

The Foundation of Truth

Essential Truth

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Bible Text: Psalm 19:7-9

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This morning I want to introduce a text that just has utterly foundational significance for our fellowship and this is a text that is foundational for what it is going to mean to be a part of Truth Community Fellowship. This is going to help clarify for us why we do what we do and it's also going to give us a sense of clarity and purpose to know exactly where it is that we are going. This is a cornerstone of what the future holds for our ministry.

You've probably heard the little phrase "To sow a thought is to reap an act. To sow an act is to reap a habit. To sow a habit is to reap a character. And to sow a character is to reap a destiny," the idea being that what a young man thinks and acts upon in the early course of his life sets a trajectory that determines what his life is going to look like; it sets a trajectory for the future. When newlyweds get married and start their life together, how they interact in the first few months of their life together sets a trajectory that determines in large part what the future of their family is going to look like. Well, in like manner, in a new church setting like what we have here, when a new church is setting its course, the early teaching in that fellowship sets a trajectory that influences its spiritual health for many years to come. It sets a tone. It sets a barometer by which, a pattern by which everything else is going to be built on. And because of that, I did not want to wait any longer to teach on the authority of Scripture here in Truth Community Fellowship. We want to sow right-thinking toward God and his word. How we think and respond to the authority of Scripture sets a trajectory that will define this church for many years to come. I think of this church already in terms of what decades from now it will be like and I want to set a foundation that will stand the test of time. I want to set a foundation not only for your life but for those that will come after us. We are sowing seed that will bear a harvest in years to come and we want to sow seed and to raise up trees, as it were, that others can come and sit under the shade in times to come where there would be a place where people could know that truth is upheld here, truth is honored here, God's word is honored here.

To do that, to orient your thinking that way, I want to invite you to turn to Psalm 19. In Psalm 19, we see a foundational teaching on the revelation of God, how he has revealed himself in nature and how he has revealed himself in his word. It's going to be our focus of consideration particularly this morning to talk about the authority of God's word. And if you look at the first 6 verses with me, we won't spend a whole lot of time in these first 6 verses but we do want to treat this Psalm as a whole, as a unit, as it was originally written, one complete unit. The first 6 verses, look at them with me say that,

1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. 2 Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there

words; Their voice is not heard. 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. 6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

We'll stop there for the moment. These initial 6 verses are describing how God has revealed himself in nature. The heavens are declaring the glory of God. There is not a moment in which we walk under the tent of the sun, as it were, or the table of stars at night in which God is not declaring forth the reality of his existence, what theologians call a general revelation in nature that goes out to all men everywhere at all times. The glory of creation, the power of creation, the consistency and predictability of nature is all a testimony that God has implanted in his creation that speaks to the reality of his existence. That's what this Psalm is teaching us. It's called general revelation because it is in nature. It comes to all people in general. Any man can look at creation and see evidence of the Creator. It's always there testifying in a silent way that continually points to the reality of God.

Look at verse 4 with me again. This is something diffuse throughout all of the world and the Scripture here says that, "Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world." These utterances, this silent testimony as the sun runs its course through nature, as the stars night by night give forth their testimony of glory, there is evidence for every man to see of the reality of his Creator. That's what these first 6 verses are teaching us. And the sun is too glorious to look at directly and thereby reflects to the great glory of God that that which you would look up and would blind you, you realize that someone even greater, even more glorious, has put that into space and that is the testimony that we are to take when we see creation around us and when we look up in the sky. God has revealed himself in creation. That's what these verses are teaching us and man in Romans 1, it says that men who would see that and deny the existence of God are without excuse. They have a moral problem. They are actively suppressing the knowledge of God in order to deny his existence. Their own hearts and their own consciences testify to the reality of God and they have to deny what their own conscience says is true in order to maintain their position of denying the existence of God. That's how great and how glorious this revelation is.

But for all of the glory that we see in creation, for all of the strength of its testimony to the existence and power of God, nature's revelation is only partial. It is not at all a full revelation of God. It is limited. Nature cannot teach us about Jesus Christ. Nature cannot teach us about the nature of salvation. It cannot teach us about the call to repentance. It cannot teach us about the need for men to repent of their own dead works in order to put their faith in Christ to truly have the forgiveness of their sins. Nature cannot teach us about the church. Nature cannot reveal to us what the future has. And so while it gives a clear and compelling testimony to the existence of God, while it gives a clear and compelling testimony for which men will be accountable, it is limited in its effect; it is limited in what it can accomplish.

No one can look at nature and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and so what David does here as he has written this Psalm is he brings out that there is a twofold nature to God's revelation. In the first 6 verses, he has spoken of God's revelation of himself as you see it in creation but now as we transition into verses 7 through 14, we are seeing the revelation of God as he has given it in his word and that's where we're going to spend most of our time here this morning. You see God's revelation in his works in the first 6 verses, you see his revelation in his word in the final 8 verses, verses 7 through 14 and that's where we want to go. The transition into the second half of the Psalm seems a little bit abrupt. Look again at verse 6, "Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat." And then boom, without transition, without an evident change of direction, he

immediately says, "The law of the LORD is perfect." You have this revelation in nature and then immediately, "The law of the LORD is perfect," and there is this abrupt transition that takes place. But the clear contrast shows what he is thinking and notice that as he has spoken about the glory of God in verse 1, how "The heavens are telling of the glory of God," that he goes and as he makes the transition into the written revelation of God, he immediately says that it is perfect; it is blameless; it is the fullness of what it needs to be.

Now as he addresses how God has revealed himself in his word, he transitions into what we now call special revelation. General revelation, what God has revealed in nature, here he talks about special revelation and what we mean by that is this: special revelation is that knowledge of God that is revealed in human language found in the Scriptures, that knowledge of God where God has revealed in human language his thinking to men in the Scriptures. And as we go through this passage, we're going to go through verse 9 here this morning, we're going to see 4 foundational qualities of Scripture, 4 characteristics of Scripture that thoroughly define what the nature of the word of God is and also that set the trajectory for our fellowship. What we are going to see here in this message today is going to be the defining statement of what it is that we believe about the word of God. It's going to be the defining statement about how we receive it as the final authority. It's revelation from God. It's the final authority. It is complete and therefore it drives everything that we do. The Scriptures are going to drive everything that we believe. The Scriptures are going to drive everything that we do and how we interact with one another and how we worship God.

So I want to have this clear defining moment in the life of our fellowship early on so that we would all have a sense of unity that we would rally around the truth of Scripture. And let me say this as we think about this and it's something that over the past several weeks I've had a number of conversations with a number of you about: I realize that many churches, most churches, word affirm their belief in the authority of Scripture and that they would affirm the things that we're talking about here. What I trust is going to make our fellowship distinct is that it's going to be clear from the way that we actually honor the Scripture in the outworking in our lives and our fellowship, that we are not going to simply pay lip service to the authority of Scripture. By the very nature and the way that it is taught, by the way that we structure our fellowship and our membership in the future, by the character of leaders that God will raise up in our fellowship and in all of those points in between, that there is going to be an evident honoring of Scripture that takes place in this fellowship. We are going to honor God's word, not simply in a doctrinal statement and then essentially deny it by being flippant and careless and short in our teaching of it. There's going to be an evident honoring of the word of God in everything that permeates everything that we do here. That's what this fellowship is going to be about and there won't be a disconnect, by the grace of God, there will not be a disconnect between the way the word is honored on paper and the way that it is lived out in the fellowship. And if that appeals to you, then you're in absolutely the right place. You're absolutely in the right place if you want to be someplace where God's word is honored because you've felt the power of it in your own life, you've felt the power of God's word and you desire to know it and to understand it and to obey it. Anybody like that anywhere is going to have a home at Truth Community Fellowship. That's going to be the nature of what we do.

Now, what's important for us is to understand why it's that way. Why is it that we submit ourselves to the authority and teaching of Scripture rather than coming up with our own philosophies. Why it is that we're content to be tied with those men over the course of church history that have honored God's word and have died for God's word. Why we want to align ourselves with them and the authority of Scripture rather than being caught up in the latest fads in church growth. Why are we content to let those fads go by and focus on God's word. We need to have that clear in our minds, right? We need to know why we're doing it this way. Well, that's what this week and the next 2 weeks are about.

In these 3 verses, verses 7 through 9, let me read them and then we'll start to unpack them and talk about the implications that it has for us as we go forward. Verses 7 through 9. Having seen God's revelation in his works, now we see God's revelation in his word. Verses 7 through 9,

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is

clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

Now, this passage is set up in a number of parallel statements. Each verse that I read gives 2 names of Scripture and then it gives 2 qualities of Scripture and 2 beneficial effects of Scripture. Look at verse 7 just so that you can see the structure here. You see the 2 names of Scripture: the law of the LORD and the testimony of the LORD. You see 2 qualities of the Scripture in verse 7: it's perfect; the testimony is sure. Then you see 2 beneficial effects of the Scripture in that verse: it restores the soul; it makes wise the simple. Well, verse 8 and verse 9 are like that as well and so there's just these parallel statements, these echoings of the qualities and the names and the beneficial effects of Scripture as David over and over again in looking at it from different angles is setting forth the perfections of the word of God. It's as if he were holding up a perfect diamond and letting the light radiate off that diamond in different ways in order to show forth its perfections and its glories.

Well, that's what he's doing here and if I wanted to, I could set up an 18 point message on those 6 verses but let's not do that. That might be a little hard even for me to endure, let alone for you to try to slug your way through 18 points. All we want to do today is structure it around 4 points. We're going to put it around 4 points that will clarify why the Bible is God's primary avenue of self disclosure; what it is about the Scripture that we believe and what it is that it teaches us about the nature of God's revelation. So we're going to have 4 points this morning if you're going to try to take notes, here's the first one: the Bible simply stated, the Bible is God's revelation. The Bible is God's revelation. That is the true starting point of understanding the Bible. This is the most foundational point of all. The Bible is God's verbal revelation to the human race. In a way that makes it unique among every other book that has ever been written or ever will be written, the Bible is God's verbal revelation to the human race. The God who made himself known in creation, who imprinted his character and his power in the very fabric of the umbrella under which we live, the umbrella of the sky, that God has made himself known verbally in the Bible.

Now, when I use the term revelation, the Bible is God's revelation, I simply mean this: that revelation is God's disclosure of previously unknown truth to man. Revelation is God's disclosure of previously unknown truth to man and right from the very beginning of the Bible you see that this is true. Right from Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Well, no one was there to observe that as it happened. No one was there to know what happened in the days of creation and so God had to take that which would otherwise be unknown to man and declare it and reveal it through the human authors of Scripture so that we would have truth about our origins; I'm just using that as an illustration. God made known our origins in the Scripture in a way that we would otherwise not know. It would be total darkness to us and you see that darkness, don't you, as soon as anyone denies the revelation of Scripture, denies the reality of creation as it's described in the Scriptures, there is an immediate black curtain of darkness that descends on the understanding of man. And as soon as you deny the revelation of the Bible, as soon as you close the Bible and move away from it, you have closed off from man the possibility of knowing the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unless we open the Bible and read it, we cannot know how to have the forgiveness of our sins. Unless we open the Bible and read it, we cannot know how God sanctifies believers and causes them to grow in Christ. Unless we open the Bible and read it, we do not know anything about the glorious future of heaven, our home in heaven that awaits us.

It all becomes darkness. You turn off the lights and darkness just descends and the ever enveloping wickedness of our society and the godlessness of our society is in direct proportion to how we have closed the Scriptures both outside the church and within the church as we have set the Bible aside in favor of our entertainment philosophies and all of those things and looking for ways to generate revenue and attendance rather than focusing on the revelation of God, when you do that, darkness descends. That's what happens. It's because it's only in the Bible where God has made these things known. It is only in the Bible where we see the attributes of God explained. It's only in the Bible where we understand that his sovereign rule is manifest in his works. It is only in the Bible that we see the nature of Christ, that we know him to be God in human flesh. It's only in the Bible where we see the cross explained. It is only in the Gospel where we see the proclamation of the Gospel upheld. It is only in the Bible where we understand that judgment is coming upon the human race. It is only in the Bible that these eternal things can be known and so, so much more. Once you close the Bible, once you silence the Bible, you have doomed men to stumble around like a drunk

from light post to light post, never having anything to support himself, never having anything to give certainty and a foundation upon which he can stand and we see the evidence in the darkness of that all around us because it's in the Bible that we find a spiritual clarity that we can find nowhere else. The Bible is God's revelation. The Bible is the word of God.

Now, I want to do more than just say that and proclaim that; I want you to see with your own eyes in the very words of Scripture here. I want you to take your index finger and be able to poke the very page of your Bible so that you can see that for yourself. How does this passage teach the reality of revelation? How does this passage teach us that God has made himself known in the Scriptures? Well, put your finger on verse 7 and just follow with me. Six times in these 3 verses you see the phrase "of the LORD," all in caps in most of your Bibles, referring to that covenant name of the God of Israel, Yahweh. Notice verse 7, "The law of the LORD is perfect." Verse 7, "The testimony of the LORD." Verse 8, "The precepts of the LORD. The commandment of the LORD." Verse 9, "The fear of the LORD." Verse 9, "The judgments of the LORD." Six times in those 3 verses you see "of the LORD" indicating that God is the source of the words of the Bible. It started with God and coming out from God was this revelation, this written revelation of himself that he put into his word.

Scripture affirms this in other places as well. You know 2 Timothy 3:16 that says that, "All Scripture is inspired by God. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." Turn in the New Testament to the book of 2 Peter as well, chapter 1. I'll give you a moment to turn there. 2 Peter 1 says this, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Now, between those 2 New Testament passages, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, these 2 passages variously describe the manner in which God produced the Scriptures for us. 2 Timothy 3:16 describes it in the sense of God breathing out his words and 2 Peter talks about it in terms of the Holy Spirit carrying the human authors along like the wind drives a sailboat with its energy. The wind fills the sails and provides the power by which the boat moves on the water. Well in the same way, God provided the initiating impulse, the initiating power as the Spirit came upon the human writers of Scripture. God the Holy Spirit motivated them and elevated them and instructed them on what to say so that as the human writers of Scripture over a course of 1,500 years were writing down the law of God, they were preserved in their writing. God used their personalities and lifted them – get this – lifted them beyond their human capacities so that they wrote precisely what God intended them to write.

When Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible, he was doing it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he was preserved from error in what he wrote because the power of omnipotent God was upon him, elevating his mind, instructing his mind, opening his mind to things that he had not known previously and as he recorded these things in the Scripture, God preserved him from error and as a result Moses wrote precisely what God intended him to write. And the 40 or so authors of the 66 books of the Bible as we now have them in our English text, that was true of each one of them. The power of God was working in them as they wrote so that what they wrote was precisely what God intended to have written and that is why the Bible is called the word of God. It's because it originated with him. His Spirit was the animating power of what was written. His Spirit preserved the authors from error in what they wrote so that the final product in the original manuscripts as they were given is exactly what God intended it to say. It is the word of God and that is why we say the Bible is God's revelation. It came from his mind, not from human minds. Although he used their personalities, the truth of what was written came from God and not from the elevated experience of man. The Bible is the word of God.

Now, if we thought about that rightly, if you and I thought about that rightly, there would be a sense of profound reverence that would come over us every time that we picked up a Bible; every time we opened a Bible there would be a profound sense of reverence. If this was fresh in our minds, there would be a sense of reverence that would come whenever we opened the Bible. I realize it's easy to lose the sense of the majesty of that when you have 8, 10, 100 copies in your home but the truth of the matter is that there should be a sense of trembling that comes over us that this is God's book and because it's God's book, we have a corresponding obligation to honor it, to believe it, to receive it with humility and with reverence. The MacArthur Study Bible was released in Arabic a few weeks ago and I've already started to hear stories of Arabic people who have had this handed to them and they trembled, they literally trembled as they've

held this in their hands because the Scriptures are not so readily available and convenient to them as it is to us. So they open it and there's this sense of reverence and tears in their eyes as they are looking upon it. Well listen, that's a right response to the word of God. I'm not saying that you and I should artificially manufacture tears every time that we open a Bible. We're not talking about artificially constructing emotion, I'm talking about something far deeper, far more profound that we would realize that when we open a Bible, when we open the 66 books of the Bible, we are looking into the mind of God. We are looking at something that he inspired in some cases up to 3,500 years ago and it has been preserved through generations and we have the privilege of opening it up and reading the mind of the Creator of the universe and bowing before his authority and what he has said in his word. There should never be any question about having a lofty, high view of Scripture when you understand that it is the revelation of God. It is the word of God. Men have spilled their blood for it and here we are and we have it in our hands with the capacity to open it and read it in peace, to read it and to understand it. There should be an ever-growing and deepening sense of honor that we have toward this book because this book came from our Creator. It came from the very mind of God. It's God's revelation and so we're going to honor it in Truth Community Fellowship because that's the appropriate response to something that comes from God, is to give it honor. It's God's revelation.

Now secondly, this passage teaches us so much more. The fact that this is the word of God has an important implication for us and that leads us to our second point here this morning. If the Bible is the word of God, we can say definitively without fear of contradiction, point number 2: the Bible is inerrant. Inerrant. If that's a new word to you, it's spelled i-n-e-r-r-a-n-t. The Bible is inerrant. Let me explain to you what that means. In the language of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy from some years ago, inerrancy means this, these great men, these defenders of the Scripture said this: "We affirm that the Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit." Let me say that again. This is an important theological point: "We affirm that the Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit." Here's the point: if God inspired the Scriptures as the Bible says that he did and as the Holy Spirit teaches us to believe even, that's a matter for another message, if God inspired the Scriptures, they are true because God is a God of truth. The nature of God, the character of God determines what the product of his inspiration is going to be and the Scriptures teach repeatedly that God is a God of truth. God cannot lie therefore anything that he speaks is by definition truth. Whatever comes from him is free from error. It is free from contaminant. It is free from falsehood. Again, if you're taking notes, just jot these references down. This will give you a little something to hang your thinking on. Hebrews 6:18 says, "it is impossible for God to lie." Hebrews 6:18, "it is impossible for God to lie." Titus 1:2 says, "God cannot lie." John 17:17 says, "Your word is truth." So there is an absolute 100% purity to the word of God.

Now, in light of those fundamental principles about the character of God, the truthfulness of his own character and when we understand that the spirits are the byproduct of his inspiration, then notice again the language of Psalm 19 as we look at these characteristics and this passage reinforces the inerrancy of Scripture. Look at verse 7 with me. Psalm 19:7, "The law of the LORD is perfect." Verse 7, "The testimony of the LORD is sure." Verse 8, "The precepts of the LORD are right. The commandment of the LORD is pure. The fear of the LORD is clean. The judgments of the LORD are true." Look at those words again and let them sink into the depth of your heart as you review for many of you and for some you have your foundational commitments to the word of God informed by what he has said. Perfect. Sure. Right. Pure. Clean. True. These are all words that speak to a perfection about the word of God and it's because of that perfection that we believe and teach that the Bible is inerrant. God superintended the writing of Scripture to preserve them from error in all that they affirm and this has massively important implications for you and for me and for the future of our fellowship. Whatever the Bible says about God, sin, Christ and salvation is absolutely without error and is perfectly reliable and should be believed without question.

Going further than that and going into the realm where the battle is often engaged inside the church and outside the church, whatever the Bible says about world history, about science, about future events and anything else whatsoever, whatever is within the orbit of the teaching of the Bible is without error. It is absolutely true to the degree of specificity intended in the text. Whatever it says. Whatever it says in realms of human knowledge of history and science is true. Whatever it says in spiritual realms about sin and salvation and judgment is true. It is reliable. It is to be believed. It is to be taught. It is to be defended

because it's the word of God. It has to be true. This book came from God, the God of truth and therefore what he said is by nature true because he cannot lie. Do you see the connections? Do you see how the attributes of God, the character of God, guarantees the product and the nature of his very word? These are matters of such great crucial, fundamental importance.

Because these things are true, we receive the Bible as supreme above all other truth claims from other religions or fields of human study. We deny and we stand opposed to the postmodern spirit of this age that says truth is relative. We stand opposed to the idea that all religions are equal and somehow sooner or later lead to God. We deny that as being Satanically influenced falsehood designed to confuse the clarity of God's word. We uphold the concept of absolute truth and we say that absolute Scripture is found in the Scripture and it is found only in the Scripture. That which would contradict the Scriptures is by definition false because the Bible comes from the omniscient God of the universe in whom we live and move and have our being. That is why we along with this fine place of Answers in Genesis, we affirm that God created the heavens and the earth in 6 literal 24-hour days because that is what the Bible teaches. We are not intimidated or influenced by the fact that natural science denies that and tries to explain origins in a naturalistic way. We don't care what they say. We don't care how they try to intimidate and bluff their way with their arrogant words. We believe the Bible and we stand on the Bible without apology and without fear and I thank God to be able to start a fellowship like this in a place like this. That is one of the great privileges that God has given to us and to me personally in my lifetime to be able to do that. For those of you that are part of the ministry of Answers in Genesis, God bless you. My prayers are with you and we stand together as one on these issues. There is no space between us whatsoever.

So, nothing corrects the Bible to conform it more closely to the truth. No one legitimately finds error in the Bible when all the facts are known and properly interpreted. And understand this: this has implications even for how you preach the Gospel. Turn back to Matthew 28 for just a moment, the very end of the Gospel of Matthew. I want to point something important out to you. We could go a couple of different places in the Gospel and maybe we should except that I'm already on a trajectory to preach for 4 hours here this morning. Let's not go there. I want you to see that this has implications for how we preach the Gospel. It is not enough to preach the Gospel and try to get someone to pray a sinner's prayer after you. That is not the Gospel at all and it is not what Jesus called us to do at all. It is such a truncated version of what it means to preach the Gospel.

Look at Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying," speaking to his disciples after his resurrection and just before his ascension, "Jesus said, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.'" There is a universality to the authority of the Gospel. There is a universality to the authority of the word of God. "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," watch this, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Part of the proclamation of the Gospel is to teach people that they are to submit their mind and to submit their will to the authority of Scripture, to the authority of what God and Christ have said in his word. So we call people not to a simple prayer that they really don't understand, we call people to a radical revolution to take place in their mind where their whole way of thinking is changed so that it is subordinated to the word of God. That is the call that Jesus makes upon us, "Go and teach them to observe all that I commanded you." That is intrinsic and true repentance. True repentance is a willingness to submit your mind to the truth of God's word and that's one of the implications of the authority of Scripture.

Now, I want to tell you something really important here. I want you to realize something: this authority in God's word, this power and this truthfulness of God's word is an objective fact. What I mean by that is it does not depend on what you think about it. These things that we're talking about in God's word, the inerrancy and the authority of God's word, are things that are true independent of you and me. These things about the Scriptures are true even if you and I had never been born. They were true before you and I were born, they will be true after you and I are dead. They are independent of us and so it's not a matter of, "Well, it's God's word because I believe that it's God's word." No, "I believe that it's God's word because it is God's word." Do you see the difference? It's completely different and so we defend the word of God based on its own intrinsic, inherent authority and we receive it that way and we realize that it would be true even if I hadn't believed it was true at all.

This has an independent truth, an independent authority to it and that's why we're able to call it God's word. That's why we call on men everywhere to subject their mind, heart and will to the Bible. We do so because the Bible is God's revelation. We do so because the Bible is inerrant and we do no one any favors, we do no one any favors by trying to cover that up and saying, "Well, we'll get to it later. You know, if we can just get them in the door and all of that, we'll talk about it at some point." No. No. No. No! That is not the way to handle God's word at all. You put the authority and the truth of God's word front and center right from the beginning and make it plain beginning, middle and end at all times so that people understand what's at stake. There must be a confrontation with the sinful mind of man that believes that he is his own authority. There must be a confrontation with the sinfulness of man that denies the authority and the need to obey God's word. There must be a confrontation with that or the battle is never engaged in the first place. And if you hide that truth, then you've never even exposed people to the truth of the Gospel.

So we don't back away from that conflict. We realize that it's a necessary part of confronting the sinful heart of men, of confronting the sinful condition of our dark and ever darkening society. We don't back away from that confrontation. We realize that that's the purpose for which we exist is to engage that confrontation and to make these things known. We do that individually and we do it collectively as a fellowship. This is what we're going to stand for. You know, we're not going to be nasty about it and we're going to be gracious to all men and we're going to proclaim these things humbly recognizing that we ourselves are sinners in need of the grace of God but we do not have the liberty to hide the natural confrontation that the Bible provokes in men. We can't hide that and be faithful to the Scriptures and we won't. We will make that known. That is one of the things that will be a hallmark of this fellowship.

Now, thirdly. We've said the Bible is God's revelation; the Bible is inerrant; thirdly, the Bible is the final authority. The Bible is the final authority. All of these points fit together in an interlocking way. The Bible makes an exclusive truth claim that contradicts today's tolerant spirit. One man says it this way and I like this, "When the Bible speaks, the argument is over." When the Bible speaks, the argument is over because it is the final authority and the psalmist here, David uses several different terms to highlight the Bible's authority and I just want to run through these very quickly with you. First of all, notice in verse 7 he says, "The law of the LORD." The law. You know, we're it used to thinking about law even in a secular sense as the law has authority. Well, the law of the Lord has supreme authority and this word here, "law," is a comprehensive term for God's revealed will that he has communicated in his word. God expresses his instruction, his teaching and his doctrine and his commandments in the Bible. It's the law of the Lord. It's the law that the Lord has given.

Now secondly, look at the end of verse 7 there, he calls it, "The testimony of the LORD." Again, remember I told you, I said, he uses 6 different names for the Scripture. Well, we're just going through those really quickly here. The word "testimony" refers to God's statements about himself in the Scripture. You know, if you give your testimony you say, "Here is what has happened in my life. Here is how I became a Christian. This is my testimony about myself." Well, the testimony of the Lord refers to God's statements about himself in the Scriptures. He declares himself to be true; to be omniscient; omnipotent; omnipresent; sovereign. That is the nature of God. Notice this: because that is the nature of God, the authority with which God himself reigns, his word reflects that selfsame authority because it is the word of God. It is his testimony to himself.

Now, verse 8, "The precepts of the LORD. The commandment of the LORD." We're going to treat these together just for the sake of time. The precepts and commandments. These terms indicate the precision and the authority with which God addresses us. Scripture often comes in the form of divine imperatives which we are to obey. Again, one of the consequences of the authority of the word of God carries with it our responsibility to obey it, to believe it. Psalm 119:4 says, "You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently." The nature of the word of God, the extensive testimony of God in Scripture calls us to be diligent in our response to it.

Now, another phrase here, verse 9, "The fear of the LORD." Do you see that? The fear of the Lord in verse 9 where, again, we're talking about the final authority of the Bible. Fear here refers to the idea of holy reverence. It emphasizes the human response that God's word fosters in our hearts. This is a good test for

the quality of your spiritual life and is a good test for someone to test himself to see if his faith is genuine. When you read the Bible, when a man reads the Bible, he should feel an intrinsic internal need to submit to it because it's God's holy word. In light of God's holiness, in light of God's greatness, when the Scriptures are read and understood, when the Scriptures are properly taught with authority, those who are under the teaching of the word of God should feel a sense of compulsion to believe it, to submit to it, to honor it, to respond to it because the human conscience naturally responds to it that way and when men reject that, they are rejecting the testimony of God's word to their own heart.

The word of God exposes our sin, our creatureliness and for those of us that have been born again that truly know God, you know this by your own heart testimony. You know this by your own response to the word of God that you are imperfectly yes, but there is an inner compulsion in your heart toward this word. You are drawn to this word. You want to know it. You want to understand it. To hear it taught rejoices your heart. To read it and to be alone meditating on it and drawing your own understanding from it is one of the greatest delights of your heart, right? That's the mark of a true Christian. That's someone who has truly been born again is that there is this intrinsic love that you have for the Scriptures, that there is a sense of fear and honor that you have toward the God who wrote it. That's what the Bible produces. It produces this fear of the Lord that makes you want to turn from sin, that motivates you toward holiness as a proper response to it.

One final thing, one final aspect, one final name that's given here as we talk about the Bible's authority. Look at the end of verse 9 with me, "The judgments of the LORD are true." Judgments refer to God's declarations about various aspects of human life, of human actions and accountability. The Bible has authority over all things pertaining to believers and unbelievers alike. Men can only temporarily evade the authority of God's word because as we're going to read next week in Philippians 2, eventually every knee will bow to him. Every knee will bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And the supreme authority of God's word over all things, the supreme authority of Christ over all is going to be finally vindicated and there will be no dishonoring left unaccounted for. The judgments of God will be thoroughly and completely and finally vindicated for all to see and know.

Now, with all of that said, the Bible is the only authority for truth. It is the foundation of Christianity and brothers and sisters in Christ, this is a hill to die on. If this were ever challenged, this would be worth spilling your blood over. When this is challenged, realize that the very lifeblood, the very nerve center of everything that we hold dear is challenged. We must guard this treasure with grace and humility but we must guard it with an unyielding firmness that refuses to be swept along in the spirit of the age. Not only the spirit of our culture but the spirit that has invaded the evangelical church. We must guard this truth against all of that and if there is only 60 of us that do it together, we'll do it together to our dying breath. If the Lord brings more, so be it. But this is going to be the cornerstone unifying principle of our fellowship is a love and respect for the honor that is due to God's word.

So, when the Bible commands, we obey. When the Bible teaches, we believe. And get this as a sweet comfort to your heart in times of difficulty and sorrow: when the Bible promises, we embrace. We as believers in Jesus Christ have the privilege of saying that, "The promises that God makes to his children belong to me and they can shape the way I look to the future. They are my comfort in sorrow. They are my strength in weakness. They are my hope for the future." And we can take these things to the bank. We can take these things with absolute assurance. We can live with confidence and trust because the Bible is the word of God. It is true. It has final authority. And when God promises, he cannot break them. And it's all tied back to the authority of his word.

Now, last point here. I realize I've gone a little long here but this is another important one: fourthly, the Bible is complete. The Bible is complete or you could say the Bible is sufficient. The Bible is complete and sufficient for anything that is necessary for spiritual life and godliness. Look at verse 7 with me, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." The Bible is perfect because it is without error but this word also carries the idea of completeness. The Bible is whole. It is blameless. It is without blemish. The Bible contains all that we need for salvation to know God, to trust God and to live righteously for him.

Turn back to 2 Timothy 3. I alluded to it earlier and I want to go there and just point out a couple of quick things for you here. 2 Timothy 3, we'll begin in verse 14 actually. Paul says to Timothy in contrast to the spirit of the age, the "evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse." He looks at Timothy and he says in verse 14, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them," look at this verse 15, this is so important, "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." There is an intrinsic power and capacity that the Scriptures have in order to lead someone to saving faith in Christ Jesus. And listen: if pastors cared at all about the souls of men, they would never stray from teaching the Scriptures because they understand that it is the Scriptures that unveil the reality of salvation and release men from the looming threat of eternal judgment on their souls. When a pastor steps away and closes his Bible and doesn't want to teach it anymore, he has made a declaration to you that he does not care about the souls of men. Period. That is the only possible way that you can interpret that because it is the Scriptures alone that give us the knowledge of salvation that is through faith in Christ Jesus.

A man who stops preaching the word is a man who really should get out of ministry pronto. I don't have any men by name in my mind when I say that, just so you know. I'm just declaring a principle. Here it is: the Scriptures give us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And if you want to take it another step, look at verses 16 and 17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that," look at this, "the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." We see in the Scriptures what is necessary for the unsaved man to come to faith in Christ. We see in the Scriptures what is necessary for the saved man to be equipped for every work that God would put in front of him.

This is a precious book. If not physically, in your heart you should just be pulling this close to you and saying, "I love this word. What a precious gift God has given to us," because only Scripture can help men see their sin and lead them to the Christ who died in the place of sinners on the cross. Only the Scriptures teach men that God will forgive their sins if they repent and put their faith in Christ. You don't get that message anyplace else. As soon as you close the Scripture, the mind of men go to thinking that they can work their way to heaven. When a man has come to Christ, the Bible makes him adequate for every situation he will encounter in life. Every situation. We do not look beyond the Bible for spiritual resources because it's all right here. Anything else could only dilute it.

Now, let me say something important here: God's people were never supposed to look beyond the written words that he had given and this is so foundational. God has always precluded adding any other books or words outside of the Scripture as having parallel or higher authority to his word. Jot these verses down. You can look them up later. I'll just read them. Deuteronomy 4:2, remember we're talking about the idea of the completeness of Scripture. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it." Don't add to it, don't take away from it. Proverbs 30:5-6, "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar." Don't add to his word. Scripture is really clear about this. Don't do that. Don't go there. Don't presume to add something to the final canon. Revelation 22:18-19. These are practically the closing words of Scripture. "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city."

We do not need to look beyond the written word of God for any doctrine about faith or salvation. Indeed, it's not just that we don't need to, it is that we cannot. God has explicitly forbidden that from his people and so that has a really important application. Watch out. Watch out for people who say this, "Yes, we believe the Bible but we also believe that there are other revelations from God that you must believe and obey." They superficially affirm the Scripture because this is part of the deception of the devil. He realizes that for someone to just out-and-out deny the Bible is to expose himself and so it's never that clear and so they'll affirm the Bible with one part of their divided tongue, but then with the other part of their divided tongue, they'll say that you need something in addition to the Bible and what I want you to understand is that as

soon as someone goes there, they have actually denied the entirety of the Bible. They have denied the Bible altogether when they say that there's something else in addition to it.

The completeness of Scripture, that is to say the sufficiency of Scripture – listen to me here – the completeness of Scripture means that the book of Mormon is false. There is no additional authority that is side-by-side with the Bible. The sufficiency of Scripture means that Catholic tradition is false. The sufficiency of Scripture means that Mary Baker Eddy is false. The sufficiency of Scripture means that charismatic revelations are false by definition; false by definition because the Bible is complete. Listen beloved, this is really important and I am almost done here: if those things were necessary, if any of those things that I listed there were true and necessary for spiritual life, if any of them were necessary to know the full revelation of God, if any of them were necessary for us to know what we needed in order to go to heaven or to live the Christian life, if any of that was true, if we needed any of it, any of that outside stuff, understand this, this is such a simple principle of discernment: if any of those things were necessary, Scripture would not be complete. Do you get it? If any of that stuff was necessary and was from God, then this book would not be sufficient. It would not be complete. It would not be the final authority. So those teachers and those religious institutions cannot have it both ways and you and I cannot have it both ways, not that we would want to. You either take the Bible alone or you don't take the Bible at all because the Bible has declared its sufficiency. God has made it plain that nothing is to be added to it and therefore you either take it alone or you leave it behind. There is no other choice.

In this place, we're happy to take it alone, right? Why do we teach the Bible at Truth Community Fellowship? We recognize that the Bible is God's revelation. We recognize that it is inerrant, that it is the complete authority and it is the final authority, I should say and it is complete for all that we need for spiritual life. When you understand that about the Bible, you understand the trajectory of the future of our fellowship. James Montgomery Boice said this and I close with this quote, "We have to take this book and hold it up before our world and say this is God's book. It is the hope of the world. It points to Jesus Christ who is the way of salvation. It does so infallibly and it blesses those who believe it and live by its teaching. Won't you believe it and come to Jesus?" This is our cornerstone and it is with joy and with gladness of heart that we commit ourselves to this book.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for the clarity with which you have made your word known and the clarity with which you have stated your authority in the pages of Scripture. We pray, Father, that as we seek to honor your word, you would honor the ministry of this place, the lives of those who come, the lives of these brothers and sisters in Christ who are here in front of me. Father, as we draw closer to your word, honor those heart commitments. As we draw closer to your word, give us a tangible sense and outworking of the blessing of your Spirit on what we do. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.