

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
THE BIBLE
FACT OR FICTION?

This morning, in our series Foundation of Faith, we will be looking at the Bible. We have seen in our previous studies that it really does matter what you believe about the Bible because it will affect the way you live out your life. If you negate the Word of God or think that only some parts of the Bible are from God, then it will be seen in how you live. If you believe that from Genesis through Revelation is the Word of God, then it too will affect the way you live and in a positive way.

People wonder why there is no difference in the behavior of Christians from that of the world and the answer is really very simple. It is because we have negated the Word of God as being the Word of God. We have taken the Scriptures and made them fit what we want them to say. The term for this is *eisegesis* and it speaks of reading something into the text that is not there at all. It is a subjective or personal view of what the Scriptures have to say and it is not really what they are saying. And obviously that is not what we are to do with the Scriptures.

Let me show you what I mean by reading into the text something that is not there because this is a teaching that is flooding through the Church through the Emerging Church and it is very unhealthy for us spiritually speaking. Roger Oakland tells us,

You may not have heard the term before, but contextual theology is a prominent message from the emerging church. In his book, *Models of Contextual Theology* (1992), Stephen B. Bevans defines contextual theology as:

. . . a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation.

In other words, the Bible in, and of itself, is not free-standing - other factors (culture, ethnicity, history) must be taken into consideration, and with those factors, the message of the Bible must be adjusted to fit. As one writer puts it, "Contextual theology aims at the humanization of theology."

But two questions need to be asked. First, will the contextualizing of Scripture cause such a twisting of its truth that it no longer is the Word of God, and secondly, is Scripture ineffective without this contextualization? To the first, I give a resounding yes! And to the second, an absolute no. The Word of God, which is an inspired work of the living Creator, is far more than any human-inspired book and has been written in such a way that every human being, rich or poor, man or woman, intelligent or challenged will understand the meaning of the Gospel message if it is presented in their native language; and thanks to the tireless work of missionaries for centuries, the Gospel in native languages is becoming a reality in most cultures today.

Dean Flemming is a New Testament teacher at European Nazarene College in Germany and the author of *Contextualization in the New Testament*. In his book, he defends contextual theology:

Every church in every particular place and time must learn to do theology in a way that makes sense to its audience while challenging it at the deepest level. In fact, some of the most promising conversations about contextualization today (whether they are recognized as such or not) are coming from churches in the West that are discovering new ways of embodying the gospel for an emerging postmodern culture.

These “churches in the West” Flemming considers “most promising” are the emerging churches. He would agree with Bevans’ model of theology, but he has an answer to the emerging church’s dilemma. He states:

Many sincere Christians are still suspicious that attempts to contextualize theology and Christian behavior will lead to the compromising of biblical truth . . . we must look to the New Testament for mentoring in the task of doing theology in our various settings.

There’s good reason some Christians are suspicious. But it can seem harmless at first because Flemming suggests the answer is in the New Testament, which he believes should be used as a prototype or pattern rather than something for doctrine or theology. New Testament theology is always open for change, he says, but we can learn how to develop this change by studying New Testament stories and characters. The premise Flemming presents of contextualizing Scripture is that since cultures and societies are always changing, the Word must change with it and be conformed to these changes. But I would challenge this. The Bible says the Word is living, active, and powerful . . .

- Roger Oakland, Faith Undone, pp. 42-44

It is as Doug Pagitt said and keep in mind that he is an Emergent Church pastor and teacher. He wrote,

To move beyond this passive approach to faith, we've tried to create a community that's more like a potluck: people eat and they also bring something for others. Our belief is built when all of us engage our hopes, dreams, ideas and understandings with the story of God as it unfolds through history and through us.

- Roger Oakland, Faith Undone, p. 42

You see, it is what the Scriptures are saying to you not what they mean and that is the wrong way to read the Scriptures. Nobody is wrong, everyone interprets the Scriptures like they want and that is very dangerous and it is very wrong! They are not there for our own personal interpretation but they are there because God has a message to us and that message is the same today as it was when these words were first written! But the Emerging Church wants to change what the Scriptures are saying and thus, they present to us a different Gospel, a different Jesus, a path that says all roads lead to God! That is not what we are to do with the Scriptures.

The correct way to look at the Scriptures is *exegesis* and this speaks of getting out of the words you are reading the meaning that is there, no more and no less. That is an objective view or you are getting out of the Scriptures what the Author intended and the Author is the Holy Spirit!

So this morning we are going to be looking at the topic of the Bible being Fact or Fiction? Obviously this is important because there are many out there today who downplay or discredit the Bible and yet, as we will see, it will stand the test of time and it has stood the test of time over the years! And we will not cover everything I would like in this section but we will as we continue on in our study on the Bible. We will be looking at the scientific evidence for the Bible. We will look at the Old Testament text and the New Testament text. We will look at how the Bible predicts future events with 100% accuracy. And we will look at the Bible's life-changing message! And by the time we finish, the only way you will be able to deny that the Bible is the Word of God from Genesis through Revelation is that you will have to suppress the truth. And yes, that is your right, but you can't say that there is no evidence to believe the Bible is the Word of God, you have just chosen to deny it!

Before we dig into our study this morning, let me share with you these words from the introduction to R. C. Sproul's book, *Knowing Scripture*. J. I. Packer wrote the introduction and this is what he wrote,

If I were the devil (please, no comment), one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible. Knowing that it is the Word of God, teaching people to know and love and serve the God of the Word, I should do all I could to surround it with the spiritual equivalent of pits, thorn hedges and traps, to frighten people off. With smug conceit, no doubt, as if receiving a compliment, I should acknowledge that wise old Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) had me absolutely pegged when he wrote:

The Devil never would attempt to beget in persons a regard to that divine word which God has given to be the great and standing rule. . . . Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive men, beget in them a high opinion of the infallible rule, and incline them to think much of it, and be very conversant with it? . . . The devil has ever shown a mortal spite and hatred towards that holy book the Bible: he has done all in his power to extinguish that light. . . . He is engaged against the Bible, and hates every word of it.

I should labor every day to prove Edwards's words true.

How? Well, I should try to distract all clergy from preaching and teaching the Bible, and spread the feeling that to study this ancient book directly is a burdensome extra that modern Christians can forgo without loss. I should broadcast doubts about the truth and relevance and good sense and straightforwardness of the Bible, and if any still insisted on reading it I should lure them into assuming that the benefit of the practice lies in the noble and tranquil feelings evoked by it rather than in nothing what Scripture actually says. At all costs I should want to keep them from using their minds in a disciplined way to get the measure of the message.

Were I the devil, taking stock today, I think I might be pleased at the progress I had made. . . .

For more than a century, Protestant theology has been in conflict about the Bible. The first storm center was inspiration and its corollary [result], inerrancy. Eighty years ago, the debate shifted to revelation, the method and content of God's communication through allegedly fallible Scriptures. Interpretation is now the central interest, and the subjectivism which yesterday concluded that the Bible is neither true nor trustworthy today interprets it on the basis that its message to us is neither consistent nor clear. . . .

- R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, pp. 9-10

I hope to challenge you this morning to trust in God's Word because it is fact and not fiction. And we have covered some of the issues that J. I Packer brought up already. We have looked at ***Revelation*** and have seen that God's Word is His revelation to us of who He is and what He desires of us. We have looked at ***Inspiration*** and the Holy Spirit speaking through the different writers and using their different styles of writing, their different personalities. And as these words were written down they are now the final authority for our faith and practice! We looked at ***Inerrancy*** and we saw in the original manuscripts they were without error and what we have today is a very accurate copy! We looked at ***Illumination*** and saw that as the Holy Spirit shines His light upon the Scriptures we can understand them. And we looked at ***Interpretation*** and it speaks of the correct understanding of the Scriptures. In ***Illumination*** we see the Holy Spirit shed His light upon the Word of God and in ***Interpretation*** we see the correct meaning of what God is saying to us.

And as we have seen, this is where people are missing the point today, in the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. And thus, what I would like to do with the rest of our time together this morning is look at this idea of the Scriptures, are they fact or are they fiction because how you view them will be reflected in how you interpret them!

THE BIBLE: FACT OR FICTION?

1. THE BIBLE IS CORRECT

The first thing we are going to look at is that the Bible is correct or that it is inerrant. And we did cover this in our previous studies, but this is an important concept for us to understand regarding the Scriptures. In Proverbs 30:5-6 we are told by Agur, **“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”**

Agur was just wondering how he can understand, know God, and now he tells us, by the Word of God. And notice what he is saying here. How much of God’s Word is pure? It is **“Every word of God”** that is pure! May we understand that! There is no room to pick and chose what you like and what you don’t like. And that word **“pure”** speaks of being tested, being refined in the fire, it is perfect, it is correct, it is inerrant!

Is that important? You bet it is. Think about it this way. Imagine a family that owns this sausage factory. The owner is a very meticulous, conscientious, clean and proper man. One day he is walking through the factory and he notices that as he son is dumping pork into the machine, a piece falls on the floor. What does he do with this piece of pork? Does he throw it away or does he place it into the machine? He throws it into the garbage. You see, the sausage that is produced is labeled “Grade A” and sent to market.

There is another sausage factory down the street from this one and it is very different. The floors are dirty, the machines are not washed, and things are a mess. As one of the supervisors is walking through the plant he sees a worker spill a piece of pork on the floor. Does he throw it away or does he place it into the machine? This time he throws it back in the machine. But guess what, it too is labeled “Grade A” and sent to market.

Now, from which factory would you like to buy and eat sausage from? Of course you want to eat from the clean one. Does it matter if human authors have put a little dirt in the rest of God’s Word? You bet it does. You see, as you add to or take away from God’s Word you are changing it to fit your own desires and, in a sense, you are putting dirt into something that is pure, that is good, that is inerrant, that is correct already!

Look at Psalm 19:7-8 as David tells us, **“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”**

The Hebrew word that David uses for “**perfect**” is TAMIYUM, (taw-meem’) and it speaks of being without blemish, that it is complete, that it is full, it is without spot, it is undefiled, it is uprightly whole. What does that mean? It means that it is perfect; from Genesis through Revelation we have the correct the inerrant Words of God! That is a fact, it is not fiction!

I realize that I am using the Bible to justify this, but let’s think this through for a minute. First of all the Bible has been the most studied and analyzed book ever by those who love it and those who hate it. And in the end the Bible stands the test of time! And let’s look at this from the view of the Holy Trinity, from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and see how this all comes together.

The argument from God the Father:

- *God cannot err.* In Hebrews 6:17-18 we are told, “**Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.**” We also see this in Titus 1:2, “**in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.**” In John 17:17 Jesus tells us as He is speaking to the Father, “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**” And lastly, in Psalm 119:160 we are told, “**The entirety of Your word is truth . . .**”

- *The Bible is the Word of God.* We see this spoken of in two classic Scripture verses. In II Peter 1:20-21 we are told, “**knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**” And the other one is II Timothy 3:16 where Paul tells us, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**”

- *Therefore, the Bible cannot err.* That just makes sense. If God cannot err and the Bible is the Word of God, then it must follow that the Bible cannot err!

The argument from God the Son:

- *Jesus is the Son of God.* That is what the Scriptures teach us. In Matthew 16:16-17 we are told, **“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”** In Mark 14:61-62 we are told, **“But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”** In John 1:1 John tells us, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** And in Hebrews 1:8 we are told, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.’”**

- *The Bible is the Word of God.* We have already seen this in the argument from God the Father.

- *Therefore, the Bible cannot err.* To deny that the Bible is the Word of God is to deny that Jesus is God. And thus, since Jesus is God and the Bible cannot err, the Bible must be the Word of God!

The argument from God the Holy Spirit:

- *He who is the source of truth cannot be in error.* The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth.” We see that in John 16:13, “**However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**” And in I John 4:6 we are told, “**We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**”

- *The Bible is a declaration of the Spirit of truth.* We see this spoken of in II Samuel 23:2 as David said, “**The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.**” And in Matthew 4:4 we see Jesus say to Satan, “**But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”**”

- *Therefore, the Bible cannot err.* You see, if the Spirit of truth cannot lie, He can’t utter any untruth, then the Bible cannot be in err!

And I think you can clearly see that the Bible is correct, it is inerrant, we can trust it 100% and we need to, we must or we will be all messed up in our thinking in our actions because we will have to decide what is right and what is wrong. Make no mistake about it, every word of God is pure, it is true! That is a fact, not fiction!

2. THE BIBLE IS COMPLETE

The next point we will look at is this. The Bible is complete, nothing needs to be added to it or taken away from it. Sounds simple and yet, there are many who try to update the Bible to fit in with what is going on today. Think about that. You mean to tell me that an all-knowing God didn't know what we would be doing today? Of course He did and His Word is complete!

In II Peter 1:2-4 we are told, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”**

These three verses are power packed. If we would only read them and apply them to our lives, truly believe them! Today people water down God's Word or they negate it or take away parts that they don't like. But look at the importance that Peter applies to the Word of God!

First Peter tells us that grace and peace are increased or multiplied as we know God. In other words we are more aware of the grace of God and we can enjoy the peace of God. And to know God is not just a casual acquaintance but an intimate knowledge of God, a relationship with Him! The more we spend time in God's Word, in prayer, with other believers, the more we will understand His grace and His peace for our lives!

What do we need for spiritual life and for that matter, physical life? Folks, we need Jesus. How many things has God given to us to help us in this life and to grow in the Lord? He tells us that He has given to us all things, all that we need and that is found in the Word of God! Paul, in II Corinthians 9:8 makes that point as he says, "**And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**"

You see, it is not about how strong we are or the power we have, but it is all about the Lord empowering us for the work He has called us to do. Why do people buy so many self-help books? Because they don't believe Jesus is sufficient and they need to look elsewhere. How foolish that is when you think about it! Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10, "**Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**"

We have seen God's grace extended to us as He empowers us and gives to us all we need to live. Not because we deserve it, but it is a gift of God to us. Now Peter tells us of the peace of God that is found in the precious promises of God to us. First, though, Paul tells us, "**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**" Romans 5:1-2.

Once we have made peace *WITH* God through Jesus Christ, then we enjoy the peace *OF* God.

And look at the promises that God has given to us in His Word and that knowledge should help us to live godly lives. That is what Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"

Also, peace through the storms of life can be ours as we rest in His promises. Paul, in Romans 15:4 put it this way, "**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**" We do have all we need to succeed in this life if we have Jesus! But, if you lack the knowledge of Him, you will be swept away and thus, read His Word and apply it to your life and the pulls of this corrupt world will not have its grips on you! The Word of God is complete and it will give to us all we need to live out our faith and to grow in the Lord! Nothing needs to be added to the Word of God and for that matter; nothing needs to be taken away! That is a fact, not fiction!

3. **THE WORD OF GOD IS AUTHORITATIVE**

The third point we are going to look at is this. The Word of God is authoritative, it is trustworthy, it is dependable! I am amazed at the number of things that churches vote on in regards to them believing if something is from the Word of God or not or really if they want to accept something or reject it and they negate the Word of God! There is no voting folk's. Either this is the Word of God without error and it is complete, it has everything we need to live out our Christian lives and grow in the Lord or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, then there is no point in reading it, studying it or applying it to our lives! But, as we have seen, this is the Word of God and thus, it is the final authority in all that we do. It is not what I feel or want, but it is what God has said in His Word!

When you look at the idea of *authority* you will find it woven throughout the Scriptures. It is unmistakably obvious from Genesis 1:1 where we are told, "**In the beginning God created then heavens and the earth**" to Revelation 22:20 where we are told, "**... 'Surely I am coming quickly' ...**" and everywhere in between!

I realize that some of you might not think that this idea of authority is that important, but it truly is. Listen carefully to one of the preeminent Reformers when he spoke to this very question at the Diet of Worms in April, 1521. Martin Luther, under intense pressure to recant regarding "justification by faith" and other recently embraced truths from the Bible, responded,

“To Meister Eck in this fashion:

Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”

Martin Luther took a stand upon the Scriptures as being authoritative over popes and over councils, over men! May we do no less today!

Now let’s think this through and see if the Scriptures are authoritative for us.

- ***The Scriptures are the Word of God.*** We have seen this already but let’s look at a few verses to show you this. In Psalm 119:89 we are told, **“Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.”** Tragically it may be settled in heaven but how many people reject this! God’s Word is settled, there is nothing to vote upon or reject! Also, in Isaiah 40:8 we are told, **“The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”** God’s Word will stand, it is truthful, it will last forever!

- *The Words of God are authoritative.* Look at these verses and you will see what I mean. In John 3:18 we are told, “**He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**” In John 14:6 we are told, “**Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” In Acts 4:12 we are told, “**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” And in I John 5:11-12 we are told, “**And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**” God’s Word is truthful, it is authoritative. It does not rest upon traditions but traditions rest upon the Word of God because the Word of God is authoritative, not traditions!

- *The Scripture is authoritative.* This just makes sense. If the Scriptures are the Word of God and the Words of God are authoritative, that means that the Scripture is authoritative! Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4 and you will see what He thought about the Scriptures. We are told, **“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ . . . Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” . . . Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.””** Matthew 4:4, 7, 10. Jesus went right back to the Word of God because it is authoritative, it is truthful, we can trust in it as we apply it to our lives! And thus, the Scriptures are authoritative!

The bottom line is this. The Bible is authoritative and is there for us to live out our faith. It shows us what we need to do in speech, in thought and in practice. You see, it is the sole and final authority for Christians in all matters of faith and practice! That is a fact, not fiction!

4. THE WORD OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT

The fourth point we will be looking at is this. The Word of God is sufficient; it is more than able to do what it says it will do in our lives. Let me give you four areas that the Word of God is sufficient in.

A. THE WORD OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION

Obviously this is an important one. In II Timothy 3:15 we are told, “**and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**” We gain wisdom from God’s Word, applying it to our lives and it is God’s Word that leads us to salvation as the Spirit of God opens our hearts to Jesus. For Timothy, as a child, he was taught the Scriptures and as he grew, that is what led him to saving faith.

Paul, in Romans 10:17 tells us, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” You see, the Word of God is sufficient for salvation!

B. THE WORD OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT FOR PERFECTION

We are told in II Timothy 3:16-17, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**” Did you see that? God’s Word is profitable to us, it is able to make us complete, to perfect us in a sense, not for salvation but for sanctification if we apply it to our lives, if we obey it! So the Word of God is sufficient for perfection!

C. THE WORD OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT TO GIVE US HOPE

Hope is an important aspect in our lives and without it, well, we become hopeless! That just makes sense and there is a lot of hopeless people out there who are missing out on what God has for them if they would only come to Him and ask him to be Lord and Savior of their lives and take in the Word of God into their lives. Paul said in Romans 15:4, **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”** You see, as we read God’s Word, as we see what God has done in the past, as we see how people even failed in the past and God’s great love for them, it gives us hope in the present! The Word of God is sufficient to give us hope!

D. THE WORD OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT TO BRING BLESSINGS TO OUR LIVES

Now how in the world does the Word of God bring blessings to our lives? James tells us in James 1:25, **“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”** There is the blessing that comes to your life when you take in the Word of God and apply it to your life. In other words, you live out your faith. You are helping others, reaching out to them and as you do, you will be blessed. And folk’s, you will see the blessings that God has for you as you read His Word and apply His Word to your life! The Word of God is sufficient to bring blessings to our lives.

There are many things that the Bible speaks of regarding the sufficiency of the Scriptures in bringing blessings to our lives. They are competent for our lives and they are truly needed in our daily lives. May we not lose sight that the Word of God is sufficient to bring blessings to our lives! That is a fact, not fiction!

5. THE WORD OF GOD IS EFFECTIVE

Make no mistake about it, the Word of God is effective in our lives, it is helpful in our lives if we allow it to be! In Isaiah 55:11 we are told, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

In other words, it will do exactly what it says it will do; it will accomplish just what God wants in our lives if we allow it to! Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 1:5 this very thing, **“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”** You see, there is power in God’s Word to change us, to transform us into the image of Christ but we must give our lives to God so He can work on us!

Remember what Paul said in Romans 12:2, “**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**” The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].**”

Notice what Paul is doing here. He is showing the contrast between living a life as you please and living a life as a sacrifice unto God. Being “**conformed to this world**” speaks of becoming like this world, influenced by this world, this system of man apart from God whose ruler is the Devil himself as Paul tells us, “**whose minds the god of this age has blinded . . .**” II Corinthians 4:4.

It is easy to just stand there and let the world press you into their mold. But Paul is telling us that we need to resist being put into their mold because, as Paul said in Romans 8:6-8, “**For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**”

As you surrender your life unto God as a living sacrifice, you will not be conformed to this world but you are being **“transformed by the renewing of your mind.”** The word **“transformed”** in the Greek is METAMORPHOO (met-am-or-fo'-o) and it speaks of a metamorphosis that is taking place in our lives. The only other two places this word is used in the New Testament is in Mark 9:2-3 where we see the transfiguration of Jesus and we are told, **“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”**

The other place is in II Corinthians 3:18 where we are told, **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

Folks, as we behold the face of God, as we spend time with him, as we surrender our lives to Him, our lives will be transformed into the image of God, a metamorphosis will take place. This begins the moment we get saved and it continues on through our entire lives until we go to be with the Lord! In other words, the new nature that God has placed in our hearts will manifest itself in our lives! The Word of God is effective, it is helpful in our lives and it will accomplish what the Lord has sent it to do! That is a fact, not fiction!

6. THE WORD OF GOD IS CONSTRUCTIVE

This just makes sense to me, that the Word of God is constructive in our lives, it is productive, it is beneficial. God wants what is best for us and why would He give us any less! But you have a choice if you want to hear or you don't. In John 8:47 Jesus tells us, **“He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”** And once again The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Whoever is of God listens to God. [Those who belong to God hear the words of God.] This is the reason that you do not listen [to those words, to Me]: because you do not belong to God and are not of God or in harmony with Him.”** God does not force you to do anything, it is your choice but there are consequences to the choices you make!

Paul, in I Corinthians 2:9-16 tells us, **“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is**

rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

You see, how you respond to what God has said will determine the essence or spirit of your life and ultimately your eternal destiny! God’s Word is constructive for our lives if we allow it to be! That is a fact, not fiction!

I realize that we have spent a lot of time this morning looking at these issues of the Bible, that it is correct, that it is complete, that it is authoritative, that it is sufficient, that it is effective and that it is constructive. And the reason we have is because it is that important. I know some of you might not think so but hear me out on this.

Did you know that about 80 percent of the college-bound students who profess to be Christians leave for school and return home no longer believing in Christ! About 80 percent of them! One of the reasons is this: when a student sits in class and hears the professor discredit the Bible, the student doesn’t have a defense and is easily deceived into believing the Bible is no longer credible. This happens too often because Christians know *what* they believe, but not *why* they believe it. And I see this not only with students, but with adults also. They are turned away from the Scriptures because the attacks against the Scriptures are strong and they don’t know how to defend themselves, they don’t know what to believe and that is very sad. It is sad that they would rather believe the words of men instead of the Word of God!

But let me also say this, and it is also important. Martyn Lloyd-Jones points this out for us. He wrote, “Ultimately this question of the authority of the Scriptures is a matter of faith and not of argument . . . you may convince a man intellectually of what you’re saying, but still he may not of a necessity believe in and accept the authority of the Scripture.”

You see, it is a work of the Holy Spirit. Now if you are saved, then why are you not open to what the Spirit is saying? That is something you will have to wrestle with between you and the Lord! And if you are not saved, then the only thing that will change your mind is a change in your heart and that can only be accomplished by the power of God’s Spirit working in you and through you. In I Corinthians 2:1-5 Paul tells us, “**And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**”

Paul stressed that he did not come to the Corinthians in his own power and strength but he came with the Gospel message that was empowered by the Spirit of God and opened up to them. It is the Word of God opened up by the Spirit of God that changes lives!

As I bring this study to a close this morning I hope you have seen that the Bible is fact and not fiction. Obviously over the next several weeks we will be looking more into this as I stated when I opened up our study this morning. But clearly, as you read God's Word, there is no mistaking that it is correct, it is complete, it is authoritative, it is sufficient, it is effective and it is constructive for our lives!

Let me close with these words from Donald Grey Barnhouse. He wrote,

A dozen carpenters sawed boards to make flooring. The foreman measured every board with a carpenter's square, an L-shaped rule that forms an exact right angle. If a man cuts a board at other than a right angle, the fit will be crooked, and the board must be re-cut to conform to the carpenter's square.

For the Christian, the Bible is the instrument by which every spiritual thought is to be squared. Every idea is to be accepted or rejected according to whether or not it meets the standard of the Word of God as illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

- Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Timeless Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching*, p. 9

May we not lose sight of what we have in our hands, the Word of God breathed from the mouth of God! It is God's love story to us and may we not only treasure it, but apply it to our lives and grow in Him! ***THE BIBLE – FACT NOT FICTION!***