

Why Do We Believe in God? #2

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By Don Green

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Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

What I want to do tonight is finish this little two-part series answering the question: why do we believe in God? And the thing that I want to say just to kind of start us out with is this: when it gets into apologetics and when it gets into dealing with objections and people who don't share our beliefs, the tendency is to sometimes want to immediately try to frame our argument in a way that it's going to be more receptive, we think, to someone who does not believe and try to engage the discussion on their ground rather than something else, and that's a serious, serious mistake, and what we have to do is, first of all, we have to understand our own position before we try to engage objections. And what I want to remind you of is that we get our position from the Bible and we say that without apology. We don't try to find common ground on an unbeliever's turf and then reason from their presuppositions. No, we start with our presupposition that the Bible is the word of God and that changes absolutely everything and we gladly say we get our position from the Bible. We believe this is the word of God and we openly and humbly acknowledge that as our starting point and then you reason from there. That's the only way; that's the only position of strength for the Christian position.

Listen, I understand that many, if not most unbelievers, are going to immediately reject that, say that you're assuming the position that you're trying to prove, you're arguing in a circle, but that's not the case. What you and I have to remember is that as an objective matter, as an objective historical fact apart from what you and I believe, the Bible really and truly is the word of God. The fact that men deny that and assault it and ridicule that position, that is the truth and that truth is outside of us; that truth is the final authority. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35 that "heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." So we have to start from the position of truth. We can't accept the presuppositions of unbelief and expect that God is going to honor our efforts. The power of our position is in the word of God. The truth of our position is in the word of God. So that's where we start and we gladly acknowledge it and we can explain both our worldview and their worldview from the position of the word of God and so that's why we start with the Bible as we open up this discussion.

Now, with that, let me just give you a little bit of review from last time. It looks like most of you were here last time, but we said last time that there are five ways that we believe in the reality of God, that we are theists as opposed to atheists. And the first reason that we said is that we look at creation and see that that's true. Psalm 19:1 says that the

heavens are telling of the glory of God. So we find that in creation, in the heavens, in the stars, in the universe, God has put his unmistakable imprint on creation in a way that testifies to the reality of who he is. Romans 1 says that "his divine power and his eternal nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that people who deny it are without excuse." That's point 1 and I won't spend any time really reviewing in detail what we developed last time.

The second thing that we said was we looked at the principle of conscience and we said that there is a principle of conscience, of moral reality that is written on the human heart that transcends every culture, that transcends time, that transcends peoples, and we believe that there is a God because we recognize the imprint of his moral character. The Bible says that his law has been written on the human heart and that's a universal principle. Humanity has a transcendent sense of right and wrong that points to a transcendent righteous Creator. Romans 2:15 says that "the law is written in their hearts." The fact that, just to go back and kind of reemphasize our position, the fact that they deny that does not change the truthfulness of it. The fact that they reject our position does not mean that we're wrong. Every single case of litigation that takes place in the American court system has two competing sides. We have an adversarial system of justice where one side puts forth its case and another side puts forth its case. The fact that there are competing claims does not mean that the truth can't be discovered. In fact, the adversarial nature of justice assumes that in the process of the competing views that the truth is going to come out of it. That's the way our system of litigation, our system of justice works.

Now, all I'm saying by making reference to that is to emphasize that the fact that people disagree with this is not a measure of the rightness or the truthfulness of the power of our position and so we don't need to be intimidated by the fact that there is opposition and ridicule. Why would we back away from that? What kind of an attorney would back away from his client's position just because someone contested it? The attorney's got to know his case. The attorney has to know the positive elements of the reasons that his case is true and then argue persuasively from his view of the facts. So all I'm doing is saying, "Look, we do this in other realms of life and no one thinks it's unusual or a denial or are arguing in a circle or something like that." If I could impress anything else on you, it's what we've been saying all along, is that we believe because of things that are outside us. It's not a matter of subjective opinion. Creation is outside us. It exists before, during and after our lifetime. It is independent of us and that testimony, Scripture says, pours forth speech day after day.

Conscience is a principle that, in one sense, it's inside us but it transcends us because you see it united throughout, it's a thread that runs through humanity. You can point people to the principle of conscience without engaging your own individual conscience and saying, "Look at this principle and how it speaks to the reality of God." So we have things that we can point people to that are outside us and, in one sense, disengage ourselves from the whole process. The testimony is not dependent upon the individual who believes it.

Now, thirdly, and still just reviewing from last time: creation, conscience, the last thing that we looked at last time was the Canon. I'm always afraid that someone is going to

think of the Civil War boom things. This is a boom but it's a different kind of boom. It's a spiritual boom that we gladly embrace. God has spoken in creation, he has spoken in the human conscience, and he has spoken preeminently in the Canon, preeminently as far as these first three positions go. 2 Peter 1:21 says that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." So the Bible claims and it is a self-authenticating testimony, the Bible says that God has spoken in the words of the Scripture and so when we say that we believe in God, we have an abundance of testimony upon which we base that on and we base it on things that are outside us. We say, "Look at creation. Look at conscience. Read the Scriptures. In every place that you look there, God is speaking loudly and clearly to his existence, to his reality." He is speaking continually in so many diverse and complementary ways. This isn't a slender thread of evidence that we say, "Well, there might be a possibility and then we'll take a leap of faith." No, not at all and what we emphasized last time was that this testimony is so clear and so compelling that every single man who ever lived will be judged who refuses to believe it. There is no excuse, Scripture says.

So, beloved, as you're contemplating this and thinking through the opposing and hostile voices that are in your life to what you believe, you've got to realize that you're on the side that will prevail in final judgment and let that be what motivates you to a deeper commitment, a deeper confidence, a deeper certainty, that what you believe is true no matter how many letters an atheist has after his name and asserts his doctrinal qualifications as opposition to it. A doctorate in science is no contest against the testimony of the eternal, holy, righteous God who is truth himself.

So that's a review from last time. Now, where does that lead us? This brings us to point number four here this evening: God has also spoken to us in Christ. This is my favorite one of them all. The focus of Scripture is Jesus Christ and so as you come to the Canon and you have the testimony of God from Genesis to Revelation, as you study the Scriptures, it points you, it drives you to a particularly specific revelation of God found in the person of Jesus Christ. And as you read the Gospels, as you read the Old Testament which prepared the way for him, as you read the Gospels and read the life of Christ, as you read the words that he spoke, as you see the actions and the deeds that he did, you are seeing face-to-face a first-hand revelation of who God is because he has spoken in the Lord Jesus Christ. So as we go to the Canon, we see Christ revealed and there is just this ever continually unfolding witness of God. What we said is that you look at creation and you look at the conscience and that unfolds and brings you to the Canon and then as you're reading the Canon, Christ is unfolded before you and so it's like we're in this magnificent, astonishing palace and every door opens up into an ever better, ever deeper, ever greater revelation of God and here we've entered into the inner sanctuary of the revelation of God when we consider the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's awesome. This is absolutely tremendous.

So turn in your Bibles, we might as well get to the Scriptures here, get to the Canon, turn in your Bible to the Gospel of John. We'll start there, John 1. This is just tremendous. John 1, beginning in verse 1, and actually since you're in the Gospel of John, let's go back to Luke 24. That's cheating a little bit but that's okay. It's right there. We might as well

see it while we can. In Luke 24:27, you remember that Jesus was walking after his resurrection with the two men on the road to Emmaus and in the verse 27, he said, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." And in verse 44, "He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." So at the end of the Gospel of Luke, you see Christ saying, "Here are the Scriptures. They point to me." And he explained in an open, obvious way how the Old Testament scriptures pointed to him and that the fulfillment of the Old Testament was found in Christ himself, in a person, in an incarnate God. Not only is the Bible not a dead word, but the Bible, the living word of Scripture, reveals the living word of the incarnate God and this is unmistakable. This is clear and obvious.

So now, the Gospel according to John 1:1 says, just follow the train of thought here in light of everything that we've been saying. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Drop down to verse 14. I know this is familiar to you. "And the Word," this Word that was God, "became flesh," he became a man, "and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Now, look at verse 18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." So you have this word that was in the beginning with God, who was God. He became flesh. He displayed the glory of God, as it were, and in that incarnation, in the life of Jesus Christ, we have God explained to us. God has spoken in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, turn over to chapter 5, verse 39 as we talk about the Scriptures and how the Scriptures point us to Christ. Look at chapter 5, verse 39 where he says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." So in the Canon, you have this unfolding revelation of God and it zeros in like a laser beam on the person of Jesus Christ and says, as it were, "Listen to him." John the Baptist had his ministry. People were attracted to him. He spoke and large crowds followed him out into the desert to see what he had to say and John said, "Pay attention to the one who follows me." The Scriptures do the same thing. Follow the Scriptures and find Christ. Follow the ministry of John the Baptist that points to Christ. The Scriptures point to Christ. Jesus Christ is the climax of God's self-revelation. He displayed himself. He spoke in a person.

Now, turn over to the book of Hebrews 1 and this kind of ties it all together. We've said that God has spoken in creation, spoken in conscience, spoken in the Canon and now we see the same motif about the person of our Lord. Hebrews 1, the first three verses, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son." This is where God speaks. It's in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He," meaning Christ, "is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."

So we can say that in a unique way, God has made himself known in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ perfectly reveals the essence of God without any alteration, diminishment, or degradation. He is a perfect representation of God, the exact representation of his nature, because he himself is God in human flesh. And so, what does that have to do with us saying why do we believe in God? We believe in God because we have read God's own testimony about himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and we believe in him as a result of that. God spoke in the Canon. God spoke in particular in the person of Christ and we believe in response to that. We didn't make it up. God spoke first, we heard and we responded and we believe. That's why we believe in God.

In John 14, you don't need to turn there, in John 14:9, Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" When we see Christ, we see exactly what God the Father is like because they are identical in character and essence. There is no more mercy in Jesus Christ than there is in God the Father. There is no more love in Christ than there is in God the Father. They are perfect in their essence and they share that single essence together and when we see Christ, we see what God is like.

So we believe in God in response to his self-disclosure in creation, conscience, Canon, and Christ. Those four reasons are broad, they are deep and they are varied, and if someone was serious about wanting to see what God had to say, someone wanted to meet God, as it were, on his own terms, they could devote their life to pursuing everything that God has said in these four areas and they would never exhaust it. If we were able to be awake 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for 70 years, we could never search out the limits of what God has spoken and how he has revealed himself.

So for humanity in the main to reject this testimony is just utterly inexcusable. Do you see that? It's utterly inexcusable to reject this testimony, to make accusations that God hasn't said enough or to set up kind of their own self-test about how God would have to reveal himself. We were talking on Sunday about a guy who said, "If God was real, he would stop this piece of chalk before it hits the ground," and just kind of setting up his own self-imposed test. Well, no. Excuse me, but if you were serious about knowing the true God, you would stop playing these stupid games and start paying attention to where God has spoken as if that was somehow inadequate, and it's the pride and arrogance of man that makes this such a problem. These are objective reasons. I'll say it again, these are objective reasons for why we believe.

Now, there is a fifth reason why you and I believe in God, but before I get to it, I want to deal with an extended side issue. This doesn't qualify as a tangent because it's in my notes, alright? So this is not a tangent at all. I still have two tangent cards that I can play tonight if I need them later. This is just an extended side issue. We've talked about this in pieces but I want to deal with it systematically. Someone hostile might say, "Preacher, if your reasons for believing in God are so persuasive, why don't all men believe in God like you do? Why is that?" And if you're taking notes, you can put this next section under this heading, "The seeming contradiction." The seeming contradiction because what we've said is that the testimony is so broad and varied that men are without excuse and that there is such a vast testimony that God has imprinted in creation and in his word that

you never live a moment apart from God speaking resoundingly about his own existence. There is nowhere you go where you can get away from it and yet we find that men don't believe and men reject and mock the very things that we're saying here tonight.

Why is that? Why are there "atheists," using that term in quotations? "If there are atheists, doesn't that argue against the clarity of the testimony? Doesn't the fact that there are so many men who would reject everything that I've said here tonight, doesn't that argue against the biblical claims of clarity?" And the answer to that very important question is no. It does not argue against it at all. The Bible explains their unbelief, gives us perfectly reasonable understandable, demonstrable reasons for that unbelief and get this, condemns it as a deliberate morally culpable act of rebellion against their Creator. This isn't because it's foggy and you just can't see it. It's not about that, and remember what I said at the outset here this evening is that we start by understanding our own position. We want to understand our own position before we try to engage the arguments that people rise up and proclaim against the biblical testimony. We have to understand our own position and what I want you to see is that the Bible, when you consider the totality of the testimony of the Bible on these issues, it gives us a perfectly coherent, comprehensive view of these things that lets us understand why people oppose it, and the Bible explains their unbelief and condemns it as a culpable act of deliberate rebellion against the God who has made himself known.

Turn to the book of Romans again, chapter 1, Romans 1:18. Having established the clarity of God's testimony in these four different areas, we're now dealing with a seeming contradiction: why are there atheists then? Paul says, writing under the inspiration of the omniscient Holy Spirit who sees the heart of every man says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." All the ungodliness, all the unrighteousness that we see stands under the condemnation of God and it is a universal statement, all of it, that these men are condemned under the wrath of God because they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Verse 19, "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." Verse 20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

Now, as Bible believing Christians here in this room, I want to help you understand how to think about this and to remind you that we're on God's side here. What I mean is that our sympathies and affections are with God, not with the unbeliever. You know, we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind, at least that's what we aspire after. So our sympathies and our affections and our loyalties and our allegiance belong to this God who has revealed himself and made himself known. So we just want to see this from God's perspective and line ourselves up with the way that he thinks.

What does God think about their unbelief? Look at what he says in verse 19, "that which is known about God is evident within them; for," this is so powerful, "God made it evident to them." God is saying here, "I have made this known to them. I have made it evident to them." And what I want you to see, brothers and sisters, is this: when our God

who has saved us from our sin says, "I have made this evident," then we want to take his side and not suggest and partially agree maybe with people who oppose us and say, "Well, you're right, it is kind of a difficult issue." We have to line ourselves up with God and say, "No, God has made it evident and so the problem is not with God, my friend, the problem is with you because he has made himself known."

So he goes on to say, Paul does there in verse 20, that God's eternal power, his divine nature, have been clearly seen, understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse. Well, how do they ever get to this dark position? This dark satanically inspired position where as mortal creatures, they are denying the clear evident testimony of the holy Creator that he has imprinted in creation all around them? How do they ever get to such a miserable state? Verse 18 says it: they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They consciously, deliberately, what's trying to well up out of their own heart and testify against their unrighteousness, it's known within them and it tries to come up and they push it back down. They suppress it. They stifle it. They smother it. If I can use a very bold illustration here: this is like a mother suffocating her baby on its bed. The cries are coming out and the cries are evident and the cries are piercing and you go and you place something and you smother it, trying to kill it and suppress it so that it can't be heard. As awful and as heinous as it would be for a mother to do that, it's even more culpable for a man and humanity in general, to suppress the clear evidence testimony that God has imprinted in creation all around him. They're just trying to smother the cries of life and so they deliberately repress what they clearly understand and know in their hearts to be true.

Now, think with me here for a moment. We have God saying, "This is clear." We have somebody saying, "I don't believe." Someone is lying, right? Those two things are mutually exclusive. God says it's evident to them and they say no, it's not. Someone is lying and I'll tell you, it's not the Bible. So no matter how vociferously they object, no matter how much they ridicule these supposed circular arguments, and they're not at all circular because it's based on outside testimony, no matter how much they object, they are the ones who are lying, not our God because our God is true and Titus 1:2 says it is impossible for him to lie. So when we see it in Scripture that God says it's evident, it's evident and you and I do not have the liberty to redefine it and to dumb it down and say, "Well, okay, it's a probability case."

Look, I don't want to pick a fight with people who are friends, honestly, that's sinful to try to reduce it to something that's probable in an effort to appeal to the mind of a sinful man. We don't have the liberty to say that it's less clear than what God says it is. Do you see that? We can't say this is probable when God says it is so clear it will result in judgment for rejecting it. When we are challenged, we have to be all the more clear, all the more assertive in it, in order to be faithful and to maintain an attitude that is commiserate with the clarity and certainty with which God says he has spoken. And the fact that that brings earthly ridicule really is of no consequence because on the final day, we will be vindicated at the throne of God and he will honor the faithfulness that we show to what he said here. And I'm a lot more concerned about the final judgment of God and how he evaluates my life that I lived out before him than I am about what some passing mortal whose breath is in his nostrils says to me in the heat of the moment, right? We have to

know, we have to understand whose side it is that we're on; who it is that we're trying to please; and who it is, beloved, that we fear. We fear God, not man, and when God says, "I have made it clear," then that settles it. And whatever consequences come from being faithful to that testimony, we're happy to bear because the alternative would be disloyalty to the God who saved us and that is unthinkable. That thought cannot be countenanced.

So when someone claims to be an atheist, they are lying. They are not an atheist. I like to say when these discussions come around, "Why are you arguing with me? You're on my side. You agree with me." And what we are saying when we say something like that is that we're helping his conscience gain a foothold to make it all the more intolerable for him to continue in his lies. Even though they might outwardly reject what we're saying, his conscience affirms the testimony that we give to him. So we continue to give it and kind of look past the boisterous opposition because we understand from Scripture what the reality is. So we're delighted to feed someone's conscience even if the response that we get is mocking and ridicule.

Someone says, "Why would they do that? Why would they do that? Isn't it in their interest to know the truth? So why would someone deny the truth?" Okay, let's deal with that question and, listen, it's not an intellectual problem that they have at all as they deny the existence of God; it is not an intellectual problem at all. It couldn't be because God has already said in Romans 1 that it's evident to them. It's clear. He made it clear. It's clear against their wishes, even. So it's not primarily an intellectual problem. The Bible says it's a moral problem. They would rather have their sin than to have the truth.

Turn back to the Gospel of John, John 3. We have to understand what is truly going on here in these things. Actually, let's look at verse 18, Jesus speaking says, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already," he stands in a position of judgment even while he lives, "because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." It's a moral problem. Do you see it? It's about what they love and they love darkness more than they love the light. Verse 20, "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

So we see from the testimony of Christ in John 3, we see from the testimony of the inspired Apostle Paul in Romans 1, that it's a deliberate suppression motivated by a love for sin that prefers sin to any truth about God because if God is allowed to rise up in their consciousness and they acknowledge what their conscience tells them to be true, then all of a sudden everything about what they love in the world collapses around them and they can no longer be their own God because they have to acknowledge the existence of the one who has testified in all of these places. So rather than submit to the truth that is evident to them, they deny it for the sake of sin. So, beloved, don't let their fiery rhetoric, don't let their intellectual arrogance, their scientific intimidation, throw you off. Even as you come across documentaries on television or books or stuff like that and some of the sophisticated things that are said are hard to decipher what they even mean, blow through all the smoke and just come back to these fundamental principles of discernment. "Oh, I

know what's going on here. I believe the Bible and I know what's going on here. There is a moral agenda that he is camouflaging in the name of atheism. He is camouflaging his moral agenda by denying what so evident in creation, conscience, Canon and Christ."

I came across, not too long ago, a very interesting unintentional illustration of this in the Los Angeles Daily News a couple of years ago. They were writing about some of the atheistic debates and different things like that and they quoted one atheist who said this, listen to this really carefully. This is the guy with all kinds of sophisticated arguments to make denying the truth of everything that we have said here. He said quote, "Religion is a human invented delusion that is," watch it, "that is sexually repressive and a threat to human survival." Do you know what he's saying? "This concept of religion represses the bodily desires that I want to express." That's all he's saying. He's saying, "The innate consciousness that I have of God restrains me from acting upon what I want to do." So rather than acknowledge that his heart is sinful and evil, he attacks the testimony of his conscience and makes a living as a professional atheist all in the name of trying to liberate what he wants to do in the flesh. An intrinsic awareness of God restrains his sinful desires. How can he liberate his flesh? Define God out of existence. He trades obvious truth for an incoherent worldview for the sake of base, sinful desires.

So the atheist upholds Big Bangs and evolution to deny God's revelation in creation. He uses psychological tricks to deny guilt instead of acknowledging the testimony of his own conscience. He worships the environment and the creation instead of Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Canon of Scripture. He just exchanges things and it makes absolutely no sense but, beloved, understand that that kind of mental oblivion is the result of turning your back on God. When the light is in front of you and you turn your back on it and walk away, you are going to delve deeper and deeper into darkness.

Look at a couple of Psalms here. Psalm 10:4, let's look at verse 3 just for fun. Psalm 10:3, "The wicked boasts of his heart's desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns the LORD. The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'" Psalm 14 which we read at the end of last time, I believe. We'll just look at verse 1. Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good."

So coming back to what we opened up with: we've got to start with our own position; we have to understand our own position. We have to see what God says about this before we sort out the world around us and what God says about atheists, those who outwardly say there is no God, you combine Psalm 10:4 with Psalm 14:1 and he says they are wicked, haughty fools. That's God's testimony. You know, I think about it this way: for all the abundance of hostility toward the Bible, all the hostility toward God, isn't it it only fair that you and I as believers in Christ would simply give voice to the biblical response to it? They're certainly not going to testify to this. You know, let's just be a voice for the Bible in response to it and let God sort out what he wants to do. Why would you deny God to the ruin of your own soul? It's foolish. And we'll say it one last time, understand

that it's not that unbelievers don't get it. They get it. They just don't want it and no amount of piling up of evidences is going to convince them to the contrary.

Think about it this way, tonight must be the night for legal analogies, legal illustrations, but this is really obvious. Remembering what the Bible says about their love for sin, they don't want to come to the light for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed, alright? That's what Christ said. We're not making any of this up. Here's a way that I think will really help you kind of nail this down: professing atheists are like a judge in a legal case who has taken a bribe before hearing a case. No amount of compelling evidence is going to cause that judge to do what is right. The outcome has been predetermined by a wicked, moral decision that he made before he ever ascended to the bench. He accepts the bribe and cherishing the bribe, he goes through the motions of hearing the case but the outcome is predetermined. That's what bribed judges do. Look, I know this. I practiced law in Chicago. That's just the way it is. No amount of compelling evidence will cause that judge to do what is right because he has a vested interest in the outcome that overrides considerations of truth. That's the professing atheists. That's the one rejecting this testimony. He has taken his bribe in his love of sin and so he rejects everything about it. People who deny the God of the Bible have a vested interest in their self-autonomy and their sinful lives. God is a threat and so they try to kill him. Alright? That's the seeming contradiction.

Now, we're going to pivot and talk, we're going to deal with ourselves now, okay? We're kind of done talking about people out there and we need to talk about ourselves for a little bit here. Lest you and I get smug about this, lest you and I would be puffed up in our knowledge of these truths, let's remember something really vitally important. Turn over to the book of Titus which is shortly before the book of Hebrews. The book of Titus, chapter 3, and I'm hoping that in a few months we will have the opportunity as a church body to go through the book of Titus together on Sunday mornings. Titus 3:2 Paul says, "to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." Watch this because you and I are right here in verse 3, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

As we talk about the testimony of God in creation and we say that this is so evident and we simply give voice to what the Bible says that wicked, haughty fools are suppressing the testimony of God that is evident within their own souls, understand that we are claiming no moral superiority tonight. We are not claiming an intrinsic moral superiority as we do this. We unapologetically give voice to God's self-testimony but we remember as Christians that we ourselves were once in darkness. We remember that we ourselves sometimes were the ones who voiced curses against his name. We remember that we were the ones who sometimes shook our fist and either in pride and arrogance lived a life of self-sufficiency, or in open, flagrant sin, sinned against this very testimony which tonight we are now upholding by the grace of God. We remember that we were once in darkness ourselves and so we come to this question, our attitude is one of, the unbelieving world, is one of appeal, "Please leave behind your darkness. Please stop suppressing the truth." We're not angry at them. We once were with them. We beg as

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, "Be reconciled to God and Jesus Christ. I beg you to come to Christ."

But let's deal with this question: creation, conscience, Canon, Christ, how is it if we were once just like them, if we were once dead in transgression and sin as Ephesians 2:1 says, dominated by the devil, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, how is it that we who were once like them now find ourselves in the light? How is it that it's all clear to us now when we once were in that same kind of darkness? That brings us to the fifth and final reason that we believe and you can put it under another "C" called conversion. Conversion. How is it that you individually hear these things and it's so obvious to you now when others say it's not? It's about your conversion.

Now, let me just define a term here for you. In a technical theological sense, "conversion" means "to turn to God in repentance and faith." It emphasizes the human response to the proclamation of the Gospel. I'm using the term "conversion" tonight in a broader sense to simply refer to God's work in securing our personal salvation. Now watch this, you're still in Titus, right? Titus 3, right after he had said "we were once disobedient, deceived," in verse 3, watch verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us," notice, God is the actor doing something to us, "He poured out the Holy Spirit upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Now watch this: as Christians, we believe in God because God worked in our lives and made us spiritually alive when we had been dead. The Holy Spirit opened our blind eyes so that we could believe the Gospel and truly know God.

Follow me here, remember, we're not thinking about how this plays with people who are unbelieving. We're talking about what we know to be true as Christians based on the testimony of God from his word and this is what God is saying about how we moved from darkness into light. Oh, this is wonderful. God exercised grace toward us in our conversion. He took these objective realities in creation, conscience, the Canon and about Jesus Christ, he took those objective realities and by the power of his omnipotent Spirit applied them to our hearts so that we would believe them and receive them. We could not and we would not have done it ourselves because we were dead. We were deceived. We were enslaved. We were blinded by Satan. The only reason that you and I are in a position of seeing these things and believing them and submitting ourselves gladly to them is because God, having done all of this great work and imprinting himself all over his creation and giving his word and coming in incarnate flesh in the person of Christ and making himself known as a man on earth, for heaven sake, God went even further with you individually and did a direct personal work on your own heart and opened your mind so that you would believe.

Let me show you some passages that will help you see this. Turn to 1 Corinthians. I'll give you three in addition to what we just read from Titus. 1 Corinthians 2, beginning in verse 10. All along, we have been saying that we believe because God spoke; we believe

in response to his self-revelation. We see it again on a personal level in our conversion. Chapter 2, verse 10 of 1 Corinthians, "For to us God revealed them," the things of God, the glory of the cross which is what he was speaking about at the end of chapter 1. In fact, let me just show you, chapter 2, verse 2, Paul said, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Verse 6, he says, "we speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however," watch this, this is just written throughout all the Scriptures, "a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory." We acknowledge this isn't worldly wisdom. We understand the world is going to reject it but why is that we believe it? Verse 10, "For to us," to believers, "God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." Verse 12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God." We know these things because the Spirit has given them to us. That's how we know.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 4:5, the Apostle Paul says, "we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." How is it that we have this knowledge of God? It's because he has shone it into our hearts; he has shined it, as it were, into our hearts so that we would receive it. God did a work in your heart in order to make these things real and personal to you.

One final passage in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 1. I allude to this often. He said, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all," there it is, you and I find ourselves in the first three verses of Ephesians 2, "we all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

So how do we find ourselves in this position tonight, gathered together with open Bibles on our laps, believing the testimony of God as fully as we have the power to do it in the way that he has revealed himself in all of these areas? How has that happened when we were dead in sin? How did that happen, verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." How is it that you believe tonight? If you're a Christian, you can properly and rightly say, "I believe because God opened my eyes to the truth." In addition to all of these reasons found in creation and conscience and the Canon and in Christ, I can truly

say, "I believe because God opened my heart to believe." Just like Lydia in Acts 16, it says that "the Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe."

Now, understand this and I am about done here. Understand that as we say this and there is a certain subjective element, a non-verifiable element in one sense, speaking very, very loosely to this aspect of conversion and that's why I don't think we start their necessarily as we discuss these things, but understand this: though this aspect of it is a matter of personal experience, we are not believing contrary to objective reality when we say that. Understand this, beloved, understand this: God, when he saved you, he opened your heart to believe the things that were already there all along. He didn't change anything about his imprint of creation. He simply opened your blinded eyes, awakened your dead spirit and rose and gave you life and suddenly you saw what was there all along because God had worked in your heart and given you a new heart; taken away the old heart of unbelief and given you a new heart that is tender to the things of truth that was there all along.

So if you're a Christian, I just encourage you, if you've struggled with these things and wondered, you know, the taunts of atheists and unbelievers and all of that, just rehearse these things in your mind. It's so easy to walk through them: creation, conscience, Canon, Christ and conversion. Creation, conscience, Canon, Christ and conversion. We have so much that God has given to us to make us strong and bold in the faith. And as you walk out tonight as a believer in Jesus Christ, the review of these things should leave resounding and pulsating in your mind and in your heart, "My faith is real and I have not believed in vain. I have a position of strength and confidence that is based on reality and I am in this position because of a gracious work of God in my previously unbelieving and undeserving life."

So we see these things and it leads us not to pride but to praise, to the one who has made himself known and was gracious to overlook our sin and even to expunge it from the record in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ so that, as Paul said in Ephesians 2, we might be with him forever and see throughout all of eternity the unfolding, abounding nature of his love, mercy, grace and kindness to those of us who believe. Praise his name.

Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we do thank you and we affirm and we line ourselves up with what you have testified to be true and we honor you and we, Father, are prepared to receive and accept whatever rejection the world hurls at us, whatever insult and injury they might cast against us for the sake of this testimony because, Father, we are convinced and we are convinced because of your gracious work in our lives. Father, we're not so foolish as to assume that everyone even in the bounds of this room actually believes and if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, take these things to heart. God has spoken clearly. There is a God and you have broken his law. You're in a condition of guilt and condemnation. Oh, my friend, my loved one, stop playing games with your conscience. Stop pretending that these things aren't real. Stop running from God. Don't you see that God intends good to you? That God forgives sinners? That God in love and grace sent Christ for sinners just like you to take away the guilt of sin? He bore the punishment at

the cross and we know it's true because God raised him from the dead; we measure time by the life of Jesus Christ. There is no doubting these things. Jesus Christ truly is the only Savior for mankind.

My friend, as we're quiet here together, on the authority of God's word, I tell you God will forgive all of your sin. He will receive you into his family if you will but repent and believe in Christ. Your guilty conscience can be silenced because Christ has satisfied all of the guilt with his life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ will fit you for heaven and he says, "Come to me for eternal life." It's not too late. You're not too bad. Jesus is the friend of sinners and your fight against God can be turned into peace with God. It says in Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." I invite you to Christ even tonight, to give your heart to him even now, for the salvation of your eternal soul.

Father, would you take these truths and seal them to each heart. May we walk out believing and rejoicing, thankful that you have saved us and looking all around us and seeing everywhere we cast our eye the indelible imprint of a holy, righteous, good God in the totality of his creation. Father, may it cause us who know you to love you, praise you, and obey you with every ounce of our being. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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