

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

Why We Believe the Bible Is True

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-321

Now whenever I have the opportunity to preach on the doctrine of the Word of God, there is a great danger that this could go on for a long time and that you may feel like you're drinking out of a fire hose at full volume, because this is my passion, as you know, the Word of God. I love the truth, I live for the truth, I proclaim the truth. Nothing is as important as the truth of God revealed in Scripture. And so, as we began last Sunday night talking about this issue of Scripture, we shall continue for many Sunday nights to come...not sure exactly how many...to talk about the great doctrine of Scripture.

Let me begin tonight by reminding you of a familiar statement that appears three times in the Bible. Once in Deuteronomy chapter 8, once in Matthew chapter 4, and a third time recorded in Luke chapter 4, and this is that statement: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." What kind of living are we talking about? What kind of life is in view? Well this refers to all of life, encompassing the spiritual life as well as the temporal, physical life.

Everything in life, every perception in life, every attitude, every action must be understood in the light of the Word of God. For us who are believers, we understand that our spiritual lives which dominate our physical lives and all aspects of living are fed solely and only by the Word of God. For believers, the only soul food is Scripture. This is laid out for us, repeatedly, throughout the pages of the Bible. In Psalm 1 we read, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night."

In the 19th Psalm we read regarding the Scripture the words that are recorded there, that they are more desirable than gold, yes than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. And we are instructed to let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart "be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." And that means that the words and the meditations of our hearts in order to be acceptable to God are reflective of His Word. And that is clearly indicated in Joshua chapter 1 verse 8, "This book of the law, Scripture shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success." All of life depends on the Word of God. It is our only true soul food.

In Psalm 40 and verse 8 we read, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, – " Why? – "because Your Law is within my heart." That is to say there is a commitment from the heart to the Law of God. Turn to Psalm 119 for just a moment. I want to direct you to a few verses out of the 176 that make up that Psalm, Psalm 119. Psalm 119 reflects back to Psalm 1. It starts in a very similar fashion. "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. They also do no unrighteousness. They walk in His ways. Thou hast ordained Thy precepts that we should keep them diligently. O, that my ways may be established to keep Thy statutes."

This is a hunger. This is a cry that comes out of the heart of the child of God because the Law of God is in the heart. Verse 15 of Psalm 119, "I will meditate on Thy precepts and regard Thy ways." Verse 16, "I shall delight in Thy statutes, I shall not forget Thy Word." Verse 27, "Make me understand the way of Thy precepts so I will meditate on Thy wonders." Verse 33, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes and I shall observe them to the end." Verse 35, "Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in them." Verse 40, "Behold, I long for Thy precepts, revive me through Thy righteousness."

Going over to verse 72, we read in a similar fashion the hunger of the heart of a child of God, "The Law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Verse 97, "O how I love Thy Law. It is my meditation all the day." Verse 113, "I hate those who are double minded but I love Thy Law." Verse 131, "I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments." Verse 161, "Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of Thy words. I rejoice at Thy Word as one who finds great spoil. I hate and despise falsehood, but I love Thy Law. Seven times a day I praise Thee because of Thy righteous ordinances. Those who love Thy Law have great peace." Verse 167, "My soul keeps Thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly."

Now, this is a profound expression of the love of a child of God for the Word of God. This is not a perfect person. Verse 176 ends the Psalm with a testimony, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek Thy servant for I do not forget Thy commandments. I remember them. I love them. I long for them. I hunger for them. But I don't always obey them." What is true about the true believer is that he loves the Word of God. The true Christian loves the Word of God. In the New Testament we find this again and again indicated to us in the language of our Lord. For example, in the 8th chapter of John, he says in verse 31, "If you abide in My Word, if you find your place, your resting place, your living place, your dwelling place, your settling place in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine, real disciples."

Real disciples, *maths alths*, genuine disciples live and abide in the Word because it is their only spiritual food. In John 14 in verse 15 Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." There will not only be a love for the Law of God, there will be obedience to that Law from the heart with joy and eagerness. First John chapter 5, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of

God and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know we love the children of God when we love God and do His commandments.” How can you tell when you’re a child of God? You love the Law of God and you obey His commandments.

Contrast that with 2 Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians reminds us that “There are people who perish –” verse 10 of chapter 2 – “because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.” Being saved is the equivalent of loving the truth. If you are saved, you love the truth, so that people are said to be damned because they do not love the truth. “We are like babies –” Peter says in 1 Peter 2:1-3 – “who desire the pure milk of the Word, the same way a baby desires milk.” Babies do not have diverse appetites. All a baby wants is milk, milk, milk, milk, milk. They don’t want variety. They want milk. And we’re the same way.

True believers know that it is the Word of God and the Word of God alone that keeps them alive and strong and produces blessing and joy and power and strength and effectiveness. On one occasion, in John chapter 6, a group of disciples abandoned Jesus after He had some hard things to say. And Jesus looked at those who remained and said, “Will you also go away?” And Peter gave the great response for those who remained, “To whom shall we go? You and You alone have the words of life.” We find our life in the Word of God. It is called the Word of Life. And those who are spiritually alive love the Word. They love to feed on the Word. They hunger for the Word of God because it alone provides the truth that brings them satisfaction.

Indifference to Scripture is not a mark of regeneration. Indifference to Scripture is not a mark of salvation. Indifference to Scripture is a mark of spiritual death. And I believe that in all generations, including this one, God’s true church, the genuinely redeemed, are desperately hungry for the truth. They want the Word fed to them. They want the Word taught to them, preached to them. They want the Word explained to them with all its richness and depth. But that’s not what they get most of the time. Serious study of the Word of God, diligent hard labor in the text of Scripture in the original languages and racing throughout the *analogia scriptura*, the analogy of Scripture as it explains itself across the sixty-six books, the diligence required for that to bring up the rich treasure is not the interest of most pop Christian personalities.

It was years ago that Jim Packer characterized evangelicalism in a way that I found to be exactly the way it could be characterized today. Nothing much is changed in the several decades since he originally wrote this. This he wrote in the preface to a reprint of Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*. This is what Packer said in characterizing evangelicalism. He said, “It is egocentric, zany, simplistic, degenerate, half-magic spell casting which is all the world sees when it watches religious television or looks directly at the professed evangelical community.” Pretty strong language from an Anglican.

He further said this, “Our how-tos, how to have a wonderful family, great sex, financial success in a Christian way, how to cope with grief, life passages, crises, fears, frustrating relationships and what

not else give us formula to be followed by a series of supposedly simple actions on our part in the manner of painting by numbers.” And he was saying all that because he was comparing it to this massive tome written by the Puritan Richard Baxter. It is well beyond a million words applying the Scripture to Christian living. He further said, “Baxter’s work is a high level of intelligent Bible-based, theologically integrated wisdom with unfailing, unimpaired clarity that is dazzling to the mind.”

Where do people go today for teaching in the Word of God that is dazzling to the mind? Where do they go for teaching of the Word of God which is highly accurate, intelligence, challenging, theologically rich, sound, integrated, clear in its truthfulness? R.C. Sproul suggests in a current issue of *Table Talk* that our culture is embedded in proud mediocrity. We’re mediocre and we’re proud of it. There are still hard-working scholars, hard-working scholastic minds in science and technology and research of various kinds. There are still those who are applied to very formidable tasks and problems, and they make a tedious and long-term effort to solve whatever the problem is. But they’re becoming more and more the exception.

We’re not producing those kinds of people at the rate we used to in our educational system, because our culture has redefined education. The culture has, in general, settled for what is quick and what is cheap, junk music, junk art, junk literature, junk thinking. Our culture is far too easily satisfied, far too easily entertained. Excellence, truth and beauty, which used to be the triad of human virtues, have been replaced by funny, cool and cute. And we get mediocrity by the boatload because we want it. Having welcomed it with open arms, we don’t just accept mediocrity, we crave it. And accommodating the culture is the church.

You want mediocrity, we’ll package it for you. We’ll give you mediocrity. We’ll give you evangelical mediocrity. We’ll eliminate the transcendent. We’ll do away with the biblical. We’ll remove the theological. We’ll take away the profound demanding truth of Scripture and we will feed the mediocrity hungered masses with mediocrity. And in so doing, we will legitimize that mediocrity and that superficiality that defines our culture. So you have people who don’t take anything profound seriously. They have not only found a place in the culture, they have found a place in the church.

Pastors now are more concerned about being funny and being cool and being okay. And they’re committed to cleverness and creativity and style and not interested in the demanding rigors of searching the Word of God and proclaiming the depths of its glorious truths because they think the culture needs what the culture wants. How far have we fallen? J.I. Packer wrote another introduction...he writes a lot of them. This one was an introduction to *Puritan Theology*.

He said this. “It does not seem possible to deny that the Puritans were the strongest just where evangelical Christians today are the weakest. Here were men of outstanding intellectual power in whom the mental habits fostered by sober scholarship were linked with a flaming zeal for God and a minute acquaintance with the human heart. All their work reveals this unique fusion of gifts and

graces. Where the Puritans called for order, discipline, depth and thoroughness, our temper is one of casual, haphazardness and restless impatience. “We crave for stunts, novelties and entertainments. We lost our taste for solid study, humble self-examination, disciplines, meditation and unspectacular hard work in our study.

“Again, where Puritanism had God and His glory as its unifying center, our thinking revolves around ourselves as if we were the hub of the universe.” And so he writes, “In evangelizing we preach the gospel without the Law and faith without repentance, stressing the gift of salvation and glossing over the cost of discipleship. No wonder so many professed conversions fall away. “And then,” he writes, “in teaching on the Christian life, our habit is to depict it as a path of thrilling feelings rather than of working faith and of supernatural interruptions, rather than of rational righteousness.

“And in dealing with the Christian experience, we dwell constantly on joy, peace, happiness, satisfaction and rest with no balancing reference to the divine discontent of Romans 7, the fight of faith in Psalm 73, or any of the burdens of responsibility and providential chastenings that fall to the lot of the child of God. The spontaneous jollity of the carefree extrovert comes to be equated with healthy Christian living, and jolly extroverts in our churches are encouraged to become complacent in carnality while saintly souls of less sanguine temperament are driven almost crazy because they cannot bubble over in the prescribed manner.” End quote.

We’re in a very difficult state. Those people who profess to be Christians, who profess to be evangelists trying to reach this society, are giving this culture the mediocrity it wants and turning away from the Word of God. Either they are not Christians, or they are the most carnal of carnal Christians. It’s one thing to be carnal while studying the Word of God. It’s another to have your carnality set the Bible aside. And I actually see this trend as a judgment from God.

You remember a few weeks ago we talked about Romans 1, that when God judges, one form of His judgment is to give people over to the sins that they choose and to let them live with the consequences of those choices? Romans 1, “God gave them over, gave them over, gave them over,” repeated three times. They didn’t want His Word. They didn’t want His truth. And God gave them over to what they did want. This is the wrath of God’s abandonment. And I think one of the forms of that is this; if people do not want the Word of God, then God will turn them over to the course that is inevitable for that rejection.

There’s a great illustration of this. Turn back to the Old Testament in Amos chapter 8, Amos chapter 8. Amos started out as a very inconsequential shepherd from Tekoa. And by the call of God and some marvelous revelation, became a formidable prophet. In the 8th chapter verse 11 we read what is really a critical part of his message, critical part of his message to Israel. Verse 11, Amos 8, “ ‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord God, ‘when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger

from sea to sea – ' from the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, to the Mediterranean – 'east to west, and from the north even to the east, and they will go to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord but they will not find it.' ”

Boy, that is so relevant. A famine of the Word of the Lord. They will seek it and they will not find it. This is a divine judgment on people who refuse to hear it when they had it. Eight centuries before Christ the northern kingdom, Israel, is confident, actually smug, feeling good. They shouldn't have. Morals had crashed. Read the whole prophecy of Amos; it's all there. Morals had crashed, honesty was gone, abuse of the poor was common, the upper class was vile. But money was plenty, prosperity was widespread and they were engaged in worship.

But if you want to know what God thought about their worship. Look at chapter 5. “I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.” I don't like your worship. I don't like your meetings. “For though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs. I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.” I don't like your worship. I don't like your songs. I don't like your music. I don't like your offerings. I don't like any of it.

Now the people of Israel thought that God was on their side. Prosperity deceived them in that regard. They thought everything was fine. They were sinful...widespread sin and iniquity...but they kept up this superficial form of religion. And they thought God was on their side, until God dropped a bomb on Israel and that bomb had a name. Amos. He stormed into Samaria, and he stormed into Samaria as a prophet of doom. And he started saying God is going to judge you. God is going to judge you and He's going to judge you powerfully and He's going to judge you severely.

Chapter 2 verse 6, “Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment.” Chapter 3 verse 1, “Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt. You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Your privileges only intensify your judgment. In chapter 4 in verse 12 it's the same thing, “Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel, because I shall do this to you – ” famous line – “prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” You are about to come face to face with God the Judge. Get ready.

This whole book is a pronouncement of divine judgment that was fulfilled when the Assyrians came in 722 B.C. and destroyed and took captive the northern kingdom from which the people never returned. It was the end of that northern generation. In chapter 5 in verse 27 Amos says, “Therefore I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus, the capital, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.” It's over. It's over.” But worst of all, in the intervening time as the judgment begins to roll, you're going to have a big problem. And that takes us back to chapter 8. You're going to be staggering in a famine, not for bread or water, but a famine to hear from the Lord. And you're going to stagger all over the

place and you're going to go to and fro trying to find a word from the Lord and you're not going to find it. You're not going to find it.

How tragic is that? But that is a divine judgment, when God says you wouldn't listen and now I will not any longer speak to you. That happened, and it's happening again. I fear that just like in Amos' day when people would not listen, there will come a time when they cannot find the truth. This country...look at its history...had a great era of great preaching in its inception, and in the Great Awakening and even into the modern era when there was consistency in the pulpits and the gospel was preached. But it was not accepted, it was not believed by the people outside the Kingdom and even by those who are in the Kingdom who assaulted and attacked it in ways that I described last week.

Those who would not listen are going to find that there is no longer a word coming from the Lord readily available to them. God's Word has been available, but when God judges, it becomes unavailable. And what you have today even in our country, and I can't speak for God and just exactly when He's judging, but I will tell you this. That there are so many people claiming to speak for God that it is well nigh impossible for an unbeliever to know who in the world is really God's spokesman. The Word of God is becoming more scarce for this world of unbelievers, as even those who believe the Word of God are afraid to speak it because it offends and they think that's bad strategy.

This society wants everything but the Scripture, and the church is content, seemingly, to give them everything but the Scripture. And those who hold to the authority and the priority of Scripture, those who hold to the authority and priority of sound doctrine, those who are sober and serious and diligent students and preachers of divine revelation are ridiculed by the world, by the culture and by many in the church, although I am convinced the true believers, the true believers long for and do all they can to find those who will feed them the truth. Now that leads us to a question that I want to try to answer tonight in part. How did we come to believe the Bible? Why do we believe it?

Why do we come here week after week after week, Sunday morning, Sunday night? You go to a fellowship group in the morning; you go to a Bible study during the week; come and take a Logos class; you go to the Master's College or the Master's Seminary to study the Scriptures. You go to the bookstore and you buy hundreds of thousands of books and tapes and CDs, and you just continue to imbibe the Word of God. What brought you to that confidence?

Are you smarter than everybody else? Are we just really the sheer intellectual elite of the world? Or did somebody lay down a case for biblical veracity that was just profound and inescapable? Did we go through some process of being exposed to rational evidences for believing the Bible? Are we the...either the most intelligent people or the most clear-thinking rational people? Or are we those who have been most exposed to the clearest, most precise and best explanation of the Bible's truthfulness? Is that why we're here?

Well, I don't think so. We're the not many noble, not many mighty. We're the lowly, the nobodies, the nothings. We're not the elite of the world. How in the world did we come to this conviction that we live by every single word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? Why are we in this church and in not some other church where there's a lot of nonsense going on? And why are you in any church at all? And why are you buying Bibles, and why are you buying study Bibles and commentaries and devotionals and daily Bibles and books about the Bible? Why...why...where did you get all this confidence? Why do you want to study it? Why is it so important for you to hear the Word of God explained?

Let me give you some comments from some past guys who left an impression. Martin Luther, "The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent. You must count on the influence of the Holy Spirit." How about Zwingli, another Reformer, "Even if you received the gospel of Jesus Christ directly from an apostle, you cannot act according to it unless your heavenly Father teaches you." Hmm.

And John Calvin held the same view that the Word of God is believed when God regenerates the heart. Listen to what Calvin wrote. "The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason." Very important statement. "The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason, for these words will not obtain full credit – " the words of Scripture – "in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Holy Spirit." Profound statement, absolutely accurate.

"Moses and the prophets," writes Calvin, "boldly and fearlessly testified what was actually true, that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke. The same Spirit now also testifies to our hearts that He has employed them as His servants to instruct us. Accordingly, we need not wonder if there are many who doubt as to the author of the Scripture for although the majesty of God is displayed in it, yet none but those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit have eyes to perceive what ought indeed to have been visible to all and yet is visible to the elect alone."

There isn't any way that we could be considered the intellectual elite of the world. In fact, to even get in the Kingdom you have to become as a little what? Child. We are not the noble and the mighty and the erudite and the elite. We're not the sages and the wise. But that is not what gets you to confidence in the Scripture. And Calvin said it. It is not reason. It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit which is superior to reason.

I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the same way I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, the same way I believe God to be the God of Scripture who is a holy Trinity, the same way I believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone and that is because God has wrought that confidence in my heart. Does it stand the test of reason? Yes. But that is not the source of that

conviction. It is the inner witness of the Spirit to our hearts. It is the Spirit that witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God. It is the Spirit that witnesses with our spirit that the Word of God is in fact true and reliable.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4 and 5, Paul said regarding his own preaching and the revelation that came from God through him, "Knowing your election how that our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." Why is it that some people hear the preaching of the gospel and it comes in power and it comes in the Holy Spirit and it comes in assurance, Paul says, "knowing your election?" Because God chose you to understand this. First Corinthians 2:4 and 5, "My speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom – " You don't need that – "but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Now, there is a preacher. And his preaching was plain and straightforward and simple, not in the words of human wisdom. He preached Christ and Him crucified. He kept the message very clear, very straightforward. He did not craft his preaching in cultural fashion in order to make it acceptable to human reason. He says it was not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. My preaching was straightforward and simple, it had massive impact which is no testimony to my skill as an orator, but is great testimony to the hally...Holy Spirit and His power. And he says, "That your faith, your faith in the truth, should not stand in the wisdom of men," not because it was such a reasonable and such a rational presentation, "But in the power of God."

Same thing that can be said of the preaching of Paul can be said of all the revelation of God. It is objective truth. It is the very Word of God. It does stand the test of reason and the test of close scrutiny and examination and history. But for you to trust in it requires a mighty work of the Holy Spirit. We believe in the Word of God because we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to go beyond where reason could ever take us.

I remember one time years ago when I was speaking at a college, and it was Whittier College. They asked me to come out on three nights and prove the Bible was true. Well, I was fairly young and thought this was great. I believe it's true and I think I can lay down some evidences. And so I crafted a whole long list of evidences. The Bible is true because of its unity; it never contradicts itself. The Bible is true because of its scientific accuracy, says He hangs the world on nothing. That's pretty significant. It says the earth is turned like clay to the seal, rotated on an axis. That's what they do with clay when they would embed a signature into soft clay.

It talks about the course of the sun that runs from one end of space to the other. The whole hydrological cycle is unfolded in the book of Isaiah. You can talk about a lot of scientific things. The scientific accuracy in a rather primitive scientific world when these things were written; that's testimony to the veracity of Scripture. And then I talked about its historical accuracy, archeological discoveries, and all those kinds of things. And I went through all the details.

I talked about miracles. How else can you explain the miracles that were seen by hundreds and thousands of people? Miracles that had no other explanation, the miraculous events, the miraculous nature, the miraculous attestation in the life of our Lord and the life of the Apostles and their associates who wrote the Scriptures. I went through all of that. I even made a point out of the person of Jesus Christ who was so transcendent, no one ever could have invented Him. And I laid down all the evidences, carefully, and I frankly thought the proof was overwhelming. Yet, to my knowledge, not one single person was convinced in the whole student body.

And I went away thinking that there's something else going on here, more than reason. And I began to realize what it says in 1 Corinthians 2:14. And if you will, turn there. That was just the introduction; now we're going to get to the text. First Corinthians 2:14. Here is the summation of the problem. "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually examined, appraised, discerned." Well that's the answer. It's impossible.

Evidences aren't going to cut it on their own. Human reason can't get you there. The natural man does not because he cannot. He does not believe because he cannot believe. And there is a certain profound reality to this "cannot." He is unable because he's natural and not spiritual. He doesn't have any spiritual apparatus. Furthermore, he is unable...look at 2Corinthians chapter 4...this is compounding his inability. Paul says in verse 3, "If our gospel is veiled – " Look, we preached the gospel and people don't all believe. We know that. "If it is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." It is veiled to those who are perishing.

It is veiled to those who are headed for hell. In whose case? Verse 4, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God." They don't because they can't. They can't because they're natural, not spiritual. They can't because they're dead not alive. They can't because they are blinded by the god of this world who is...as you well know...Satan.

But there's even more. Go back to Matthew chapter 11. To show you how profound their condition is, how it is to say how deep is their darkness, in Matthew chapter 11, Jesus speaks in verse 25, "He answered and said this, 'I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes.'" Oh, boy. Now, you have not only the natural condition, making it impossible for somebody to believe, you not only have the Satanic condition, making it impossible for somebody to believe, but you have the divine judgment in which God has hidden these things from the wise and intelligent.

Why? The answer is in verse 26. And here's the answer Jesus gave in His prayer to the Father. "Yes, Father, for thus it was well pleasing in Thy sight." That is the only answer. Are you ready for that?

There's no other answer, because He wanted it that way, because He wanted it that way. It pleased God to hide these things from the wise and the prudent. You can't get there through reason, even reason at its peak, reason at its pinnacle. How can Einstein, arguably one of the most intelligent men who has ever lived, how can he go so far and never come to understand that there has to be a God and the reasonableness of the God of the Bible being that God?

How is it that all the scholars can even pour over the Bible and make their searches for the historical Jesus and chase around studying the life of Christ and pour over the Old Testament? And there have been tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Old Testament scholars and rabbis who read the Scripture. And there are all kinds of quote/unquote New Testament scholars and teachers in universities and seminaries in religion departments who don't get it and they have minds that are off the charts.

And the answer is this. The natural man can't get there because it's in a different dimension. The natural man's darkness is compounded by satanic blindness. He is so strongly attracted to the kingdom of iniquity that he runs from the truth which exposes his sin. And then you have God Himself limiting, limiting His disclosure of the truth, hiding it from the wise and intelligent, and revealing it to babes. This was so demonstrated, wasn't it, in the choice of the twelve apostles? Twelve absolute nobodies, none was a rabbi, none was a teacher, none was a preacher, none was a synagogue ruler, none was a Pharisee, Sadducee, none was a scribe.

Just ignored all the scholastics, all the elite. As many as seven of them might have been fishermen, guys that worked with their hands. One was a scummy tax collector, social outcast. And why did God do that? And the answer comes in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 26, and we've alluded to it. Let me take you to it. "Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong. And – " implied – "God has chosen the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God."

Now, listen to the next verse, "By His doing you are in Christ Jesus." It is only by God's doing that you've come to believe the truth of God's revelation. "It is by His doing you are in Christ who became to us wisdom from God." The only thing that ever makes anybody embrace divine wisdom is God's work in that heart. Wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption all come from God because God has chosen to give it to us, so that just as it is written, verse 31, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." You can't get there through the natural process of human reason.

That's why when you're trying to deal with a non-believer you can stack up and stack up and stack up all kinds of evidences, all kinds of reasonable arguments. And believe me, the truth is rational and the truth is reasonable. But that doesn't take people there. If you want to present the case for biblical

authenticity...and I want to do that every single time I step in this pulpit. I do not get up here and tell you what are the reasonable evidences that the Bible is true. I just open it up for it is sharper, more powerful than any other weapon. It carries its own power with it.

Turn back to Matthew chapter 11...and we ended up in Matthew chapter 11...and just be reminded of this tremendous passage. Verse 25, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes – " Why? – "because it was well-pleasing in Your sight." Now look at the next verse, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son – " listen to this – "and anyone to whom the Son wills to – " What? – "reveal Him."

The only people who believe the gospel, the only people who believe the Bible to be the Word of God are the people God has chosen, the people to whom God has revealed Himself and those to whom the Son wills to reveal the Father. Very selective. And yet, don't you love that next verse? Because this is secret and we don't know who these people are, comes this invitation, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." The balance, the sovereignty of God is that invitation.

Now I want you to turn to Matthew 13, and we'll leave our main text for next week. Matthew 13, this is really still introduction. Verse 11, "He answered and said to them – " His disciples had just asked Him the question, "Why do You speak in parables?" A parable is just an analogy, illustration. But if you don't explain it, it becomes a riddle. "So why do You speak to them in parables?" Why are You speaking to the multitude in parables? "He answered and said to them – " I love this – "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. But to them, it has not been granted.' "

Do you feel privileged? Do you feel privileged? You're sitting here as a direct result of a sovereign choice by God in eternity past to disclose to you His truth. "To them it has not been granted. So I speak – " in verse 13 – "to them in parables because they see and don't see, they hear and don't hear, they don't understand." And this is exactly what Isaiah said and He takes us back to Isaiah 6 when God told Isaiah, "Go preach, but know this, the people will hear but not understand, they will see but not perceive, the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, they've closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear, for truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desire to see what you see and didn't see it, and to hear what you hear and didn't hear it."

Wow are we privileged. And all these people: rabbis, and people in religion, scholars, and students chasing all around trying to figure things out. You've got all the other people looking in every realm of

philosophy and trying to interpret religion. And here we are, all the nobodies and nothings and lowly and we understand it because...as verse 11 puts it...it has been granted to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. Why do we believe the Bible? Cause it was given to us to believe it.

A man who had a great influence on me years ago and still does, occasionally, when I read his writings, is a man named Cornelius Van Til, a great apologist for the Christian faith, but a presuppositional apologist. And the presupposition was that the Bible is true. Van Til said this in his *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, volume 5, page 130. "Man often speak as though the only thing that the sinner needs is true information. This is not the case. Man needs true interpretation, but he also needs to be made a new creature. Sin is not only misinformation, it is also a power of perversion in the soul." You can't just give him the information; you can't just give him the interpretation. He has to be made a new creation.

Van Til said, "The Christian knows that he would interpret nature wrongly due to the sin that is within him, unless he be enlightened by Scripture and guided by the Holy Spirit." We know that. "Apologetics –" he said – "involves a conflict over ultimate authorities, that is a conflict over our presuppositions or a final standard." Now let me split that up for you. You either believe that a human being has a rational power on his own to ascend to the truth of God's Word or you believe he doesn't. If you believe he does, you have an unbiblical view of man. If you believe he doesn't, then you know that the power is not in evidences to the rational mind, but the power is in the proclamation of the Word of God.

And what you have in ministry today that is nothing but trying to convince people with cleverness and reasonableness and whatever other manipulating forces that somehow within the heart of man is the capability for him to rise out of his spiritual death, rise out of his spiritual blindness, rise out of divine judicial blindness, and on his own believe because you've made it so easy for him. Ludicrous. But it's what drives so much of so-called evangelism. The sinner's opposition to the Word of God, the sinner's opposition to divine holy truth, the sinner's opposition to the gospel does not arise from legitimate intellectual issues regarding the truth or the veracity of Scripture. It rises from the rebellion of a sinful soul. And because he is natural and even at his best rational level, he cannot attain to this spiritual knowledge.

Man is not the final court of appeal. You cannot let the sinner think that his reason is the deciding factor in his salvation. According to God, God is the final court of appeal. His revelation decides what's true, not man's reason. Sinners have for centuries applied their reason to the Bible and come up with all kinds of damning heresies. "And all men –" writes Van Til – "do their thinking on the basis of a position accepted by faith, and your faith is either in God –" he says – "or in - yourself and your reason."

I will not put my faith in human reason, so I do not preach things that manipulate human reason. I preach the Word of God because my faith is in His power and His Word. Thus to know divine truth and to understand the Bible, the sinner must call on God. The sinner must be overwhelmed with the truth of the Word of God. Preach anything other than the Scripture and you are wasting your time. The sinner must understand the truth. He must have that information. He must have that interpretation.

We are begotten again by the Word of Truth, but he must cry out for God to save him, to give him life, to take off the blinders, to overpower the enemy who has blinded him, to remove the things that God Himself has hidden from him and bring them into the light. The sinner has to throw himself before the throne of God and cry out with the depths of his fearful soul, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Give me an understanding of the truth." It's all the work of God. Augustine said, "I believe in order to understand." Let's pray.

What can we say, O God? Words fail us to express what our hearts feel as we come into Your presence and endeavor to say thank You that You have chosen to reveal Yourself to us, that You have given us a love for Yourself, a love for Your Son, a love for Your Word and a love for one another. It's all a testimony, not to our reasoning powers but to Your divine and supernatural regenerating power. We do believe and so we understand. And Your Word opens up to us and we identify with all the words of the psalmist. Our delight is in Your Law. In it we meditate day and night. We love Your Law. We find joy and rejoicing in Your precepts. We hunger and thirst for Your truth. It is our only soul food.

And, O God, we know that Your people around this country and even around the world are in many places facing a famine of the hearing of Your Word. May Your true people have teachers and preachers and writers who can reach them and feed their hungry hearts. And may this society, which is so devoted to what is foolish and mediocre, begin to hunger for something that is deep and real, and may Your church somehow undergo a transformation by Your grace and goodness and go back to proclaiming Your Word in all its fullness and richness. This we pray that You would be glorified and You would be honored and we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

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