

**FOUNDATION OF FAITH!**  
**INTRODUCTION**  
**PART 1**

This morning we are going to begin a study that I have called *FOUNDATION OF FAITH*. We are going to be looking at our basic Christian beliefs and when I say basic, I mean those foundational truths, those very things that are being attacked by the church today. We are called to “re-imagine” our Christian faith but into what? You see, we have what we need to build our Christian faith in our hands; it is called the Word of God! Don’t let anyone tell you differently and by the time we get through these studies I pray that your faith will be stronger and you will be able to defend what you believe, why you have the hope you do have!

Some of the issues we will be studying are:

- **Paterology:** The study of the person and work of God the Father.
- **Christology:** The study of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Pneumatology:** The study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Bibliology:** The study of the Bible.
- **Anthropology:** The study of the purpose and nature of humanity, both in its pre-fall and post-fall state.
- **Hamaritology:** The study of the nature, origin, and effects of sin on all creation.
- **Soteriology:** The study of salvation.
- **Angelology:** The study of the nature and works of angels and demons.
- **Ecclesiology:** The study of the nature of the Church.
- **Eschatology:** The study of end times.

Now don't let those words scare you, the subject matter is what we are interested in and I believe it is very important for us to understand. You see, as I have said there is a movement within the church that is challenging our Christian beliefs and I believe they are leading us away from the true and living God and into the One-World Church that is coming together faster than I ever imagined. So we need to know what we believe, that is the bottom line, and then put this into practice. Thus, during this study I hope to not only give you information, sound or healthy doctrine, but then show you how it needs to be applied to your life, how you are to live out your faith now that you know these things.

Now some don't feel there is a problem with Biblical literacy, but let me share this story with you and I think you will see what I mean when I say that there is, and the problem is big. We are told:

A candidate for church membership was asked, "What part of the Bible do you like best?" He said: "I like the New Testament best." Then he was asked, "What Book in the New Testament is your favorite?" He answered, "The Book of the Parables, Sir." They then asked him to relate one of the parables to the membership committee. And a bit uncertain, he began . . .

“Once upon a time a man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves; and the thorns grew up and choked the man. And he went on and met the Queen of Sheba, and she gave that man, Sir, a thousand talents of silver, and a hundred changes of raiment. And he got in his chariot and drove furiously, and as he was driving along under a big tree, his hair got caught in a limb and left him hanging there! And he hung there many days and many nights. The ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. And one night while he was hanging there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair, and he fell on stony ground. And it began to rain, and rained forty days and forty nights. And he hid himself in a cave. Later he went on and met a man who said, ‘Come in and take supper with me.’ But he said, ‘I can’t come in, for I have married a wife.’ And the man went out into the highways and hedges and compelled him to come in! He then came to Jerusalem, and saw Queen Jezebel sitting high and lifted up in a window of the wall. When she saw him she laughed, and he said, ‘Throw her down out of there,’ and they threw her down. And he said, ‘Throw her down again,’ and they threw her down seventy-times-seven. And the fragments which they picked up filled twelve baskets full! NOW, whose wife will she be in the day of the Judgment?” The membership committee agreed that this was indeed a knowledgeable candidate!

- Source Unknown

Now we laugh at that and if you are not laughing and you are thinking that this is a very knowledgeable man, see me after study and I will explain it to you. Now, before we get too high and mighty, thinking we are so smart, biblically speaking, let me ask you a few questions and you tell me if it is found in the Bible or if it is not found in the Bible.

Listen to these following phrases:

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|---|----------------------------|
| ➤ Cleanliness is next to godliness            | Is it in the Bible or not? |
| ➤ God helps those who help themselves         | Is it in the Bible or not? |
| ➤ Confession is good for the soul             | Is it in the Bible or not? |
| ➤ We are as prone to sin as sparks fly upward | Is it in the Bible or not? |
| ➤ Money is the root of all evil               | Is it in the Bible or not? |
| ➤ Honesty is the best policy                  | Is it in the Bible or not? |

None of these statements are found in the Bible and yet, how many people believe that they are in there! Many of you know of Jay Leno, the host of The Tonight Show on late night television. On one of his shows he asked his audience a couple of questions to see if they knew about the Bible and what he found was very interesting. He asked them, “Name one of the Ten Commandments.” One person was brave enough to answer, “God helps those who help themselves.” Obviously wrong and thus, Jay Leno thought he would ask a simpler question, “Name one of the apostles.” Believe it or not, there was not one person in the audience that could answer that question! But then Jay Leno asked the audience to name the Beatles and the crowd roared out without hesitation, “George, Paul, John and Ringo.”

We tend to know the names of music stars, sport stars, movie stars and-so-on more than we know the people in the Bible and the events that took place in the Bible. We can rattle off statistics on various things, but when it comes to the Bible many have no clue what the Bible has to say. And you may be thinking that this problem is for those that don't go to church, but you are very wrong. George Barna gave us this insight into the church in America.

“The Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy,” warns researcher George Barna. “How else can you describe matters when most churchgoing adults reject the accuracy of the Bible, reject the existence of Satan, claim that Jesus sinned, see no need to evangelize, believe that good works are one of the keys to persuading God to forgive their sins, and describe their commitment to Christianity as moderate or even less firm?”

And George Lindbeck, a Yale theologian has made comments regarding the decreasing knowledge of Scripture from a professor's perspective. He said, “When I first arrived at Yale, even those who came from nonreligious backgrounds knew the Bible better than most of those now who come from churchgoing families.” This is what he is seeing today!

And this is a problem that has come into mainline Protestant Churches, including Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Episcopalians! Listen to what George Barna found out in regards to what they believed or didn't believe in regards to key Christian doctrines. In regards to Christ being sinless, only 35% of mainline Protestant church members believed that He was! In regards to the Bible being totally accurate, inerrant and infallible, only 34% of mainline Protestant church members believe that it is! In regards to working your way into heaven, only 27% of mainline Protestant church members agree that works don't open the door to heaven for you. And, only 20% of mainline Protestant church members believe that Satan is real!

Now you may be wondering if this really matters? Of course it does. You see, what we believe will affect the way we live out our faith and if we don't know what we believe or what we say we believe is not biblical, then we will live out our faith in a unbiblical way and that is exactly what we are seeing today. There is no real difference in what the unsaved and the saved do, how they live out their lives, and that is tragic.

Christians today have accepted and combined so many ideas from other worldviews and religions that they have created their own faith system and thus, we see them as being no different than those that are not saved! We are to be a separate people, we are to be holy people but you need the truths of God found in the Word of God applied to your life or it won't happen!

And, like it or not, the church is at fault because we have given the people what they want instead of what they need. We have developed a mentality that God wants us to be happy and that is wrong, sorry. God does not want us to be happy, that is not His focus in our lives. He wants us to be **HOLY** as He is **HOLY**! In other words, we are a separated people, separated from this world and we are living for the Lord, or at least that is how it should be!

Gary Johnson helps explain what has happened in the church today, what we see the Emerging Church practicing, and it is the problem of overemphasizing experience and essentially promoting antiintellectualism or the dumbing down of the modern American church! He wrote,

“The idea that faith must be accommodated to culture has undermined the teaching of the church’s faith. Popular evangelical faith has developed a bias against theology (not to mention the intellect) and has elevated the bias to the level of a virtue. . . . This is reflected more and more in the pulpits of professing evangelical churches. Doctrine. . . is purposely avoided.

They focus on practical matters, such as family concerns and personal growth, not doctrine, sometimes mixing psychotherapeutic concepts with biblical teaching. They often emphasize religious experience. They seek to feel God’s love, not understand church theology, a theme that plays well with the decreasing importance of denominational doctrine among baby boomers.”

And so, with the remainder of our time this morning, I would like to focus on what the Lord said in Hosea chapter 4. Now just some background information on this prophet named Hosea. He ministered from around 755 BC to around 710 BC during a time of prosperity and relative peace in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, also called Ephraim, which was the focus of his ministry. Other prophet's that were contemporaries with Hosea were Amos who also ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Isaiah and Micah ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Now as you read through this book you will see sin and that sin will bring about judgment, which causes God to seek to restore His people as they call upon Him. You see, when we turn against God, when we are unfaithful to Him, He has to act, He can't condone our sin. And as He brings about His judgment upon sinful man, He will not leave them in that condition. He is trying to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep. He is seeking to win back those who have forsaken Him. It truly is a picture of God's rich love and Israel's spiritual adultery! And thus, it is also a picture of the Church in America today and there are lessons we can glean from this. We are not Israel, but the spiritual truths do apply to us!

I like the way that G. Campbell Morgan put it. He said of this book: "We have in the book of Hosea one of the most arresting revelations of the real nature of sin, and one of the clearest interpretations of the strength of Divine love. No one can read the story of Hosea without realizing the agony of His heart. Then, lift the human to the level of the Infinite, and know this, that sin wounds the heart of God."

As we move into chapter 4 of Hosea, God is no longer just dealing with Hosea and using his life as an object lesson, but He will deal with the nation directly as He tells them what they did wrong. In fact, as we look at Hosea chapter 4 the chapter opens up like a formal court proceeding as we see charges that are being brought against the defendant or the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The charges against them are as follows: They have been unfaithful to God, they have shown no devotion to God, and they have no knowledge of God. Those are some serious charges and God loves them too much to leave them in that condition and I believe the Lord loves His Church so much that He will do something to awaken us out of our spiritual sleep!

#### **HOSEA 4:1-10**

##### **VERSE 1**

Again, picture this as a court case and the Northern Kingdom of Israel is on trial, but for that matter, we might as well put the Church on trial today and you will see what I mean. In these opening arguments, you might say, look at the progression. First of all there is ***NO TRUTH!*** Now think about this, it is not too difficult. If you don't have the truth, what are you holding on to? You are holding on to lies! You have been deceived. Now I realize that some would argue, "It is my right to believe this way!" It is, but also understand if you do, if you move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God, you will see your actions reflect that change!

You see, when you move away from the truth, then there is ***NO MERCY*** in your life! In other words, it is all about looking out for number 1, and that is you! You see, what you believe will be manifested in what you do and when you move away from God's Word, then the focus of your life will be upon yourself and making yourself happy. Do we see that in the church today? Absolutely. Look at divorce in the church today; it is the same as those that are not saved. How can that be? Because people, not all, but I am sorry to say most, have moved away from God's Word and they feel their lives are to be happy, that is what God wants and the only way that will happen is to get a divorce. That is wrong. And folk's, it is not only divorce, we have become very selfish people.

In the early church they helped each other out, not that they didn't have problems, they did, but there was this looking out for others attitude and that is what is needed today, the mind of Christ working in us but if you move away from God's Word, then you will have the mind of this world working in you and through you! And then it just gets worse, the progression continues downward!

You see, as you continue down this path, as you have moved away from God's Word and have ***NO TRUTH***, as you have developed this selfish attitude or ***NO MERCY***, you come to the place where there is ***NO ROOM FOR GOD!*** How can there be when you are so consumed with self that to take the time and study God's Word, pray, go to church would interfere with your time! And yet, you have that void in your heart for God but since you don't have time for Him, you fill it with other things; you go after false god's, just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel was doing and it will never satisfy!

Now here is the thing. I want you to think about what these two men have said and as you will see, only one got it right. Alexander Pope, a famous writer, once wrote: “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” But an even more famous writer, Charles Spurgeon, responded to Pope’s statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.” How true that is!

Now, what is the result, what is seen in a people, a nation that does this? We don’t have to guess, look at the next verse because we are told.

## VERSE 2

In other words, if you don’t see the fruit of the Spirit born in your life, you will manifest the works of the flesh and that is just plain ugly! There is no self-control, no self-restraint. Just in this one verse we see five of the Ten Commandments broken, (Commandments 3, 9, 6, 8 and then 7). So what is the solution to this? Many, even in the church today have ideas. It is the 12-step program and if you are really in trouble, maybe the 22-step program! There are books to help you, seminars to go to, and even programs to follow and yet, they miss the real issue. You see, these are the symptoms of the problem and the real issue is that it is a matter of the heart. It is the result of not knowing the truth, not showing mercy, not seeking after God!

You see, our modern age is completely set against the idea of restraint, there is no mercy, there is just looking out for self. How can I say that? Just look at our modern advertising slogans:

- “To know no boundaries”
- “No rules, just right”
- “Just do it”
- “Break all the rules”
- “Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road”
- “Living without boundaries”

Think of it like this. If you had a headache as the result of a brain tumor, you would not take Tylenol or Aspirin for the headache because you have not dealt with the root of the problem, the brain tumor! You would have the tumor removed and guess what, the headaches would go away!

What we try to do, even in the church, is to stop the killings, stop the stealing, stop this and stop that but we are not dealing with the root of the problem. If we would, then these issues would go away because we would, as Paul said in Ephesians 5:21, be **“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).”**

In other words, you are not going to treat people the way God wants you to treat them unless you live in reverence of God, unless your relationship with God is right. If it is, then you don't have to worry about divorce, you don't have to worry about how others are treating you, because you are more focused on honoring the Lord and showing them mercy because you know what God desires, you know His truth! Now, if we refuse to obey, listen to what God says next.

### VERSE 3

In other words, if you reject God, then His judgment will come upon your nation, you families' and-so-on. You will be taken into captivity you might say and the land will be desolate. You may laugh at that because you don't see that happening, but look at the families' who have been taken into captivity by sin, they are in bondage to it and it is making the family life barren, desolate. Look at our nation who is fighting an army overseas that is much smaller and yet, they have us on the run and the reason is simple. We have moved away from God and we are being taken into captivity, our land is becoming desolate. And folk's, yes this is speaking of it being physical, but I also see a spiritual aspect to it!

VERSES 4-5

In Deuteronomy 17:9-13 we are told, **“And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the Lord chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you. Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.”**

Specifically this passage is dealing with issues that the priests and the judges were to judge upon, but I think it is also speaking of spiritual matters. God is making it very clear that His people were to listen to and submit to the priests and the priests were to lead and help the people to understand and apply the Word of God to their lives.

One of the problems here is that they were the ones who **“contend with the priest”** or they rejected what the priests were saying and they cast off the knowledge of God or what we were told, truth, mercy and restraint. They fought with the priests and contended with them instead of listening to them. And please understand that there will be a problem with the priests, as we will see, but they were teaching the truths of God found in the Word of God and the people refused to listen and obey!

The end result is that they will stumble, they will fall because they can't see clearly where they are going, they don't have the light of God's Word to show them. It is as David said in Psalm 119:105, "**Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**" And the prophet of God also is dragged down to the level of the people and he too stumbles because of it. And as we will see, the priests will also succumb to this, giving the people what they want instead of what they need!

#### VERSE 6

There are two reasons God says that His people are destroyed. One is "**the lack of knowledge**" and here it is speaking of the knowledge of God! Yes, they know of God, they knew a little of God, they knew some things of God, but it was so little that it was going to destroy them, both physically and of course spiritually!

The second reason God's people are destroyed is because they "**have rejected knowledge**" and "**forgotten the law of your God.**" In other words, they neglected the Word of God. Yes, they knew some of God's Word, they knew a little of the Bible, they knew some things that God had said in His word, but it was so little that it was going to destroy them, both physically and spiritually!

Paul, maybe thinking of these words when he wrote Romans chapter 1, reiterates these things and you can read that chapter on your own, but you will see that if people reject God, He will give them over to those things that they want to do, those depraved, those selfish things that will destroy people's lives, hurt others and themselves. It is a grim and yet realistic picture of what we see happening in the world today and sad to say, it is coming into the church.

Let me just share a couple of things with you from Romans chapter 1. Paul said, **“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.”** Romans 1:24. Because they had all the information to know God and yet rejected it, God gave them over to worship all kinds of things that are not God’s, they worshiped the creature instead of the Creator! God gave them up to do whatever they wanted to do! You see, **“God also gave them up.”**

Not only that, but in Romans 1:26 Paul tells us, **“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”** They rejected God and thus, God gave them over to homosexual lifestyles, to dishonor their bodies, the ones that God had given them! Again, **“God gave them up”** to these things because they rejected Him!

And lastly, in Romans 1:28 Paul said, **“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.”** You see, they did not want to keep God in their minds because that was convicting for those that do know God and condemning for those that don’t know God.

And what was manifested in their lives? What we read here in Hosea and yet, Paul even goes more in-depth as he tells us, **“being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”** Romans 1:29-32.

Folk’s, I don’t care how you slice this up, these are not the fruit of the Spirit but they are the works of the flesh and before we come down too hard on those that have rejected the Lord and are not saved, let us be more critical of those that are saved and yet are doing these things! It is time to wake up, it is time to get right with God, it is time to live holy lives as God has told us but it won’t happen until you acknowledge God in your life and obey the Words that He has spoken to us in the Scriptures! If you refuse, like God said to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, He will move away from them!

Now it was the reasonability for the priest to teach, to instruct the people in the things of God, the Word of God and what these priests were to do, as we will see, so are the pastors and teachers and Sunday School teachers of our day! In Deuteronomy 33:10 we are told, **“They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law. . . .”** That is pretty simple and yet, how often people move away from doing what God has instructed them to do, teach the Word of God!

Also, in Ezekiel 44:23 we are told, “**And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.**” You see, how can you know what is truth and what is error, what is clean and what is not clean if you don’t know the truth. And what will happen if you don’t know the truth is you will decide for yourself and that is what many have done today! They pick and chose out of the Scriptures what they like and what they don’t like and if what they are doing the Scriptures contradict, they say something like this, “But God said to me . . .” like He has given them some kind of special dispensation! He hasn’t because God does not change and thus, neither does His Word! And it is even worse, because many choose outside the Bible, other religions, other world views and add them to their Christianity! That too is wrong!

And in Malachi 2:7 we are told, “**For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.**” It was the responsibility for the priests to know and teach the people the Word of God, that is why the priests were spread throughout the Promise Land!

And in the New Testament, listen to what Paul tells Timothy in II Timothy 4:2, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”** I am sorry if I offend anyone but tough! It is a pastor’s, it is a teacher’s responsibility to teach God’s Word whether people want to hear it or not! You are to convince people of the truths of God found in the Word of God, from Genesis through Revelation, verse-by-verse! You are to rebuke those that are living in sin, sometimes this is done one-on-one and other times it is done as the Word of God is being taught! You are to exhort people to continue on in the faith, to live out what they believe, to obey the Words of God!

And there will be times when people want to hear God’s Word and there will be times when they don’t and I believe we are living in a time when people are not interested in God’s Word, not everyone of course, but many in the church today! And Paul picks up on this in II Timothy after he exhorts Timothy to preach the word. He says, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:3-5.

People want to live out their lives the way they want and thus, they look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. And those teachers are out there and those who were teaching God's Word, they, many times will succumb to this apostasy and move away from the truths of God so they can grow a church, be popular or whatever! Paul admonishes Timothy to be watchful, stand firm in the midst of affliction, do the work that God has called him to do, fulfill his ministry, ***PREACH THE WORD!*** May pastor's and teacher's do that today! You see, God will hold you accountable if you don't!

#### VERSES 7-8

How true this is, as God blesses people they tend to turn against Him, feel they don't need Him anymore and as their sin increases the priests were benefiting for the unholy things they were doing. In what way were the priests benefiting? By taking bribes, by eating the sin offerings!

#### VERSES 9-10

Now as the people go so will the priests, but how can that be? Because many of the people who are not walking with God will become priests and they will lead the people away from God, in the direction they want to go! And thus, because of this, judgment will come upon the land, upon the people!

Whatever they do have they will not be satisfied, it will be empty to them, they will want more and more and it will never end. And what they have will be taken away from them. It is as Hosea 8:7 says, **“They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; It shall never produce meal. If it should produce, Aliens would swallow it up.”** And I wonder how many Christians have sown to the wind and they are reaping the whirlwind. They are buying into this “What you want to believe is true” idea and they are ending up with nothing, they are never satisfied!

I hope, that as I lay down some of this groundwork regarding these studies, that you will see the importance of knowing God’s Word, of obeying God’s Word. I am so blessed to see that most of you bring Bibles to church each week and when I say turn to a certain book, you turn there. If you don’t bring your Bible, why don’t you? If you don’t have a Bible and can’t afford one, see me and I will get you one. If you forgot to bring it, we have extras here, but folk’s come on, did you forget to put on your pants this morning? Don’t tell me!

Paul, in I Timothy 3:15 tells us, **“ . . . I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”** This is very important for it tells us what the Church is about. Before I expound on this, let me ask you this question. “Have you heard of Vince Lombardi?”

I'm sure you have, he was the coach of the Green Bay Packers football team, making it into the Hall of Fame for his great coaching ability. Vince Lombardi emphasized the fundamentals of the game; blocking, tackling and because of that his players could execute these things better than anyone else, which enabled them to win championships! At the half time of one game, I believe it was against the Chicago Bears, the Packers were getting creamed and the players were prepared to get blasted for their lack-luster performance so far. They knew their coach and they knew he would not tolerate what they were doing and not doing. As he walked into the locker room he held up a football and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football!" You see, he went right back to the basics!

We need to get back to the basics of the Bible and we need to see how important it is to know how to conduct yourself in the church, what the church is all about, it is the fundamentals! The church, the place where God's people gather is to be the pillar and the foundation of the truth and that truth is from the Word of God, not experience or feelings! Jesus said in John 17:17, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Sanctify them [purify, consecrate, separate them for Yourself, make them holy] by the Truth; Your Word is Truth.**" May we truly believe that and apply it to our lives so that as we speak, we have so much of God's Word in our lives that it just flows forth from us!

In regards to truth, what we believe, Jon Courson makes this powerful point. He says:

In a debate with Dennis Praeger, a believer, atheist Oxford University professor Jonathan Glover, said, “It doesn’t really matter whether a person has a belief system that is biblical or godly. The important thing is that they believe in something.”

Praeger replied, “Imagine, Professor Glover, that you’re in downtown Los Angeles. It’s two o’clock in the morning. Your car breaks down. You get out. You hear footsteps. You turn around to see ten big young men walking toward you. Would it make a difference if you knew they had just come from a Bible study?”

You see, it does matter what people believe! And praise be to the Lord that we are a part of the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.

Not only that, not only does the church have God’s truth but also it is the vessel that God uses to proclaim it to the world! A pillar is a supporting structure and we hold up God’s Word to the people of this world. The foundation is also a supporting structure and this world rests upon one of two foundations, the truth or the lie, but if the foundation is weak, the structure will be unstable. Thus, to bring stability to the people of this world, we need to bring them the truths of God!

Now, as you look at the church, with all its weaknesses, all its frailties, all its carnality, it is hard to imagine we can have any impact on anyone. I know, especially for myself, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture because I know what I am like, my weaknesses. But folks, if it was all about what we can do, we might as well give up right now because in the end, we won't succeed! We need to be faithful and walk, to stand up for the truths of God, to live out our faith and God will empower us for the work we are doing!

As I begin to close this morning, let me say this. Biblical illiteracy affects our lives, it causes us to live in an ungodly manner, there is no direction to our life or no real direction, we make the wrong choices, there is no true joy or peace in our lives, we slaughter the innocent, we reward the wicked, we see divorce and adultery, we see evil such as pornography, broken homes, the moral fabric of our society falling apart, and the end result is that, **“In those days there was no king in Israel [or America today]; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** Judges 21:25.

Albert Mohler wrote,

“Churches must recover the centrality and urgency of biblical teaching and preaching, and refuse to sideline the teaching ministry of the preacher. Pastors and churches too busy--or too distracted--to make biblical knowledge a central aim of ministry will produce believers who simply do not know enough to be faithful disciples.”

He continues on,

“We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs. The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.”

And he concludes by saying,

“This generation must get deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy, or a frighteningly large number of Americans--Christians included--will go on thinking that Sodom and Gomorrah lived happily ever after.”

- Albert Mohler, The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem

There is no reason for God's people or for any people for that matter to be destroyed because of lack of knowledge. God has given to us all that we need, we just need to receive it into our lives and walk accordingly. It is time to get serious about our faith. And we will deal more with this next time as we look at the call for us to be ready to give a defense of our faith! Let me close this morning with these words from II Peter 3:17-18, **“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”** Keep focused, don't be led away with error, unsound doctrine, but grow in the Lord because your diet is filled with sound, healthy doctrine and your focus is the Lord, living out your faith!