the death cults: People's Temple, followers of Jim Jones. Over 900 people drank cyanide-laced Kool-Aid, thinking their gonna go to heaven in a mass suicide. And then that bizarre David Koresh, 75 who died in self-emulation, really, in a battle with the United States Government, in the Branch Davidian Cult. And then there was that screwball, Marshall Applewhite, in Heaven's Gate cult, who all poisoned themselves thinking they're gonna be taken to heaven in a Hale Bop Comet. How do people get this kind influence? It's not just human. Do you understand that? It's not just human. Twisting Scriptures, pseudo Christian imagery exists in all these bizarre things and they just relentlessly, mercilessly hack at the Scripture.

I sat down with the primary theological leaders of the Mormon Church on several occasions here at the church. They've come here several times to talk about theology, Bible. We spent hours and hours and hours together. And I said to them, I said, "You know, I only do this for one reason and

that one reason is in the hope that you will see the horrible error of your ways and come to the knowledge of the truth." And I have to tell you that's the only reason I do this. Listen; let me tell you something very simple, truth gains nothing from dialogue with error. That is pointless. And in the Evangelical world today the climate is, "Let's dialogue. Let's sit down with Muslims and let's sit down with the Roman Catholics, and let's sit down with Orthodox Jewish people, and let's sit down with these other people and we'll grown in the dialogue." You know what happens in dialogue? Nothing good. You wanna be patient with people; you wanna be loving and gracious. I don't need the Islamic view of anything to interpret the Bible. Do you understand that? I don't need the Mormon view of anything to interpret the Bible. That's not a necessary element. Error provides no insight to truth. Error is not a hermeneutic. I don't interpret the Bible better because now I'm a buddy with a Muslim. I wanna be a friend to a Muslim. I wanna be a loving friend to one because I wanna lead him to the truth - that nothing in his religion makes any contribution to my understanding of Scripture. The only thing that happens in those dialogues is compromise. And the end result always seems to be the same - the diminishing of conviction about truth. Well, the cults are a real real problem. With the cults you can throw in the world religions, that's why I used that illustration.

Now, so we talked a little about the critics, we talked a little about the cults. Tonight I'm gonna talk about some more. I'm gonna start with the charismatics. And we're gonna go into the Word of God and see how inside that movement there is so much that assaults the Scripture.

Let's pray. We are at your mercy, O God, in every area. We only know what you have told us in your precious Word. We only live the life you've given us. We have no way on our own to discern divine truth, we have no way to gain salvation, it is all of you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for giving us, by your Holy Spirit, the conviction to believe your Word, which is not natural because naturally we understand, not the things of God. Naturally we are sinners at enmity with you. Naturally we are bound up in our own foolishness. Naturally we are following our Father who is the devil and believing his lies.

We thank you God that you have rescued us from the deception and the lies of that natural condition and you have awakened us to the truth. And we do see your Word as a light and a lamp. And the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. And the testimony that you've given us in Scriptures is sure making wise to simple and it's right, rejoicing the heart.

We thank you that you have given us the love of the truth and Lord we need to defend it in a day when it is just being relentlessly assaulted. May we know in our own lives that it is our confidence in the Word of God that gives us the strength to stand against Satan's temptations. If we don't trust the Word of God then we can't stand on it when he questions it and we will fall like Eve fell, to doubting You and questioning You and thinking that Your laws and Your standards, and Your holy and righteous truth somehow impinges on our freedom and somehow limits our satisfaction.

Help us to believe that when Satan says, "God has told you not to something but if you do it it's gonna be fun and fulfilling and thrilling." Help us not to believe the lie but to believe Your Word. And that You're not trying to hold us back from joy, You're trying to hold us back from what is deadly and destructive.

Help us to believe You. Help us, not only to trust Your Word for our own lives, but stand and defend Your Word against all attacks of those who would undermine its truth, whether they come at it critically or cultically. Whether they just deny it or whether they misinterpret, misrepresent it, twist it, and pervert if.

Help us to be, like Luther said, "Waging our war at that littlest point." Maybe it's just the point where they take the word Son or Father or Man in the text of Scripture, and because of some pressure from what is politically correct, they change it. It's just a little point but it's there that the battle has to be fought.

"Help us to be faithful to the truth, which has redeemed us, for it is that we are begotten again by the truth," as Peter put it. "by living an incorruptible truth." And may it be that we are faithful to hold the truth up in our own temptations, live the truth, proclaim the truth, protect the truth. To your Glory we pray. Amen.

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