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

How to Study Your Bible: Closing the Gaps
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-158

I want you to open your Bible as we discuss this matter of how to get the most out of God's Word and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 15. I apologize in some ways because normally on a Sunday morning and evening we take a passage of Scripture and we work through that passage in an expository fashion, but this is a very special series, not so much like preaching and more like a classroom, as we're talking about principles of Bible study. By virtue of the subject we are forced to deal with some technical things and some things that are not necessarily related to a text of Scripture, but are so essential and so foundational that they will prepare you to study all the passages of Scripture. So if you'll indulge me a little bit to be the teacher rather than the preacher today and give you a lesson on Bible study, you'll be well served and so will I.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 we have just a starting point biblically that gives us the mandate for this necessity of Bible study. It says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

Not to handle the word of truth is to bring shame upon yourself. When you're dealing with the word you're dealing with the word of the living God. When you're dealing with God you're dealing with one who is true and in whom there is no untruth...God who cannot lie has spoken. In the Bible God has spoken. He has spoken so as to be understood. It is incumbent upon us that we rightly divide the truth, that we handle accurately the word that God has spoken.

Nothing is more disconcerting to me, nothing is more distressing or disturbing to me than mishandling of Scripture. In fact that's somewhat of a passion for me. I grieve in my heart when I hear the Word of God being mishandled, misrepresented, passages being used to teach things they don't teach, Scripture being used to teach doctrine it does not teach. Misrepresenting the Word of God is serious, it is a serious sin of the caliber of inept, unbiblical worship. None of us would want to be guilty of worshiping God in a manner that is unsuited to Him. God wants to be worshiped and He wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. God wants to be worshiped from the heart. He wants to be worshiped for the God who He is. He wants to be rightly understood. He wants to be exalted for His attributes as they are. And we want to worship the true God as He is in the way that He has called us to worship in the Scripture. And we don't want to tamper with worshiping God in a trivial way or a trite way because we understand the seriousness of that. And the same should be true with how we handle the Scripture since God has exalted the Word even to His name, Psalm 138:2. How we handle the Scripture is equally concerning to us. And if we do not handle it accurately, we ought to be ashamed.

There's a measure of shame involved in mishandling Scripture.

Now you're liable to say because it's a fairly common perspective that handling the Scripture accurately is not an easy thing. Good men disagree. A lot of Bible teachers disagree. Preachers disagree. Writers disagree. If it's...if it's so important that we handle it accurately and if it's a matter of shame when we don't, why is it that there is so much disagreement?

Well there are a number of reasons for that. One is because of inadequate study, inadequate preparation. Another is because of presuppositions. Some people have already been front loaded with viewpoints to which they conform the Scripture rather than letting the Scripture speak for itself. Another is a failure to deal with issues in one life that clear the path for understanding of Scripture, laying aside sin and other things that clutter the mind. I think another reason that there's difference in Scripture is because some people decide they're going to follow certain heroes. They follow certain traditions, certain theological heroes, certain writers and they stay in line with them. They tend to impose that upon various texts of Scripture because of their being enamored with a certain writer of a certain period of time, even a contemporary one.

There are a number of reasons why there is difference. There are differences to be had and we understand this on issues of Scripture that are somewhat peripheral, that are not dealt with extensively in Scripture or clearly in Scripture. There are some matters of Scripture we just don't have a lot of information on and we have to take what we have and do the best we can with it.

But after having said all of that I remind you that there is a mainstream, there is a main pipeline of truth down the very center of the Word of God, down the center of Christian history that's unwavering and undeviating and we stand in that great tradition. We want to interpret the Word of God as its always been interpreted by faithful, godly interpreters. And the great truth of the Christian faith is that there has always been a true understanding of Scripture in all the history of the church, even in all the history of Israel. During the time of Israel's wanderings and sin and wavering and defection and apostasy there were always those Jews who were faithful to the truth of Scripture who understood it rightly. And there were always prophets who stood up and gave the right interpretation and priests who moved by that right interpretation to bring the people to God. We want to be in line with that...that main flow of truth of true understanding of Scripture when we study the Word of God...understanding there are some things that are too mysterious for us to grasp because they're supernatural by nature and we are natural, understanding there are some things that are inscrutable, that is impossible for us with the kind of mind we have to unravel, to sort out. There are some things for which little information is given and therefore we really can't understand an exact interpretation. But when it comes to the main thrust and the main flow of Scripture, the sweep of Scripture, that can be grasped and in general the Word of God can be taken at face value and understood by us as believers.

Now in order to do that, in order to get the most out of God's Word, in order to really understand what God meant by what He said we have to close some gaps. And I want to talk about that this morning. I want to talk about the way we do that in the study of Scripture.

We talked already about reading the Bible. And that's where you have to start, reading so that you become familiar with the text of Scripture. I'll promise you one thing, you'll never know what the Bible says unless you read it. And when you read it repeatedly, as we talked about, a repetitious reading plan, you'll begin to plant the Word in your heart. It will begin to sort of explain itself because you start by knowing what it says. But there are some gaps in understanding what it means by what it says that have to be closed. Once you've read the Word of God and you've put it in your heart and you're reading it and memorizing it and making it your own, it's going to come alive to you in many ways but there are still some gaps that have to be closed. And the gaps are related to an ancient document. We're dealing with an ancient document. This book is a very old book. It goes back to the patriarchal period, the time of Moses when he's writing about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. It goes all the way back to the time of Job which may have been written even before Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy which we call the Pentateuch. It's a very old document written over a period of 1500 plus years by 40 plus writers cradled in that marvelous place called Israel, both Old and New Testament come from there. But it is ancient. It was completed, as you obviously know, in the first century A.D., that's 2,000 years ago, and so we have a very old document. That creates some gaps for us. If we're going to understand the Bible we have to close those gaps.

Gap number one is a language gap. The Bible was not written in English. The Bible was written in the Old Testament in Hebrew and some passages in Aramaic which was more of a sort of the common street language, even spoken during the time of Jesus among the Jews. But predominantly, of course, far and away written in Hebrew and a few passages in Aramaic. The New Testament written in Greek which was the language of the Roman Empire which had extended itself through the Middle East and into the land of Israel at that time.

So we have a problem here because not only was the Old Testament written in Hebrew, but it was written in a kind of Hebrew that isn't spoken today...that has changed as language does. And the New Testament written in the Greek language that is different than the Greek of today. It's even called koine Greek which means common Greek and it was different than sophisticated sort of uncommon or literary Greek even in the time it was written and both of those are different from Greek today. So we have to close this language gap. That's very important because we have to understand the speech of the people and how they spoke and how they wrote if we're going to understand what they meant. That's why when young men go to seminary we teach them Greek and Hebrew. Now we know that going to seminary for three years or four years, or in the case of some eight years, nine years, just depends, going through all of that time and learning Greek and Hebrew isn't necessarily going to make you in just that brief course the primary source on the significance of the language. But it is very important to understand the Greek and the Hebrew language because there are a number of things

that are helped when you do that. You can, for example, use all the Hebrew study tools, you can use lexicons and dictionaries and all of that. And you can also read certain commentaries that refer to the Hebrew words and you know what they're talking about. And you also know if you know Greek and Hebrew that when somebody refers to the Greek or the Hebrew you can sort of double check on them and find out if they're right. If you don't know those languages you're sort of at the mercy of the writer you select to believe because you can't really verify it.

So knowing the language is very important. Somebody has to know the language. If you as a Bible student don't know it, you have to have somebody who does know it informing you about it. That's where commentaries come in to be of help to you and study materials and Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words and Dictionary of Old Testament Words and those kinds of things that help you to come to grips with what the words mean. Vine's I mention because it starts with English and then goes back to the Greek and back to the Hebrew. So one who doesn't know Greek or Hebrew can use it. But you've got to get in touch with the words to find out what they mean because that is the heart and soul of communication.

A second gap that has to be closed is the culture gap. That deals not with the speech but with the customs. Speech is connected to custom. Speech is idiomatic. I mean our speech is idiomatic. When I listen to the idioms of today, I don't even know what young people are talking about. I mean, I hear conversations and I haven't got a clue what they're talking about because language continues to accumulate idioms. We're familiar with certain idioms. You know, we say to people when we meet them, "How are you?" I don't know...that is about as silly a statement if you just take it at face value, "How are you?" Well how are I am? I am because my mother was and my father was then I were. What do you mean how are you, what does that mean? If you said to someone are you well...they could answer that either yes or no. If you said to someone are you happy...they could answer that but how are you seems to me to be an idiom that somebody must have thought at some point meant something which is sort of lost to us.

Another idiom we use is "hi", what does that mean? Hi...I don't know what that means but that's an idiom. We develop those in language. Well as you deal with ancient language you're dealing with an idiomatic language, you're dealing with expressions that are reflective of culture and knowing culture is absolutely crucial. You can't even recreate the scenery. You can't recreate the scenery biblically unless you know the culture, that's very, very important unless you know the background. Understanding many things about culture, Jewish culture, Greek culture very, very important in interpreting the Scripture. The culture of the mystery religions, the culture of the Pharisees, the culture of the Sadducees, the Romans, the whole situation there, the culture around Israel, the polytheism, the polytheism meaning the many god pagans, the culture of Baal worship, all of that stuff that surrounds the biblical data is part of understanding the framework in which language exists and in which stories are told.

Thirdly the geographical gap, the geography gap. Very important to understand something about that. It's not quite as compelling as the others but it is compelling to some degree to be able to identify the scenery itself, the actual scenery that's going on. For example, Jesus is saying look at the fields for they're white unto harvest. What's going on there? What does He mean by that? Well there's a marvelous scene there as the grain has reached a certain level at that time of the year in that part of the world and on the backside of the grain comes the people from the towns in their white garb and they look like white heads on the growing grain and appear to be a harvest and Jesus uses that as a metaphor for the need to harvest the souls of those people. So there's something about the agrarian geography, something about the fact that the hillsides of Palestine were used for vineyards and the fields were used for grain and something about understanding what it means to go up to Jerusalem and go down to Jericho and it's something about geography...very, very important.

You understand much about the culture of the Bible, you understand much about the geography of the Bible, and then you're going to get to understanding the fourth point which is the history, the plot itself. You have to close those gaps.

Now let's talk about those...those four gaps...the language gap, that gives you the speech; the culture gap gives you the customs and the idioms; the geography gaps creates the scenery, the actual scenario around it; and the history gap is the plot, what's going on historically around that. What is the context of history. I have found through the years that spending a maximum of time on these matters is crucial to all effective Bible understanding.

People often ask me, "How long does it take me to put a sermon together?" Well, the truth of the matter is to actually put down an outline and to write down some notes and to bring them up here and present them to you I might spend an hour doing that. But it could take me 30 hours to do what I just described to you as closing those four gaps because once those gaps are closed and you now have a living scene, you understand the language, you understand the culture customs that have formed the language, you've created the scene and you've got the plot, then the passage just kind of falls off the tree. It becomes very apparent what it means when you've reconstructed all of that. And frankly, that's the fun, that's the exhilaration of Bible study for me is recreating that current scene to which the passage speaks which makes it alive.

Now let's talk about that. Let's talk about language, first of all. As I said, there are two basic languages, Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew is the more easy language to learn, even though you would be sort of put off by Hebrew because you look at the characters of Hebrew and they seem more different than the character of Greek, the characters of Greek. Hebrew is actually an easier language, it's not nearly as complex, it's much more concrete. But you come to Greek and Greek is very, very complex. In fact there is not one regular verb in the Greek language that follows the regular formula for varying cases and all of that varying endings and so on, there's no one single Greek verb in the

entire language that is uniformly regular. Which means that all your doing is memorizing irregular parts and every verb has a myriad of forms. Every time you change any of the grammar in the sentence the form of the verb changes.

We don't have that in English. We say a verb and it's a verb. I ran is I ran, all we can say I was running, there's a few forms, but the Greek language would change the word "ran" into fifteen different forms depending upon how it was used in the structure of the sentence. So it's a tremendous amount of memorization. People who take Greek memorize and memorize and memorize and memorize so that you have all of that information in your mind so that you can read. And eventually as you do that long enough, it sort of becomes familiar to you. But that gets you in touch with the speech.

Now let me tell you something very basic to understand. When God wrote the Word He put His message in words. The message is in the words. They must be understood. And it must be understood that the original words were Hebrew and Greek and the better understanding we have of the meaning of those original words, the better we will understand the passage. For the most part you can be happy to know that the translators of the Scripture have accurately translated those words. Scripture in the English language has been poured over and poured over and poured over and poured over for centuries really and refined and refined so that what we have is an accurate representation of the Greek and the Hebrew but without the nuances, without the rich nuances that can be brought to bear by a careful study of language. And so what I do in studying the Scripture is come into touch with that. You deal with accidence...that's with a "ce" rather than a "ts" at the end...that means the form of the word, what case is it in, what gender is it in, is it singular, is it plural, is it aorist, is it imperfect, is it perfect...all those things.

We have a problem today, you know, trying to deal with people to teach them a language because they don't know the...they don't know the principle parts of English. In the Master's Seminary, for example, we take only bright students, only students that can do very, very difficult graduate level work. They have to make a real sacrifice academically to do well in seminary. It takes the best and the brightest of guys to do it. One out of four young men that apply to the Master's Seminary can pass the basic English exam and they all come out of university backgrounds. They don't know their own language. They know how to talk it, but they don't understand how their language is constructed, they don't understand how its built. And so when you try to teach them another language they don't know how to learn a language unless you give them a Berlitz tape, you know, and say you learn Hebrew by learning these little phrases. You can't do that. So it's very challenging. You have to learn the form of words and that's a great challenge.

I remember as a college freshman, I went away, I was determined I was doing to know the New Testament, so as a freshman in college I took five units of Greek...every day I took Greek, five days a week, the whole year, my whole first year. That's a lot of Greek for an eighteen-year-old kid. That's an

awful lot of memorization, an awful lot of study, and I took Greek all through my four years of college and took a minor in Greek and then I went into seminary and took Greek for three more years so I kept taking Greek and Greek and Greek and when I got to the end I still don't think I had memorized everything there was to memorize...very complicated. But we have tremendous tools today to help us get to those matters to help us understand the words and the forms of the words.

Then there's lexicography in addition to what we call accidence, which is the form of words, and lexicography is the meaning of words. Now you're going to talk about what do these words mean, that gets you into the whole background of words, very rich. Then syntax...s-y-n-t-a-x...which is the relationship of words and you're getting in to how the words all connect up. That's very important. That is a gap that has to be closed.

To give you a little illustration of how I do this and I've been doing this now ever since I've been preaching and teaching the Word of God, this is the normal thing for me, this is kind of what I do, this is sort of my trade. I start out with an eight and a half by fourteen pad and I go to the passage and I get the original language part of the passage in the original language that I'm going to preach on and I just work through that whole thing until I understand the words, I understand the meaning of the words, the forms of the words, you know, if I have to parse them or lay them out or show what case they're in or whatever it is in the case of substantives, nouns and adjectives. And then what that all scribbling all over the place, those notes are not for public view, occasionally they leak around, but I just chicken scratch all that out. And then I get into the meaning of those words and I look up the meaning of the words and I go to various source material to find the nuances of meaning. And then I work on antecedents and relationships and begin to connect those words with the passage itself. And then I've got a whole...a whole understanding of what the passage basically is saying, the actual words are now clear to me, very important, trying to understand in the original what is the richest understanding I can have of that passage. That's working with language and that's the first process I do. I start with the original language so that I can come to grips with that.

Now not all of you, of course, are going to be able to do that because you don't know the language. But look, there's so much material out there to help you, there's so many good things that will get you in touch with the best and the richest of the language. If ever there was a time, folks, I have to tell you this, if ever there was a time in the history of the church when lay people had the capability to be good Bible students, it's today because of the volume of material, because of the sheer volume of material that you have. If you're not a good Bible student it's because you don't care enough to get into it, or it's because you're buying the wrong stuff. And for all the good material out there, for every good resource out there there's probably five bad ones, so you have to have a discerning mind and have some help in making those choices. But there never was a time when we had more opportunity to be good students of Scripture because there have never been more tools.

Somewhere along the line while you're reading all these good books written by good Christian people that are helpful to you, start a process where you're actually studying the Bible and get some tools to do that, get more primary in your Bible study.

Well let's go to the second point, closing that culture gap. What I mean by culture is current ideologies, current thought. How did they think? How did the Jews think? How did the Greeks think? When Paul is writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians in chapter 11 he starts talking about women having long hair. What is...what's going on with that? Well you have to understand, and I found some of this information in a wonderful little Bantam book years ago called Daily Life in Ancient Rome by Jerome Carcopino(?), secular book. He is a historian who chronicled the history of the Roman Empire around the time of the New Testament. And he has a whole section on the woman's liberation movement of that time which had focus in the city of Corinth. Women were running around bare breasted with spears in their hands stabbing pigs and climbing poles trying to get equal rights with men. And Carcopino...Carcopino gets...gets into all of this stuff and shows how that was all the background. And one of the things these women did in demanding sort of this liberation was to shave their heads. With that kind of background, with the understanding of that kind of culture going on, when Paul talks about a woman's hair being her glory you get some meaning into that.

There are a number of problems that have been posed on John's gospel chapter 1 verse 1, "The Word..." which says, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God." And we all for the sake of the Jehovah's Witnesses if not somebody else wish that verse had said, "Jesus was God and don't argue about it." Right? Why did it say the Word was...you know. Well I'll tell you why. Because at the time there was a reigning philosophy, there was a very famous word logos, that's the Greek word for word translated there. And there was the belief that the logos was the floating supernatural, divine energy that created everything. And what John is saying is you know that floating, divine, supernatural energy that creates everything, that's Christ. And he's merely capturing the thinking of the moment in the terms of those people's philosophy or religion and bringing it down to the Word of God. You have the same thing in Colossians chapter 2 where he is dealing with a pregnostic kind of mentality, those people who had some sort of secret knowledge and were involved with angels, they thought, and believed in these emanations coming down from God to man and were all about these kind of bizarre mysterious affairs and ascetic behavior and he is answering that in Colossians chapter 2. It's directed right at that current trend in Greek thinking.

You have a similar situation in John chapter 8. This is everywhere in the Bible, it just comes to mind. Jesus stands up and says, "I am the light of the world, he that follows Me shall never walk in darkness but have the light of life." And you say, "Well that's great, I understand that." Jesus is the light, it's a dark world, He brings light. But when you think about that and when I thought about it first going through the gospel of John, I asked myself, "Well why does He just stand up and say I am the light of the world? Why would He say that? I mean, what is the context for that?" Well you begin to study that passage in John 8 and you find out that He said it in the court of the women which is the outer

courtyard of the temple, that in the court of the women were also there were little receptacles for people to give their money. They would come in, men and women would come in there and give their money. The men could go into the next part of the...sort of the inner part of the courtyard, the women remained outside there, but the court of the women was where He was speaking that.

He walks into the court of the women...we also find...it says in the text...that it was the day after the feast. What feast? The feast of lights. What is the feast of lights? The feast of lights commemorated God leading the children of Israel by fire by night, by a cloud by day, that's how He led them in the wilderness. They celebrated that with the feast of lights for eight days. How did they celebrate it? Do you know what a menorah is? Seven prong candlestick, they put up a massive menorah, massive thing in the middle of the courtyard which had no roof, of course, and shown this multi-colored powered menorah shown light out the top like a diamond in the middle of the city of Jerusalem. Eight days that thing was lit, eight days that menorah burned to celebrate God's provision of light in the wilderness. The day after it was put out. Jesus walks in the court of the women where the menorah is there but the menorah is out and He says, "I am the light of the world, I don't go out." And all of a sudden there's a context that gives complete different meaning to that and struck the hearts of the people.

That's...that's dealing with the culture, understanding backgrounds. And that's part of what you do as a student of Scripture. You need to have some resources, some books, some commentaries, some Bible dictionaries, whatever it is, you can find them in the bookstore. We don't run the bookstore over there to make money. We've proven that year after year after year. We run that bookstore to provide resources for you. So that's important with regard to culture.

Now geography is equally important. One of the wonderful things that you as a Christian can do if you have the opportunity is to tramp around the land of Israel on your own. It will make the Bible come alive to you in many, many ways. All you have to do is be in one storm on the sea of Galilee and you'll understand why the disciples were afraid, especially if you're in a rowboat. You understand the topography, the geography of the land, you understand the relationship of towns and villages and cities. You understand how battles were fought and why they were fought in certain valleys and on the top of certain mountains and you stand there and you see that whole scenario laid out before you. You understand why God has chosen Megiddo to be the place of the battle of Armageddon, the final conflict of the ages. Napoleon said, "It's the greatest battlefield on the face of the earth." If you're there and you stand up there and look down the mountain and look at that whole place, you can understand why that would have been in all of ancient history one of the great battlefields of the world. Understanding geography is very important.

If you understand, for example, something of the geography of Jerusalem, that city way up on a plateau, you understand that...for example, you're reading about the death of Jesus Christ and how He left that night after His betrayal and He went by Judas. Judas, you remember, left the Last

Supper, went to betray Him, Jesus left, crossed the Kidron, went up to the Mount of Olives...significant because at that time Passover lambs were being slaughtered by the thousands and they were slaughtered at the back part of the temple mount, their blood ran down the back slope of the temple mount which is on the east side of Jerusalem, down into the Kidron Valley, the Kidron brook runs through it. There's a slope down to the brook, you cross the brook and there's a slope right back up to the Mount of Olives, over the little hill is the town of Bethany, to the south is Bethlehem. Jesus walked down that back hill and had to cross the Kidron. At that time of the year, Passover season, the Kidron is still full of water, it's a dry creek in the summer but it still has water in it and that water though is blood red because of the thousands of lambs that have been slaughtered and their blood is coming down the back of the temple and fills that little stream. There is Jesus stepping across, the symbol of His own sacrifice as the Lamb of God. Those kinds of things are very graphic and make the Word of God alive.

When you talk about hell, for example, in the Bible and the Jews understood about hell as a place of terrible torment, a place of gnashing of teeth and wailing, a place of darkness, a place of pain, a place of a conscience that is fully accusing with no relief ever. It's a horrible place. The way they described it was they used the word gehenna. What was that word? Gehenna was the name of the city dump in the Valley of Hinnom just south of the Kidron Valley. They took all the garbage of the city and threw it all down there and they had a perpetual fire going all the time. Of course, garbage was garbage in those days and there were maggots and all of that and that's why the Bible talks about the worm never dies because there was always garbage being poured into Gehenna so that there were always worms there eating it and the fire and the horror of that and the smoke and the stench and all of that, and that's the...that was the picture of hell to them. If you could...you could stand on any of the hills in Jerusalem and look down into the Valley of Hinnom and be very aware that hell was down below in a place of terrible, fearful identity.

So understanding some of that geography, very important. If you understand some of the geography even to the north in Galilee you understand much the richness of the biblical stories. You have to close that gap in some Bible dictionaries and atlases. I keep Bible dictionaries and atlases right by my desk all the time to pull them out to check topography and relationships. And writing the study Bible, I was out there with my little ruler, you know, on the scale things measuring the distance from one village to the next. All through the Old Testament he went from here to there and he went from here to there. And so you're, okay this is this far, and this is this far, and this is this far. And as you begin to work all that through, the whole story and understanding of Scripture becomes wonderfully rich and alive.

Well then you have the fourth gap, you have the language gap, you have the culture gap, you have the geography gap, then you have the history gap. And the history gap is the plot. Scripture has a plot. You know, sometimes...I remember my grandmother when I was a little kid had a plastic...a little plastic box with Bible verses in it. Did you ever see those things? It was just a little plastic thing and it

had little cards with Bible verses on, and it always struck me that they were...they could put them in any order, but they had no context. You could shuffle them like a deck of cards and stick them in any order you wanted. And I suppose you could come up with anything, just pull on out that said, you know, Judas went out and hanged himself, and the next one said go though and do likewise and what thou doest do quickly, you know. So you could...you could just organize them any way you wanted. You could sort of have your Bible in any order.

The Bible wasn't written like that. There's a real plot, there's a real story going on and everything is in a context and framework. It's not a bunch of assorted verses that can be fit into any order. There is history. There's background. You will never understand, for example, why Pilate scourged Jesus and tried to get the Jews to release Him, why he fought so hard to do that, why he went outand said, you know, he washed his hands of the whole deal and found him innocent and all that, and then yet crucified Christ unless you understand that Pilate was already up to his neck in deep trouble with the Roman Empire because of at least three major faux pas that he had committed while he was governor in Palestine. And the Roman caesar wanted pax Romana, he wanted Roman peace, and all Pilate kept doing was stirring up these hostile Jews to a fever pitch and getting them angry with Rome and he was in some deep, deep water and the Jews finally pulled their trump card and they said to him, "If you don't crucify Him, we'll tell Caesar," end of discussion. If you understand the background you understand why that happened the way it happened. Very, very important.

When I was going through 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 I was trying to understand what the Corinthians were doing in the place of the true use of tongues and the true use of spiritual gifts. They...they obviously were not doing the right thing. Somebody was standing up pretending to have a gift from the Holy Spirit and cursing Jesus Christ. Now that's how bizarre it was.

I looked in the library years ago to try to find some source material about the religions of Greece, ancient world. I came across a fascinating book called The Mystery Religions written by a man named Angus, A-n-g-u-s and published, I'll never forget, even the publisher, Dover Press in England. This was a thick book which from a secular viewpoint gave the history of the mystery religions at the New Testament time. And I came across an understanding of two words in the Greek language, enthusiasmos and ekstasia which is enthusiasm and ecstasy transliterated into English. And those were words that define the nature of worship in the mystery religions. They tried to whip people into ekstasia and enthusiasmos, both of them were sort of altered states of consciousness in which you flipped out and did bizarre and wild things and this was sort of mystically how you connected with the deities.

You know who in our recent culture bought that was Timothy Leary and sold it to a whole generation of college kids, told them if they really wanted to get in touch with God they needed to smoke dope. That's nothing but that same thing revisited. So there was suppose to be a religious experience. Remember then they all started going from the dope to the...Asia and sitting down cross-legged with

some guru and smoking more dope and thinking they were going to commune with deity in this process? Well that was ancient Greek mystery religion stuff just revisited.

And I began to read about how they expressed themselves. And I began to become familiar with that and I went to read 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14, it was exactly crystal clear what was going on there, they had taken the mystery religion format and they had put it right into the church and sanctified it and called it the work of the Holy Spirit. And that's what Paul had to sort out. Those kinds of...those kinds of backgrounds historically create the plot in which the story is told...very, very important.

Now some people say, "Well, I don't read any books, I just go right to the Bible." I've had people say...I've had preachers say that to me...I don't believe in studying books, I just study the Bible. Really? Well maybe you'd like to tell us all you know about Shur, Moab, Mahashallel, Hashbas, Kalno, Carchemish and Michmashjust off the top of your head. I don't think so. That's a kind of veiled egotism.

We need to be thankful to the Lord that He has provided the material for us to close that gap, right? You need some good commentaries, Bible dictionary. You ought to have a Bible dictionary and a good commentary so that you have a model for interpretation, you have something that will deal with difficult passages. We endeavor to do that in the study Bible all the way through. In fact, that's why it's so thick because we dealt with every single difficult passage, we want to help you through all of that.

Now those are the gaps that have to be closed. Now as I close, and I don't have much time to do this, so hang on. Five principles...I use five principles to close these gaps, five principles I work with and this is kind of just looking over my shoulder a little bit.

Number one is literal principle...literal principle. When you interpret the Scripture you interpret it literally. What does that mean? That means you understand Scripture in the natural normal sense. You understand Scripture in the natural normal sense.

In other words, the customary meaning of the words is what...is what you accept. There's no secret meaning, there's no hidden meaning, there's no meaning behind the meaning. You say, "Well what about figurative language?" Well figurative language is figurative language and that's customary and normal. If I say he's as strong as an ox, I don't mean he's an ox. That's clear. If I say he stood tall like a tree, I don't mean he's a tree and has branches and leaves. You understand that, that's normal language. Figures of speech are part of normal language. There are a number of metaphor, simile, all those things are a part of normal language so you have figurative speech in the Bible. That's part of normal language.

What about symbolism? You have symbols in the Bible. We have symbols in our language. We talk in symbols all the time. We substitute something for something else in order to...to put meaning into it.

We say, for example, "I'll tell you, I saw that guy going down the street in a rocket." What do we mean by that? We don't mean he was going down there in an ICBM, we mean he probably had a...he probably had an eight-cylinder engine in a car and he was going very fast. But the rocket becomes the symbol of that and that's normal language. We have that latitude in language. You don't need to panic when you see a symbol. Merely look at the context and the symbol unfolds.

You say, "What about the book of Revelation?" Well you do have some symbols in Revelation the likes of which are very unique, but you also have them, mark this, in Zechariah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel primarily and Revelation. And you will notice that those are all books that major on...what?...prophecy. So when it comes to predictive prophecy yet to be fulfilled in the future, you will find many symbols because there are no historical equivalence, those things will unfold in the future. God speaks to us about them in symbolic language. We know it's symbolic. We know that's symbolic.

When we read about heaven we say there in heaven in front of heaven's throne there is a sea of glass. Well a sea is a sea and glass is glass. What is that actually? Is it a sea or is it glass? I don't know. Some of that is sort of figurative, some of it is symbolic, we'll have to wait and see because we don't have an actual experience with that. Much prophetic literature includes symbols. When you read in the book of Revelation that a beast rises out of the sea it will define something about that beast and who he is.And the beast is representative of fierce power. And out he comes and it tells you he's got seven horns and he's got certain heads and it defines what those are. And the Scripture unfolds that int he context.

Bottom line, God spoke clearly. And so you accept it literally. Once you've said I'm not going to accept the literal interpretation of Scripture, you're hopelessly lost. Now the customary meaning of the words is exactly what God intended. When God gave us the book He made it clear. He said I want you to hear Me speak, right? He didn't give us a mystery, He unfolded it. The rabbis got all caught up in mystery meaning, they took the word Abraham, Abraham's name has three consonants, the B, the R and the M in the Hebrew are the consonants, the others are vowels. And so in the Hebrew language letters in the alphabet have numerical equivalence so the rabbis said that the secret name of the Abraham is that if you add up the B, and the R, and the M you get a total of 318, so the secret meaning of Abraham is that he had 318 servants. You can't find that in the context of anything, that's just pure fantasy. But that's the kind of thing that was done. That's called cabalistic interpretation.

By the way, a very popular approach in the past and a popular approach even today, Will Varner wrote an excellent article in the Master's Seminary Journal on that cabalistic approach where you have all these bizarre secret meanings. Listen, a wayfaring man though he be a fool need not error because God has spoken and He has spoken clearly. And you take it at face value.

So, that's where you start. You start with an understanding of the literal sense of the word. Secondly, a historical principle. Having understood the words and I'm cycling back through what we've been

saying from a different angle, you now develop the history. And that's really what I love is to go back into the history and the backgrounds and the culture and the geography and this is when I really read. I get to reading all kinds of things. I read...I read the background books. I read the commentaries. I probably read...it's probably average for me to read fifteen commentaries on every passage because I want to take advantage of all the best of insights into backgrounds and history and I'll read Bible dictionaries or Bible histories or whatever it takes. Just in general reading about the Jewish culture you accumulate information about how they operate and how they think and that informs much of Scripture.

What the point I'm trying to get to here is what did it mean to the people to whom it was spoken or written? What did it mean then? Not what does it mean now. What did it mean then? Because whatever it meant then it means now. So what was their scenario? What was going on? That's the plot. I go back to that. I've often said a text without a context is a pretext. You can't just yank a verse out and make it mean what you want, there's a plot there, there's a story going on there, there's something happening there to which this speaks directly. And when you understand the plot then you'll understand the meaning of what was written That's the historical principle, creating the background to the given scene.

Thirdly is the grammatical principle. Now this is an exercise that I go through. First exercise, I write down all that stuff about the language, get all the literal stuff, put it all down, write it all down, understand the text. Then I go to all the commentaries, read everything I need to read. Get the history, the scene, the background. If I need to understand Pharisees or Sadducees, I look it up, or Zealots or Essenes or whatever it might be. If I want to know more about the background of somebody I go to some book that will give us backgrounds on the individuals of Scripture. Get all that scene put together. Then I come back and I'm still writing all over the place. And I come to the grammatical principle. That's when I begin to look at the structure itself.

Now I understand the scene. I understand the plot. I understand what it says. Now I'm really going to dig deep. I look at the prepositions, the pronouns, the verbs, the nouns, I begin to analyze the passage, I begin to analyze the structure of the passage, put it all together...words, phrases, antecedents. And this is...this is the exercise that we call inductive Bible study. You know the background, you know the words, now what do they say? What are they really saying? And that's when you study the sentence structure.

You know, when we were taking English as kids they used to teach us how to do diagraming. Did they ever do that in your case? Teach you sentence diagraming? Very important to learn how to do that. Very helpful so that you learn how to break down phrases and words and modifiers. And I tell you, I really worry about the next generation of Bible students if they don't learn how to handle their own language. If they only know street talk and they don't understand the components of language, how can they break down language? I think, you know, there are a lot of reasons why people don't

rightly divide the word or handle it accurately today, one is they don't understand the importance of that they just think they ought to stand there till they get a feeling or an impulse or wait till God quote/unquote tells them what it means. But another problem is they don't understand the structure of language. They don't understand that language has rules and laws that are being very carefully followed and that you must understand those. Very important. So you break down phrases, you break down words, you break down modifiers to say how do these things all connect...very, very important if you're going to rightly divide the truth. And in doing this you're really getting at the heart and soul of that passage.

Now let me suggest some little practical things on how you do this, just simple things. You start by just reading that passage and reading and reading and reading and reading and reading and then you find the main point. This is the first thing you do in this breakdown section of grammar, find the main point. What's the main point? And I'll give you a little hint, the main point is usually connected to the main verb. If you're dealing with a paragraph of Scripture, let's say, you're dealing with a paragraph, two or three verses, three or four verses, there will be a main verb in there.

I was telling the folks in the first service, I didn't really get into it in this one, but if you turn to Philippians just very briefly, chapter 1, here's a perfect illustration of this. You're reading in Philippians 1:18 and you could find these on every page in every passage, but here's one. He says, "In every way...verse 18...whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and in this I rejoice and I will rejoice." Now the main idea here is Paul is...what?...he's what? He's rejoicing. He's rejoicing. That's the main idea. So we're reading, we start reading in verse 12 where the notation of the text as a paragraph begins, the paragraph runs all the way down to verse 26 the way they've laid it out. You start in verse 12, he's talking about how his circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.

What are his circumstances? Well, if you study the background of Philippians, where is he? He's in jail. Verse 13, my imprisonment. And he says because I'm in prison the whole praetorian guard is hearing the gospel and because I'm in prison others are having more courage, verse 14, to speak the Word of God without fear. It's making other Christians bold. And because I'm in prison some are preaching Christ from envy and strife. Can you believe that? There are some preachers who are so bothered by the great shadow of Paul they don't want to be in the shade of Paul, he was the man, that they see Paul in prison and so they start out of envy and evil motive in their heart to say he's in prison because God's punishing him and they attack him. And verse 17 says they cause him distress in addition to his imprisonment, they hurt him. They do it out of selfish ambition not from pure motives. Then in verse 19 he says I know that this will all turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Christ.

I rejoice. Why do I rejoice? Well look at it, the main deal is he rejoiced. I just told you why...one, in verse...and I'm just making this up as I go, folks, he rejoiced because he knew that his circumstance

would turn out for the progress of the gospel; two, because the whole praetorian guard was hearing the truth of Christ; three, because other believers were more courageous because they could see that even being in prison you could still preach the gospel; four, because it was causing other preachers to attack him but even that would cause the people of God to pray for him. So, you see, the main thing he did...I rejoice...and all the rest just feed that and informs that.

People sometimes, you know, ask me...how long does it take to prepare a sermon...well the part that I walk in here with a few pieces of paper with things written, I can write that down in an hour, it might take me twenty hours to get to that place. You see, when you've done all the rest of the stuff, the passage just sort of falls off the tree. When you understand what the words say and you understand the historical background and you understand the grammar, then the passage just comes alive. So you start by reading, you find the main idea then you begin to analyze the structure within the framework of that main idea.

Luther put it this way, great statement, he said this, "Shake the whole tree, then climb and shake each limb, then each branch, then each twig and then look under every leaf." And that's...you know, and you don't hear probably a fifth of what I get in that process. That's...that's what's called for.

Well the fourth principle, first was literal, second historical, third grammatical, dealing with the structure of the language, four is synthetic. By that I don't mean fake, but I mean synthesizing, pulling together. What do we mean by that? I mean, understand this, there are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the Old, 27 in the New, written by 40 plus authors but there's really only one source of every Scripture. Who is it? It's God. Therefore there's no contradictions in the Bible, therefore the Bible is perfectly in harmony with itself. And when you've discovered the meaning of a given passage and you...for example, let's take that Philippians 1 passage and now, okay, Paul rejoices and he rejoices for all these reasons. Wow, how does that fit into the whole of Scripture, that's the next question you ask.

Let me synthesize that. The Reformers called it analogius scriptura meaning Scripture is analogous to itself, that is it is completely consistent with itself. No part of the Bible contradicts any other part because one author, God the Holy Spirit, has written it all. So at this point I start cross referencing and I love this part, too. I just chase all over the Bible. Oh, suffering unjustly and being...and rejoicing, where would I go to learn about that? How about James 1, right? Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Other times in the life of Paul he had this same attitude and he expressed it on a number of occasions. I could go back to Job. I could go back to the psalmist and read David's psalms where he rejoices in the midst of tremendous distress. And I can begin to see illustrations of this all over the Word of God and I can even dig in deeper say to James chapter 1 and find out more about the principle of rejoicing in suffering. I can find it in James. I can find it in Peter. I can find it in the persecuted church in Revelation 2 and 3. That's the synthesis principle. You start moving around the Scripture. That's what cross referencing does for you. That's why in the study Bible we put "see note

here," "see note here," "see note there," I don't know how many times and a hundred thousand cross references in there. So you can go chasing all over to your heart's content following a truth all around the Scripture and it becomes so rich and fulfilling when you do that.

And then the fifth and final approach. When you study the Scripture is I guess you would call the practical approach. You have literal, historical, grammatical, synthetic and practical. and at this point, I'll make a confession to you, I really don't think that the most helpful thing in studying the Bible is just to give people a bunch of practical little things to do. Like now, folks, what I want you to do is when you go home the next time your husband yells at you, rejoice. You know, the next time you fall on your kid's toy and break your ankle in the hallway, rejoice. The next time you go to work and your boss bad mouths you and somebody else gets a promotion you deserve because you did the work and he took credit, rejoice. Fine. That's all well and good and you should do that. But what I've learned through life and I think it really works, it really makes sense is, listen to this, the main emphasis of Bible study is to grasp the principle. And when that principle becomes a conviction then it will show up in every practical scenario. I can't think of enough practical scenarios for you. They aren't going to be dead-on hits. Life is fluctuating all the time.

But I'll tell you one thing. When you understand Scripture well enough that it becomes a conviction, it shows up in every practical scene. That's why I spend far more time and some times get criticized for it...well, you're just all theological, it's all biblical stuff, you're not very practical...I'm not really too worried about the practical...the practical, because I know you live out what you believe and I know that you live your convictions and you're controlled by your convictions, you're not controlled by my exhortations and you're not controlled by my scenarios and you're not controlled by my little ditty here and little ditty there that tells you what to do. You know, every time I see one of these seminar deals where they say, "You know, you guys need to...you know...be kind to your wife, if your marriage doesn't have love, and your marriage...and what you need to do..." and I read one guy and he said, "Well, take a vacation. Take a vacation." You want to know something? If you don't have a good relationship with your wife, a vacation is miserable because you're stuck with her. This guy...this same book said, this same book said, "Buy a Teddy bear, bring it home, wrap it in tin foil and put it in the back of the freezer, write a love note really romantic, stick it on the Teddy bear, put it in tin foil, stick it in the back of the freezer. And some night when she's getting out the old lasagna to feed you, by mistake she'll get this, not know what it is, open it up and there will be this Teddy bear and this love note." And my reaction was if you have a bad marriage you better not do that, she'll throw it at you and frozen Teddy bears are much more potentially dangerous than unfrozen ones.

You know, you can spend a lot of time talking all that kind of stuff but I'll tell you something, if you have a conviction in your heart that God has called you to love the wife He's given you and that is a conviction you hold before God with all your heart, that's the issue. You can...you can do practical things and we ought to do some practical things, and it's fine to make those suggestions, but to me the practical principle is the principle of conviction, it's the principle that says I own this truth, I

embrace this truth, I believe this truth, I will live by this truth. And, boy, that is a personal...that is a personal exercise that you have to go through. I know when I go through the study of the Word of God, the last thing I want to do is crystalize what I've just learned and make it a part of my belief system and say...Okay, the first opportunity that comes my way I want to live this out...I want to live this out.

Well, that...those five things is what...are what put you in touch with the text. Those are the exercises that I go through in preparing to understand the Scripture. When I'm done with all of that I can always think of something to say, as you well can attest.

I want to give you just a couple of other key elements if you're going to really know the Scripture. Reading it, very important, we gave you a reading plan how to do that. Interpreting it, we went through all of that. There's a third that I would encourage to think about and that is meditating on it, meditating on it. In Deuteronomy 6:6 to 9 God said, "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, when thou rises up." All the time, all the time is the idea there. You're talking about them all the time, they're in your heart, they're in your mouth, "And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand." In other words, you apply the Word of God in all the work you do. "They shall be as frontlets between your eyes." They are to be...the truths of God's Word are to be the focal point of all your thoughts. "You write them on the posts of your house," so that you conduct all the matters of life within your house consistent with the Word of God. "And you shall write it on your gates," so that everything connected to you as you come and go in the world is filtered through an understanding and application of the Word of God.

In other words, you meditate on the Bible all the time...day in, day out, hour in, hour out and when you're sitting down, standing up, lying down and walking by the way. It's the matter of all your conversation with your family, with your children, it controls what you do in your home and the matters of going and coming as you live out your life.

The Word of God then in that passage in Deuteronomy 6 basically said to write it...write the truth on your door posts. In other words, the Word of God becomes to you like a billboard. You see it everywhere. It has application in your hands, it has application in your thoughts, it has application in your home, it has application as you come and go. It's...it's like putting up billboards all over the area of your life, all throughout all of the avenues of life, the billboards of the Word of God. You can't drive up and down the streets in our society, in our culture without seeing billboards advertising liquor, advertising beer predominantly, advertising cigarettes. Billboards everywhere promoting all of these kinds of things. Now we look at that and we understand why young people are drawn to liquor and cigarettes, they can't even advertise that stuff on television anymore but they are using the billboards that are right before the eyes of everybody in our society. The Lord knew human nature, He knew us, He knew that we would respond to sign posts, and that's why the Word of God tells us that we are to

have signposts and those signposts are to be consistent with what God's Word says. Signposts of sound doctrine, signposts of biblical truth.

A man once was asked, "When you go to sleep at night, you have a hard time sleeping, do you count sheep?" He said, "No, I listen to the Shepherd." You know, it's good to do that. It's good to retire at night reciting some of the signposts that God has revealed in His Word. Meditating on the Word of God is absolutely crucial. Just letting it saturate your mind, just thinking about it.

"Blessed is the man...Psalm 1:1 and 2 says...that walks not in the council of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night."

Now the word "meditate" really has the idea of constantly ruminating over something. It's sort of a word that's symbolic of...I should say, it can be symbolized by a cow chewing the cud, it goes out in the morning and while the grass is fresh the cow eats the grass. And when the sun comes up and the grass is warm and the weather is hot, the cow goes and finds a shady place and just continues to chew on what it ingested in the beginning of the day. And that's really what meditating is like. You take it in and then you begin to meditate on it, bring it back up and you think about it, you ponder it. Your own mind deals with its proper applications and so forth. That is a very important part of coming to grips with Scripture.

And if I can add something to that, I think sometimes it helps to also dialogue about it. I don't think meditation alone gets us into the deep thinking about Scripture. I think it really stimulates meditation if you have somebody to have a conversation with. That's why I think in Deuteronomy 6 it says talk about it when you stand up, sit down, lie down and walk in the way. I don't know how you are but some of the things that come clear to me in understanding the Scripture come clear to me more quickly in dialogue then they do in my own isolation. So I just put that in because I think it's really important to ruminate on the Word of God, meditate on the Word of God, discuss the Word of God all the time and you'll be amazed at how that will help you to own it, to make it your own and to understand its wonderful applications in your life.

Then one other principle that I would give to you, and I'm not going to develop this because this is a whole other subject. If you really want to know the Bible, read it, interpret it, meditate on it, and fourthly, and maybe most importantly, teach it. There's a simple principle that is really true, whatever you give away you keep. Whatever you give away you keep. The best way to learn is to teach. The best way to learn biblical truth is to be responsible to have to pass it on. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:2, "The things you've learned from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." If you want to retain the truth, give it away.

You say, "Why is it...why is that true?" Well it's true because, first of all, in order to teach it you have to learn it. And then as you're struggling to make it clear to a student, you're struggling at the same time to make it clear in your own mind. This may be one of the secrets I'm not supposed to give away. But I primarily preach what...what I want, what helps me, what motivates me, what clarifies things for me, what makes sense to me, what makes the Word of God clear to me. People always ask me, "Well, how do you know...how do you know how your people think?" Well, I don't know how all of you think. "How do you know what your people's interests are? And how do you know the pulse of your people and so forth in a large church like that?" To be honest, and sometimes I might be a little reluctant to say it, to be honest with you, the preacher as a teacher winds up preaching and teaching what captures his own heart. And when I struggle to make something clear to you and find a way to do that, that's because it made it clear to me and I'm passing that on to you.

So anybody who teaches is involved in the vortex of this grappling with truth. I want it to be clear. I have this driving passion to understand the Scripture, you sort of get the overflow of that. Before I can teach you I have to learn it myself. And I also find that when I struggle to understand it, it sinks in deeply. And then when I struggle in the pulpit and sometimes it's more of a struggle than other times, as I'm struggling to communicate it with you, it is also sealing it in my own heart and the repetition is helpful too, especially if you have to preach twice on Sunday mornings.

But I'll tell you right now, the best way to learn the Bible is to teach it. And you may not feel you can stand up in front of a Sunday school class or group of people and teach, but you can sure find somebody who needs desperately to know the Word of God and take on the responsibility to teach them.

Now having said all of that we could draw some simple conclusions. God has given us His Word. It is the source of truth. It is the source of blessing. It is the source of victory. It is the source of growth. It is the source of power. It is the source of guidance. It is the source of hope. It is the path of righteousness. It is everything we need. We live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. This immense treasure, we've been talking about this all along, this immense treasure is in our hands, it is comprehensible if we will approach it faithfully. The Bible demands of us that we believe it, that we honor it, that we love it, that we obey it, that we fight for it and contend for it, that we proclaim it and also that we study it. Colossians 3:16 says that we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly...richly. The Apostle Paul in praying for the Ephesians prayed that their heart would be enlightened so that they would know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. Where are you going to learn that? Where are you going to find that? It's revealed in the Word of God. He prayed that we would know the truth of God, that we would understand the truth of God.

To the Philippians Paul said, "I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere or genuine." Over and over again the Scripture tells us that we are to understand its truths, so we've been trying to show you a pattern by which we can apprehend those truths and make them our own.

I suppose my...my prayer for you or my desire for you would be the same as that which Paul expressed in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the Word of God you accepted not as the word of men but for what it really is, the Word of God which also performs its work in you who believe."

My prayer for you is that you would hear the Word, you would understand the Word and the Word would go to work in your life as you commit yourself to the learning of it. Matthew 4:4 again, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Feed on that heavenly bread.

Let's pray.

Father, it's been so wonderful to be together this morning and studying Your Word and how we can dig in and unleash the truths that are there. I pray for every person here that they would do that, that they would take advantage of this incredibly rich treasure. David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin," and there's no other way, we avoid sin when the Word controls us. Fill us with the convictions of Your truth that we might live to Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).