

What I Believe

William E. Johnson

What I Believe

by William E. Johnson

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This series of sermons was preached first in 2002 at New Testament Baptist Church in the auditorium Sunday School class. It was later modified into its present format and preached to the Randolph Christian Church during Sunday morning services.

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Chapter 1. Introductory thoughts for "What I Believe"

May I ask you a question. Imagine that a total stranger approached you in the street, looks deep into your eyes, and asks "What do you believe?" Are you imagining it? How would you answer this person? Can you explain what you believe? People see you enter this church building every Lord's Day (or at least I hope they see you entering it every Lord's Day). Could you explain to them why you do it? A multitude of people drive past this historic old church building every day. No doubt some of them wonder just what this old building is here for; just what we believe in here. Could you explain it to them?

When I attended Bible college, I was taught a little creed, which I had to recite every-day of the world in chapel, and at many other times as well. That creed was:

"I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in Whom we have salvation from sin by faith through grace. I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning. I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming."¹

There are many simple outlines we could use to structure our next series of lessons, but I believe this simple statement of faith will be a good one for us to follow. So, our lessons for the next few weeks will basically be:

Topic 1

I believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

Topic 2

I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

Topic 3

I believe we have salvation in Him, by faith through grace.

Topic 4

I believe the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ.

Topic 5

I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world, through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning.

Topic 6

I believe Jesus is coming again.

Topic 7

I believe that I should seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming.

According to Leadship Journal², 90% of new members will stay in the church if:

1. They can articulate their faith (implies need for membership and evangelism classes).
2. They belong to subgroups (i.e. choir, Bible Studies, Sunday School classes, etc.).
3. They have 4-8 close friendships within the church.

Did you notice that first item? People stay in churches then they are taught the truth, and when they understand it to the point where they can articulate it to somebody

Chapter 1. Introductory thoughts for "What I Believe"

else. And so, for that reason, I want to spend the next few weeks discussing seven absolutes that we believe. It is my hope that, if you cannot currently answer the question, "What do you believe?" you will be able to do so after we've studied these seven truths.

Notes

1. (Written by Dr. Tom Malone, Midwestern Baptist College, Pontiac, Michigan)
2. Leadership, IV, 3, p.46

Chapter 2. I Believe in the Inspiration of the Bible

January 14, 2007 - RCC - FULL TEXT

Read - *Psalm 19*

Text - *Psalm 19:7-9* "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

Theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

Introduction:

Let us look at the first of our seven truths: "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." Everything about our Christian faith hinges on this key truth - The Bible is the Word of God, and is therefore all we need to order and guide our lives. It is sufficient. It is not deficient in any way. We need add nothing to it.

Now there are a variety of verses that we could use to discuss the inspiration of the Bible. Verses like:

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The inspiration of the Bible is a deep well of truth, and a subject that we could spend hours and hours upon without exhausting what the Bible says about it. For today, let's just accept those verses at face value and sum them up in this simple statement: God is the author of the Bible, and in it He gave us everything we need for this Christian life. Perhaps in the future we can delve more deeply into the subject, but for the purposes of today's sermon, that simple statement should suffice.

And so, we believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

This, by the way, was one of the founding principals of this church, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak. Where the Bible is silent, we are silent." We need discuss nothing else, because the Bible is completely sufficient for every need. "Bible words for Bible things and Bible things in Bible ways." The Bible is all we need.

Consider this story: "When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?" asked the good reverend. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank." said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - -Chapter 11.""

We may laugh at that, but it is, in a way, illustrative of a truth - EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE IS IN THIS BOOK!

Now, we could use any of the passages we've read this morning as launch pads for a discussion of the inspiration of scripture, but there is another passage in the Bible that I want you to see. Let's spend the rest of our time this morning in *Psalm 19*, consid-

ering what the Psalmist says about this subject. *Psalm 19* is about God's revelation to man. It describes His "general" revelation - *vss. 1-6*, as well as His "special" revelation - *vss. 7-14*.

In the first 6 verses, which are not the subject of our lesson today, we learn that God has revealed all that is needed about Himself in creation.

Psalms 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work."

The same truth can be found in the New Testament:

Romans 1:18-20 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

A while back, I was involved in a conversation at work. One of my colleagues mentioned she had read about a new planetary discovery - a new planet in a nearby solar system that scientists believe is "life capable." The question naturally arose as to whether there is life on other planets. This woman believed that it is ridiculous and arrogant to think that our planet is the only one with life, and that all that exists out there is just for us. And yet, I maintained as I always have, that the heavens DO have a purpose, but it is not to harbor other life forms as described in *Star Trek*. It is to DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD. When we look at the stars, God speaks to us.

This thought is the opposite of arrogance. It is extremely humbling to look at the heavens with *Psalm 19:1* in mind.

And so, the first few verses of *Psalm 19* remind us that God declares Himself through all of His creation. Remember that the next time you look up into the millions of stars that He created to point you to Him.

Today, though, we want to concentrate on what this Psalm teaches us about God's "special" revelation, the Word of God.

Notice, especially, *verses 7-9*, "*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*"

The structure of those verses is interesting.

There are 6 descriptions of the Word of God. It is called law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments.

There are 6 characteristics of the Word of God. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.

There are 6 results of the Word of God in our lives. It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and is righteous altogether.

Finally, there are 6 reminders that the Bible is OF THE LORD! It is called the law OF THE LORD, the testimony OF THE LORD, the statutes OF THE LORD, the commandment OF THE LORD, the fear OF THE LORD, and the judgments OF THE LORD.

Let's break down these 6 statements about God's Word, and notice how they illustrate our theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added. I would like to follow a similar approach with each of these six phrases. We will first examine the name, and then the characteristic, and finally the result. We will do this for all six statements about God's Word. Don't worry, though, if we run low on time we'll just stop and pick it up again next week.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."

Notice the name - "the LAW of the Lord"

This is the Hebrew word "TORAH" ¹, and it means "law, direction, instruction." This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the TEACHING or DIDACTIC nature of the Bible. It emphasizes the fact that God is teaching man through His Word.

Notice the characteristic - PERFECT

How is God's teaching? How is His instruction? How is His law? IT IS PERFECT; or to expand upon that word with its Hebrew definition: it is "complete, whole, entire, and sound."

Notice the result - it CONVERTS THE SOUL

IT IS THE WORD OF GOD THAT SAVES!

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

I read a fascinating story once about Menelik II. Have you heard of him? "He was one of the greatest rulers in African history and the creator of modern Ethiopia. Born in 1844, he was captured during an enemy raid and held prisoner for 10 years. Escaping, Menelik II declared himself head of the province of Shewa. He began conquering neighboring kingdoms and developed them into modern Ethiopia with himself as emperor. When Italy tried to take over Ethiopia Menekil's army met and crushed the Italians at the Battle of Aduwa. This victory, as well as his efforts to modernize Ethiopia (schools, telephones, railroads), make Menekil world-famous. The emperor had one little known eccentricity. Whenever he was feeling ill, he would eat a few pages of the Bible, insisting that this always restored his health. One day in December, 1913, recovering from a stroke and feeling extremely ill, he had the entire book of Kings torn from an Egyptian edition of the Bible, ate every page of it--and died." (Source Unknown)

In a warped way, he had the right idea. We cannot know salvation without the Word of God. It is the Word of God that saves, and apart from the Word of God there is no salvation. (Don't EAT it, though, READ IT!)

Matthew Henry said, "The Holy Scripture is of much greater benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe, or the light of the sun. To recover man out of his fallen state, there is need of the word of God."

And C. H. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers said, "It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation."

"The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

The name - TESTIMONY

This comes from a Hebrew word meaning "testimony, witness".

In contrast to the previous word, "law, which presented the Bible as divine instruction, this word, teaches us that the Bible is a DIVINE WITNESS. It emphasizes the fact that the Bible is God giving testimony to Who He is, and what He requires.

The characteristic - SURE

You can mark it down and take it to the bank - when God is on the witness stand, His testimony is absolutely SURE.

A few of the meanings of this Hebrew word include "believe, assurance, faithful, sure, established, trust, verified, steadfast, surely be, stand fast, trusty"

THERE IS NO Surer TESTIMONY THAN WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE. Now this is a critical truth to consider in this day and age where people are constantly casting doubt on the validity of the Bible. How many of you saw the DaVinci Code movie, or read the book? How many have seen the plethora of TV programs and magazine articles on "other gospels" that have surfaced in recent years. Our adversary, the devil, wants us to believe the Bible is not totally trustworthy. He wants you to doubt what you read therein. This was his first tactic with Eve and he's still using it today. "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1)

But regardless of those who would cast doubt, the "testimony of the Lord is sure.

Peter said it like this in 2 Peter 1:16-19 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day stars arise in your hearts."

In other words, the testimony that we have in scripture is as trustworthy as (actually more trustworthy than) the voice of God speaking directly from heaven!

ILLUS - To get an idea of the SURENESS of Scripture, picture God as a witness in a court of law. (We've all seen enough TV to draw an adequate mental picture from.) The prosecuting attorney asks question after question, but God's testimony is SURE - He does not falter, hesitate, or stumble over His words. The prosecutor attempts to trip Him up, make Him make a mistake, reverse His testimony, but He is SURE. After an eternity of attacks and cross-examination, God's testimony will be unchanged, undaunted, unscathed. IT IS SURE.

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted
'Mid the raging storms of time;
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands like a mountain towering
Far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can.

The result - MAKES WISE THE SIMPLE

When we have more questions than answers...

When we don't know what to do...

When our mind is bombarded by the contradictory claims of this world...

When we are told that our views are unsophisticated and uneducated and old fashioned and foolish...

When we vacillate between belief systems...

When we, like the father in *Mark 9*, cry out in despair, "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!"

THEN we find God's testimony is SURE!

You may depend on it... mark it down... take it to the bank... God's testimony is SURE!

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart"

The name - STATUTES

If we look up the definition of this Hebrew word, we find that it means "precept, commandment, statute". We find a word that includes the meaning of the other 2 words. It has the idea of TEACHING, as in the LAW, and it also has the idea of TESTIMONY. However, the idea here is more on GUIDELINES, than on either witness or law. The Word of God contains divine guidelines to help us order our lives.

The scripture is full of guidelines for living from God. They show the path in which we should walk.

We live in the day of the "HOW TO" book. I performed a search for the words "HOW TO" on Amazon.com, and found that there are over 32,000 books in their collection that have something to do with "HOW TO." Some examples:

How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie
How to Talk so Kids Will Listen, and Listen so Kids Will Talk,
by Adele Faber
How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of
Comfort Cooking, by Nigella Lawson
The Pocket Guide to Making Successful Small Talk -
How to Talk to Anyone Anytime Anywhere About Anything,
by Bernardo J. Carducci
How To Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food,
by Nigella Lawson

The point is, we live in a day when people are looking everywhere for guidelines, and here they are... "The statutes of the LORD are right!"

The characteristic - RIGHT

God's guidelines for living are ALWAYS RIGHT. His directions are ALWAYS CORRECT. His path is ALWAYS STRAIGHT.

The result - REJOICING THE HEART

God has given us guidelines for living. We may not always understand them... they certainly don't always agree with the world's way of doing things, but THEY ARE RIGHT and the ONLY SOURCE OF JOY for our lives. Why look anyplace else for help in how to live? You are never going to go wrong with the Bible. It will always lead you in right paths.

I read a quote once that said, "The man who walks with God always knows in what direction he is going."

Have you ever taken a wrong turn on a one-way street? Did it bring about joy in your life? I once was driving in Pontiac, Michigan with my wife who was great with child. As I was peacefully navigating the streets of Pontiac, my lovely wife, in a way that only wives can, reached over and touched me on the arm and said those words that strike insanity into the heart of any man who has ever heard them. She said, "Honey, I think it's time." I looked at her with complete calm, and in total control. I said, "OK, we'll go to the hospital, then," and turned onto Wide Track Drive, which is a bypass around Pontiac... about 4 lanes wide... one-way. I was going the wrong way.

There is no joy when we're going the wrong way on the wrong road. We need God's guidelines. Only in following God's guidelines is there joy.

Abraham Lincoln said, "No man ever got lost on a straight road."

God's guidelines give us a straight road. We need to follow them.

"The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

The name - COMMANDMENT

This comes from MITSVAH, a Hebrew word meaning "commandment, either of men, or of God." When used to describe the Word of God, this emphasizes the fact that God's Word contains the DECREES of God. Not suggestions, but COMMANDMENTS. It reminds us of the AUTHORITATIVE nature of scripture, its NON-OPTIONAL character.

Turn with me, please, to *Matthew 15:1-9* in your Bibles. When I read that passage, I cannot help but wonder whether we have a similar attitude today, discounting the COMMANDMENTS of God, in favor of the traditions of men? And I suggest to you, brothers and sisters, that we need to get back to an understanding that the Word of God contains the unalterable, authoritative, and non-optional decrees of God!

John MacArthur said, "The Bible is not full of a lot of suggestions. It is commandments, binding authoritative commandments. This is what God requires and for those who respond, there is blessing. For those who do not, there is judgment."

The characteristic - PURE

Several possible meanings come from the definition of this Hebrew word (BAR), including "pure, clear, sincere, clean". I suggest that the meaning here is God's commandments are CLEAR. They are not hard to understand. God has made it very plain what He expects. There is no mystery!

Let's look at *1 John 5:1-3*. John taught us that keeping His commandments is a sign of genuine salvation, but he also taught that God's commands are "not grievous." He has not made it hard to do what He commands.

In the days following September 11, the number 1 search request on internet search engines was Nostradamus. Why? Because some have said that he predicted the events of September 11. The writings of Nostradamus, however, are completely opposite of the commandments of God. Where God's commandments are CLEAR, Nostradamus' writings are ridiculously muddy and mysterious.

As an example, notice this quote from the book *Nostradamus, Prophecies You Cannot Ignore*, by Bernie Ward: "Nostradamus... tossed in a baffling mix of word games, puns, number codes, allusions and mysterious anagrams. Then, to muddle things even more, Nostradamus deliberately scrambled the order of the verses to further disguise the chronology." He TRIED to make it difficult to understand, and that is exactly the opposite of God, whose COMMANDMENTS ARE CLEAR - EASY TO UNDERSTAND. By the way, the comments from Nostradamus that are supposed

to prophecy September 11 are, for the most part, an internet hoax... a fabrication of words that he never actually wrote, but Nostradamus scholars seem to think that the following 2 verses prophesied the events of September 11:

"The year 1999 seven months
From the sky will come the great King of Terror.
To resuscitate the great king of the Mongols.
Before and after, Mars reigns by good luck."

"At forty-five degrees the sky will burn,
Fire to approach the great new city:
In an instant a great scattered flame will leap up,
When one will want to demand proof of the Normans."

Clear, huh?

The result - ENLIGHTENING THE EYES

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning - "to be or become light, shine, to become bright, to be illuminated, to light up"

We do not stumble in the dark. Our Bible, and the Commandments of the Lord it contains, LIGHTEN OUR PATH, ILLUMINATE OUR WAY, ENLIGHTEN OUR EYES!

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever"

The name - FEAR

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the fact that the Scriptures are intended to draw us into a REVERENCE of God, or a FEAR of God.

It reminds us that God is worthy of our worship.

The characteristic - CLEAN

There is not a spec of evil or impurity in the Word of God.

The result - ENDURES FOREVER

"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

The name - JUDGEMENTS

The Hebrew word MISHPAT is used here. It refers to judgment, justice, the act of deciding a case, a place or seat of judgment. Earlier, we learned that the Bible is God on the witness stand ("the testimony of the Lord"), and now we see Him behind the bench. The Bible is God's VERDICT. It is His already rendered JUDGEMENT.

The characteristic - TRUE

Contrast this with earthly judges, who are so often changing, corruptible, and unfaithful.

In America, we have an entire judicial system that has been designed to deal with the variableness of opinion between judges and courts, and with the fallibility of earthly judges. Hence the appeals courts, and the appeal process. THERE IS NO APPEAL WITH GOD, FOR HIS JUDGEMENT IS ALREADY PASSED! READ THE WORD TO SEE WHAT THAT JUDGEMENT IS!

The result - RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER

Last week we were reminded of *Romans 3:10*, "There is none righteous, no not one." None of us are righteous, and therefore none of us is really capable of righteous judgement. Edgar Howe said "The average man's judgement is so poor, he runs a risk everytime he uses it."

In contrast to the judges of this world, who can be bought and sold and make a mockery of the word JUSTICE, God's judgements are RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER: That means that every judgement is righteous - each individual one. And all judgements are righteous - the sum total is completely righteous.

Conclusion:

The psalm goes on to describe the incredible value of the Bible. It points out there is nothing of greater value than the Bible. Nothing brings greater wealth (*vs. 10a*). Nothing brings greater pleasure (*vs. 10b*). Nothing brings greater profit to those who invest in it (*vs. 11*) - profit both in eternity, and in this life on earth.

And the psalmist also points out that the Bible changes us. It illuminates our sin and need before God (*vss. 12-13*), and concludes with a prayer that springs from just such an illumined heart (*vs. 14*).

We have spent considerable time on this subject, but I hope you agree it is important. We as believers need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to delight in them day and night. We need to meditate in them day and night. This past Thursday evening I was privileged to spend a few minutes with our brother Bill Brannon. He spoke of many things, but he grew emotional when he talked about how much he loves to read his Bible, and how sad he is that he cannot do so now due to his poor eyesight. He told me how his mother had read through the Bible 100 times by the time she died at 93. That humbled me. He told me also of how he, when he was able to see to read, would read a passage of scripture before going to bed at night, and then lie there thinking about that passage as he drifted off to sleep.

That's what we need, brothers and sisters. We need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to base our lives upon them, and turn to them for the answers to all of life's questions. We need to base every single thing we do in this church on the Bible, and on nothing else.

Legendary coach Vince Lombardi began the first practice of each season by holding up a football and saying, 'This is a football.' He would then gaze around the room while still holding the football aloft and ask, 'Have we lost anybody?'

Just as there is no game of football without the football, so there is no Christianity without the Bible. It is just as central to our faith and belief system.

God help us to see the sufficiency of the Bible. God help us to pattern our lives after it. God help us to come to the place where our words and our thought patterns are completely and always shape by this book.

Notes

1. Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon

Chapter 2. I Believe in the Inspiration of the Bible

Chapter 3. I Believe in the Inspiration of the Bible

Read - *Psalm 19*

Text - *Psalm 19:7-9 "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."*

Theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

Introduction:

Here is the first of our seven truths: "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible."

There are other verses that teach the inspiration of the Bible:

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We could spend hours on this subject.

Let's just sum the subject up in this simple statement: God is the author of the Bible, and in it He gave us everything we need for this Christian life.

And so, we believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

BTW - founding principal of this church include, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak. Where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

ILLUS - "When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?" asked the good reverend. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank," said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - -Chapter 11.""

Silly, but illustrative of a truth - EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE IS IN THIS BOOK!

Let's spend the rest of our time this morning in *Psalm 19*. *Psalm 19* is about God's revelation to man. It describes His "general" revelation - *vss. 1-6*, as well as His "special" revelation - *vss. 7-14*.

Psalms 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work."

Romans 1:18-20 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

ILLUS - A while back, I was involved in a conversation at work. One of my colleagues mentioned she had read about a new planetary discovery - a new planet in a nearby

solar system that scientists believe is "life capable." The question naturally arose as to whether there is life on other planets. This woman believed that it is ridiculous and arrogant to think that our planet is the only one with life, and that all that exists out there is just for us. And yet, I maintained as I always have, that the heavens DO have a purpose, but it is not to harbor other life forms as described in Star Trek. It is to DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD. When we look at the stars, God speaks to us.

Today, though, we want to concentrate on what this Psalm teaches us about God's "special" revelation, the Word of God.

READ - verses 7-9

The structure of those verses is interesting.

6 descriptions of the Word of God. It is called law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments.

6 characteristics of the Word of God. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.

6 results of the Word of God in our lives. It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and is righteous altogether.

6 reminders that the Bible is OF THE LORD! It is called the law OF THE LORD, the testimony OF THE LORD, the statutes OF THE LORD, the commandment OF THE LORD, the fear OF THE LORD, and the judgments OF THE LORD.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."

Notice the name - "the LAW of the Lord"

This is the Hebrew word "TORAH" ¹, and it means "law, direction, instruction." This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the TEACHING or DIDACTIC nature of the Bible. It emphasizes the fact that God is teaching man through His Word.

Notice the characteristic - PERFECT

How is God's teaching? How is His instruction? How is His law? IT IS PERFECT; or to expand upon that word with its Hebrew definition: it is "complete, whole, entire, and sound."

Notice the result - it CONVERTS THE SOUL

IT IS THE WORD OF GOD THAT SAVES!

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

ILLUS - (Menelik II) - "He was one of the greatest rulers in African history and the creator of modern Ethiopia. Born in 1844, he was captured during an enemy raid and held prisoner for 10 years. Escaping, Menelik II declared himself head of the province of Shewa. He began conquering neighboring kingdoms and developed them into modern Ethiopia with himself as emperor. When Italy tried to take over Ethiopia Menekil's army met and crushed the Italians at the Battle of Aduwa. This victory, as well as his efforts to modernize Ethiopia (schools, telephones, railroads), make Menekil world-famous. The emperor had one little known eccentricity. Whenever he was feeling ill, he would eat a few pages of the Bible, insisting that this always restored his health. One day in December, 1913, recovering from a stroke and feeling

extremely ill, he had the entire book of Kings torn from an Egyptian edition of the Bible, ate every page of it--and died." (Source Unknown)

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) - "The Holy Scripture is of much greater benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe, or the light of the sun. To recover man out of his fallen state, there is need of the word of God."

QUOTE (C. H. Spurgeon) - "It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation."

"The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

The name - TESTIMONY

This comes from a Hebrew word meaning "testimony, witness".

In contrast to the previous word, "law, which presented the Bible as divine instruction, this word, teaches us that the Bible is a DIVINE WITNESS. It emphasizes the fact that the Bible is God giving testimony to Who He is, and what He requires.

The characteristic - SURE

A few of the meanings of this Hebrew word include "believe, assurance, faithful, sure, established, trust, verified, steadfast, surely be, stand fast, trusty"

THERE IS NO SURE TESTIMONY THAN WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE.

A critical truth to consider in this day and age where people are constantly casting doubt on the validity of the Bible.

ILLUS - DaVinci Code movie, book?

ILLUS - "other gospels"

Satan wants us to believe the Bible is not totally trustworthy.

ILLUS - This was his first tactic with Eve and he's still using it today. "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1)

2 Peter 1:16-19 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

ILLUS - To get an idea of the SURENESS of Scripture, picture God as a witness in a court of law. (We've all seen enough TV to draw an adequate mental picture from.) The prosecuting attorney asks question after question, but God's testimony is SURE - He does not falter, hesitate, or stumble over His words. The prosecutor attempts to trip Him up, make Him make a mistake, reverse His testimony, but He is SURE. After an eternity of attacks and cross-examination, God's testimony will be unchanged, undaunted, unscathed. IT IS SURE.

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted
'Mid the raging storms of time;
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands like a mountain towering
Far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can.

The result - MAKES WISE THE SIMPLE

When we have more questions than answers...

When we don't know what to do...

When our mind is bombarded by the contradictory claims of this world...

When we are told that our views are unsophisticated and uneducated and old fashioned and foolish...

When we vacillate between belief systems...

When we, like the father in *Mark 9*, cry out in despair, "*Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!*"

THEN we find God's testimony is SURE!

You may depend on it... mark it down... take it to the bank... God's testimony is SURE!

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart"

The name - STATUTES

DEFINITION = "precept, commandment, statute". It includes the meaning of the other 2 words. It has the idea of TEACHING, as in the LAW, and it also has the idea of TESTIMONY. However, the idea here is more on GUIDELINES, than on either witness or law. The Word of God contains divine guidelines to help us order our lives.

Scripture = GUIDELINES. How to live. The path to walk.

ILLUS - We live in the day of the "HOW TO" book. I performed a search for the words "HOW TO" on Amazon.com, and found that there are over 32,000 books in their collection that have something to do with "HOW TO." Some examples:

How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie
How to Talk so Kids Will Listen, and Listen so Kids Will Talk,
by Adele Faber
How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of
Comfort Cooking, by Nigella Lawson
The Pocket Guide to Making Successful Small Talk -
How to Talk to Anyone Anytime Anywhere About Anything,
by Bernardo J. Carducci
How To Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food,
by Nigella Lawson

The point is, we live in a day when people are looking everywhere for guidelines, and here they are... "The statutes of the LORD are right!"

The characteristic - RIGHT

God's guidelines for living are ALWAYS RIGHT. His directions are ALWAYS CORRECT. His path is ALWAYS STRAIGHT.

The result - REJOICING THE HEART

God has given us guidelines for living. We may not always understand them... they certainly don't always agree with the world's way of doing things, but THEY ARE RIGHT and the ONLY SOURCE OF JOY for our lives. Why look anyplace else for help in how to live? You are never going to go wrong with the Bible. It will always lead you in right paths.

QUOTE - "The man who walks with God always knows in what direction he is going."

ILLUS - Turn onto Widetrack Drive in Pontiac - wrong way on a one way street!

There is no joy when we're going the wrong way on the wrong road. We need God's guidelines. Only in following God's guidelines is there joy.

QUOTE (Abraham Lincoln) - "No man ever got lost on a straight road."

God's guidelines give us a straight road. We need to follow them.

"The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

The name - COMMANDMENT

DEFINITION - Hebrew word MITSVAH, meaning "commandment, either of men, or of God." When used to describe the Word of God, this emphasizes the fact that God's Word contains the DECREES of God. Not suggestions, but COMMANDMENTS. It reminds us of the AUTHORITATIVE nature of scripture, its NON-OPTIONAL character.

READ - *Matthew 15:1-9*. Do we, today, discount the COMMANDMENTS of God, in favor of the traditions of men?

The Word of God contains the unalterable, authoritative, and non-optional decrees of God!

QUOTE (John MacArthur) - "The Bible is not full of a lot of suggestions. It is commandments, binding authoritative commandments. This is what God requires and for those who respond, there is blessing. For those who do not, there is judgment."

The characteristic - PURE

DEFINITION - Hebrew word (BAR) - "pure, clear, sincere, clean". Meaning here is God's commandments are CLEAR. They are not hard to understand.

READ - 1 *John 5:1-3*. NOT GRIEVOUS.

ILLUS - In the days following September 11, the number 1 search request on internet search engines was Nostradamus. Why? Because some have said that he predicted the events of September 11. The writings of Nostradamus, however, are completely opposite of the commandments of God. Where God's commandments are CLEAR, Nostradamus' writings are ridiculously muddy and mysterious.

... notice this quote from the book Nostradamus, Prophecies You Cannot Ignore, by Bernie Ward: "Nostradamus... tossed in a baffling mix of word games, puns, number codes, allusions and mysterious anagrams. Then, to muddle things even more,

Nostradamus deliberately scrambled the order of the verses to further disguise the chronology." He TRIED to make it difficult to understand, and that is exactly the opposite of God, whose COMMANDMENTS ARE CLEAR - EASY TO UNDERSTAND. By the way, the comments from Nostradamus that are supposed to prophecy September 11 are, for the most part, an internet hoax... a fabrication of words that he never actually wrote, but Nostradamus scholars seem to think that the following 2 verses prophesied the events of September 11:

"The year 1999 seven months
From the sky will come the great King of Terror.
To resuscitate the great king of the Mongols.
Before and after, Mars reigns by good luck."

"At forty-five degrees the sky will burn,
Fire to approach the great new city:
In an instant a great scattered flame will leap up,
When one will want to demand proof of the Normans."

Clear, huh?

The result - ENLIGHTENING THE EYES

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning - "to be or become light, shine, to become bright, to be illuminated, to light up"

We do not stumble in the dark. Our Bible, and the Commandments of the Lord it contains, LIGHTEN OUR PATH, ILLUMINATE OUR WAY, ENLIGHTEN OUR EYES!

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever"

The name - FEAR

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the fact that the Scriptures are intended to draw us into a REVERENCE of God, or a FEAR of God.

It reminds us that God is worthy of our worship.

The characteristic - CLEAN

There is not a spec of evil or impurity in the Word of God.

The result - ENDURES FOREVER

"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

The name - JUDGEMENTS

The Hebrew word MISHPAT refers to judgment, justice, the act of deciding a case, a place or seat of judgment.

Earlier, we learned that the Bible is God on the witness stand ("the testimony of the Lord"), and now we see Him behind the bench. The Bible is God's VERDICT. It is His already rendered JUDGEMENT.

The characteristic - TRUE

Contrast this with earthly judges, who are so often changing, corruptible, and unfaithful.

In America, we have an entire judicial system that has been designed to deal with the variableness of opinion between judges and courts, and with the fallibility of earthly judges. Hence the appeals courts, and the appeal process. THERE IS NO APPEAL WITH GOD, FOR HIS JUDGEMENT IS ALREADY PASSED! READ THE WORD TO SEE WHAT THAT JUDGEMENT IS!

The result - RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER

Last week we were reminded of *Romans 3:10*, "There is none righteous, no not one." None of us are righteous, and therefore none of us is really capable of righteous judgement.

QUOTE (Edgar Howe) - "The average man's judgement is so poor, he runs a risk everytime he uses it."

In contrast to the judges of this world, who can be bought and sold and make a mockery of the word JUSTICE, God's judgements are RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER: That means that every judgement is righteous - each individual one. And all judgements are righteous - the sum total is completely righteous.

Conclusion:

Psalms describes the incredible value of the Bible.

1. Nothing brings greater wealth (*vs. 10a*).
2. Nothing brings greater pleasure (*vs. 10b*).
3. Nothing brings greater profit to those who invest in it (*vs. 11*) - profit both in eternity, and in this life on earth.

And psalmist points out that the Bible changes us.

1. It illuminates our sin and need before God (*vss. 12-13*)
2. Concludes with a prayer that springs from just such an illumined heart (*vs. 14*).

We have spent considerable time on this subject, but I hope you agree it is important. We as believers need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to delight in them day and night. We need to meditate in them day and night. This past Thursday evening I was privileged to spend a few minutes with our brother Bill Brannon. He spoke of many things, but he grew emotional when he talked about how much he loves to read his Bible, and how sad he is that he cannot do so now due to his poor eyesight. He told me how his mother had read through the Bible 100 times by the time she died at 93. That humbled me. He told me also of how he, when he was able to see to read, would read a passage of scripture before going to bed at night, and then lie there thinking about that passage as he drifted off to sleep.

That's what we need, brothers and sisters. We need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to base our lives upon them, and turn to them for the answers to all of life's

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questions. We need to base every single thing we do in this church on the Bible, and on nothing else.

ILLUS - Legendary coach Vince Lombardi began the first practice of each season by holding up a football and saying, 'This is a football.' He would then gaze around the room while still holding the football aloft and ask, 'Have we lost anybody?'

Just as there is no game of football without the football, so there is no Christianity without the Bible. It is just as central to our faith and belief system.

God help us to see the sufficiency of the Bible. God help us to pattern our lives after it. God help us to come to the place where our words and our thought patterns are completely and always shape by this book.

Notes

1. Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon

Chapter 4. Son of God and God the Son

READ - *Matthew 27:50-54; John 20:26-28; Matthew 16:13-16*

TEXT - *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:54b)*

THEME - Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son.

Introduction:

Christians around the world responded in dismay recently when Dan Brown's novel "The DaVinci" code hit the bookshelves and the movie screen. The fuss surrounded the claims Brown made about Christ's divinity, or lack thereof. Brown's basic premise was that Jesus was never believed to be God by his followers; that was added later by the church hierarchy. One of Brown's characters says, for example, "Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet - a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal."

Did the followers of Jesus believe He was just a man, or did they understand Him to be the Son of God and God the Son?

Let's consider three sample scenes from our Bibles. Read along in your copy of scripture.

Note: READ 3 text passages, and paint the scene for each. Be dramatic - imagine what these people must have thought, felt and experienced! Each of them believed and publicly confessed that Jesus was and is the Son of God.

These are only 3 examples. There are others. The Bible presents clear evidence that Jesus was and is the Son of God. Let's examine some of that evidence this morning.

Evidence

He possesses the attributes of God.

As we read our Bibles, we come to see that there are certain things that are true about God... certain attributes which apply to His character. These are things that are unique to Him as God. The Bible is filled with illustrations of Jesus demonstrating those same attributes. If He has the attributes of God, He is God.

1. He is ETERNAL

- He was before John - *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. (John 1:15)*
- He was before Abraham - *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)*
- He was before the world came into being - *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (John 17:5)*
- He is the firstborn of all creation - *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (Colossians 1:15)*
- He was in existence "in the beginning" (John 1:1)

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- He has existed "from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2)
- He continues forever (Isaiah 9:6f; Hebrews 1:11f; 13:8)

2. He is OMNIPRESENT

- He was in heaven while on earth - READ *John 3:13*
- He is on earth while in heaven - READ *Matthew 18:20; 28:20*
- He is everywhere you are at the same time He is everywhere I am, and everybody else!

ILLUS - Nathaniel - *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. (John 1:48)*

Where Nathaniel was, Jesus was, even when He was somewhere else! And where you are, Jesus is. He is everywhere present at the same time. Only God can do that.

3. He is OMNISCIENT

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17)

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:3)

He knows EVERYTHING!

ILLUS - He knew all about the woman at the well - READ *John 4:16-19*

ILLUS - He knew (knows) the thoughts of men: *But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. (Luke 6:8) But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. (Luke 11:17)*

4. He is OMNIPOTENT

There is one word found throughout the Bible which over and over demonstrates the fact that Christ is ALL-POWERFUL. That word is MIRACLE.

- He demonstrated power over demons - *Mark 5:11-15*
- ... over disease - *Luke 4:38-41*
- ... over death - *John 11:38-44*
- ... over the elements of nature - *John 2:3-11*
- ... over ALL THINGS - *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18)*

5. He is IMMUTABLE.

And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 1:12)

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

He holds the offices of deity.

He does the things that God does, or that God is expected to do.

1. He creates - Jesus is the creator.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Colossians 1:16)

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: (Hebrews 1:10)

2. He upholds - Jesus holds everything together.

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:17)

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3)

He exercised the privileges of deity.

1. He claimed to be able to forgive sins.

Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:47f

2. He claimed that He will one day raise the dead in the resurrection.

John 5:25-29

3. He claimed that one day He will judge all things.

John 5:22

He is referred to by names that equate to deity.

1. Alpha and Omega - *Revelation 22:13*

2. Resurrection and the Life - *John 11:25*

3. I AM - *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)*

4. Emmanuel - "God with us!" - *Matthew 1:22f; Isaiah 7:14*

He CLAIMED to be deity!

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:36)

Clearly we are justified in saying, "I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son!"

Application

So why does this matter to me here in Randolph, Ohio? How does this help me with my very real problems in life?

May I suggest a few ways in which you might want to apply this to your life.

1. Since Jesus is the Son of God, we should treat Him as such.

- If you are saved, worship Him.

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. (Matthew 14:33)

- If you have not yet decided to trust Christ, listen and obey Him before it's too late!

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

What are you waiting for? There is no further evidence that is forthcoming.

I warn you my friend, that if you do not believe on Christ in this life, you will none-the-less acknowledge Him. *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (Romans 14:11)*

2. Since Jesus is the Son of God, what do you have to worry about?

- He is bigger than your problems.
- He is bigger than your struggle with sin.
- He is bigger than your endless failures.
- He is bigger than everything! He is God!

... greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: (Jeremiah 32:17)

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? (Jeremiah 32:27)

SONG -

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

Conclusion:

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:54b)

I assure you, my friend, that the centurion and those who stood gazing in amazement at the cross, had it right. Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God, and God the Son.

The question for you is, what difference does that make in your life?

Invitation

Note: With heads bowed and eyes closed, will you consider that last question once again
- What difference does it make in your life that Jesus is the Son of God?

- Will you believe in Him... believe His claims... trust Him to save your soul so that you may be with Him forever in heaven? Or will you walk out of here today still uncertain, and still in danger of dying and going to hell?

*1Jo 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.
(1 John 5:12)*

This is IMPORTANT. Do not delay.

- Will you worship Him, and live for Him? Will you let Him be Lord of your life? Perhaps you have trusted Christ and are certain of heaven. But did it stop there with you? Are you living every moment for His glory... the Son of God's glory?

This is IMPORTANT. The world needs Christians who look and act and live in such a way that they see Jesus in them. Will you be one? Randolph needs such Christians. Will you be one?

- Will you rest in Him? When troubles and difficulties come your way, when struggles and trials of life overwhelm you, will you remember that He is the Son of God, and bigger than your problems? Will you give them to Him?

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Chapter 5. Seen, Heard and Handled!

READ - 1 John 1:1-4

TEXT - *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1)*

THEME - Jesus is the Son of God, and He is also the Son of man. His humanity is as important as His deity.

Introduction:

John said he had HEARD Him, SEEN Him, and even TOUCHED Him. His description in *vs. 1* is of a MAN, with all the physical characteristics that are common to any other man.

Last week we discussed the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and God the Son. We examined some evidence from scripture that teaches this truth:

1. We learned that Jesus is what God is.

In other words, He possesses the same attributes as God. He is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and immutable. And He is everything that God is.

2. We learned Jesus does what God does - He created all that is, and sustains all that is.

3. We learned that He is called by names that imply deity, and we learned that He even CLAIMED on many occasions to be God.

It is important to us as Christians to understand why we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. But there is another side to this issue which is equally as important. Not only is Jesus God, and the Son of God... He is just as much man, and the son of man.

That is what we see in our text, and it is this aspect of the Savior that we will examine today.

Allow me to suggest 2 statements that will help us as we consider this truth:

1. Jesus Christ was, and is, 100% God and 100% man.

2. Jesus Christ was, and is, just as much God as if He had never been man, and He was, and is, just as much man as if He had never been God.

Heresy has crept into the church down through history. And much of the false teaching and error has dealt with these truths. In the early church, there was the constant fight against those who denied the humanity of Christ. (cf. *1 John 4:2*) In our modern church, we more often find those who reject His deity. Many today accept Him as a good man, but reject Him as God. In the early church, interestingly, it was often just the opposite.

Denying either is a problem.

And so, let's follow the same format we did last week as we examine this topic. Let's notice some evidence from scripture that Jesus was indeed, just as much a man as you and I. And then let's make some application of that to our lives.

Evidence that Jesus was a man.

He was born, just like any other man.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (Galatians 4:4)

This teaches BOTH His deity and His humanity! His Father was God, and His mother was Mary - and she was just a normal woman - no such thing as the immaculate conception - that is heresy.

He LOOKED LIKE any other man.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8)

He had all the outward indications He was a man - "fashion" = "appearance".

This verse also points out that He demonstrated His humanity with that which is most human about us - He died!

He is the REPRESENTATIVE man.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (1 Timothy 2:5)

Two key points here:

1. He is called a man here - can't be much clearer than that!
2. He is said to be the go-between between us and God - our representative - our advocate.

cf. 1 John 2:1

ILLUS - He is your ATTORNEY - one like you who represents you before the judge. He stands between you, the accused, and God, the judge, and pleads your case.

He was made of flesh!

He had a BODY - Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:39)

He was made of FLESH - And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

He could be HANDLED - cf. our text - 1 John 1:1

He grew up, just like any other, from childhood to manhood - *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:52)*

Note: By the way, notice how that verse teaches that Jesus grew in 4 ways - mentally, physically, spiritually, socially. Someday I want to preach on that verse, for it explains why so many people struggle today. We need that 4-fold balance in our lives. When we are not growing in one of those areas, we are out of balance. (Stay tuned for that one!)

This is a GREAT MYSTERY

Are you confused by this? Join the club - so am I! So was Paul!

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

This is why I said it would take a lifetime to understand. And this is why I want you to just accept the statements I made earlier about the humanity and deity of Christ:

1. Jesus Christ was 100% God and 100% man.
2. Jesus Christ was just as much God as if He had never been man, and He was just as much man as if He had never been God.

Application

So why does this matter to me here in Randolph, Ohio? How does this help me with my very real problems in life?

Well, let's go back to our text. John gives 2 great applications in *vss.* 3-4. As a result of this One whom John had seen, heard, and touched, we can have fellowship with God! And we can have joy such as is available nowhere else.

I can't think of any other truth of scripture that applies MORE to you and I than this one. For this is what makes Christ truly precious to us. He was and is, as His name Emmanuel reminds us, "God with us." He is God, but He is also one of us. Think about what that means:

It means we can know what God is like.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)

ILLUS - This is the opposite of the "representative man" concept we mentioned earlier. There He stands between you and God and pleads your case to the Judge. Here, He stands between you and God and introduces you to Him... shows you Who He is, and just how much He loves you!

It means we can be forgiven. Our sins are paid for.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Romans 8:3)

JOKE - A Sunday School teacher had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?" There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. "Sin," he said. (Bits and Pieces, May, 1991)

We may giggle, but the sad fact is none of us has any problem with that, do we?

We ALL need forgiveness.

And it is THERE for you because of what Jesus did in the flesh!

ILLUS - The parable of the prodigal son (cf. *Luke 15:11f*) is a great picture of the forgiveness you have available in Christ. The prodigal sinned in every conceivable way. He is a picture of misery and ruin. Yet the father RAN to forgive him when he but turned to Him and asked.

The same is available to you, if you will just ask.

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalm 86:5)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

It means our great enemy is defeated! Glory!

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (Hebrews 2:14)

This is similar to the previous point. But it stresses the fact that we fight against a real PERSON, Satan. And that PERSON has been defeated by and will be destroyed by Jesus Christ!

ILLUS - Jesus was tempted by a PERSON in Matthew 4:1 *"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."*

You, too, may experience the oppression of Satan at times in your life. *(Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: (1 Peter 5:8))* But no matter how strong he may seem, he is a defeated and ruined foe.

This is my Father's world,
O let me n'er forget
That though the wrong
Seems oft so strong
GOD IS THE RULER YET!

It means we have an example of how to live.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (1 Peter 2:21)

In a world filled and overflowing with information, how do we know what to do? Conflicting voices shout from all sides about how we should live, and these often conflict with what we read in our Bibles. Is there an example we can follow? YES - Christ is our example.

There are very few issues in life that you cannot ask "What would Christ do in this instance?" and find an example from His life. Live like He did, do what He would do, and you will never go wrong!

By the way, you don't get to make that up. Some, today, would claim to be living like Jesus, but they are ignoring what the Bible teaches about Him. He was love, but He also never excused sin. He demanded repentance and change in our lives. Although He loved and forgave, it was always in the context of "Go and sin no more." So let's be honest when we claim to follow His example.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6)

It means He knows what we are going through.

- He experienced SORROW - Matthew 26:37
- He experienced ADOLESCENCE - Luke 2:40
- He experienced HUNGER - Luke 4:2
- He experienced WEARINESS - Luke 8:23

- He experienced POVERTY - *Luke 9:58*
- He experienced TEMPTATION - *Matthew 4; Hebrews 4:15*
- He got ANGRY (righteously so), and SAD, and FRUSTRATED

ILLUS - Gold City quartet song - "The Search is Over" has a verse: "He knows what you're goin' through. He's walked in your shoes. And He's felt the pain, 'til His tears fell like rain and His heart broke in two. He knows how it feels alone, when all of His friends were gone. And He walked up that hill, doing His Father's will, to die for you.

Conclusion:

It is a wonderful truth that Jesus is not only the Son of God, He is also the son of man - one of us.

He is, as John described *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1)*

Note: It is important to remember, though, that there was one main difference between the man Jesus, and any other man - He never sinned. That is why He could pay the price for your sin and mine, because He didn't have to pay the price for His own!

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

And the result of it all?

1. You can have fellowship with Him (*vs. 3*).
2. You can have joy that comes no other way (*vs. 4*).

And you can have this because of the man, Christ Jesus.

Invitation

Heads bowed:

How many will testify this morning with a raised hand that you are right with God - you are a member of the family, you have the fellowship that the Son gives, and you know the joy of being saved - you KNOW YOU ARE GOING TO HEAVEN because you are trusting in this man Jesus Christ and His work on the cross? How many will testify right now, "I KNOW I AM SAVED?"

If not, will you fix that today? He died for you. He will save you, if you will simply believe in Him.

Christian - do you need to respond? The Holy Spirit speaks and applies His word in ways none of us understand. Has He spoken to you this morning, and is He pointing out areas of your life that you need to address? Don't ignore Him. Respond today.

Membership and Baptism

Chapter 5. Seen, Heard and Handled!

Chapter 6. Grace, Grace, and Nothin' But Grace!

READ - *Ephesians 2:1-10*

TEXT - *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

THEME - Salvation is only by grace through faith. There is nothing we do to earn or obtain it.

Introduction:

We continue this morning in our series entitled "What I Believe." Our statement of faith, upon which we are basing these lessons is:

"I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in Whom we have salvation from sin by grace through faith. I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning. I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming."

Having now spent time on the inspiration of the Bible and the Deity of Jesus Christ God's Son (as well as His humanity), we come now to the following statement:

"I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in Whom we have salvation from sin by grace through faith."

Let's discuss this fundamental aspect of what we believe. It is vital for a believer to be able to state the mechanics of salvation. How else can we know we are saved? How else can we articulate to an unbeliever why they need to be saved? How else can we have any assurance whatsoever of our eternal destination? We need to be able to say with assurance, "I know I'm saved, and this is why."

And so, let's examine our text (although we'll do it in a slightly different order than it appears on our text):

"Are ye saved"

ILLUS - Discussion with Terry, when Terry noted, "Jesus was always confrontational. When people met Him, they came away in one of two camps - those who believed and loved Him, and those who didn't believe and hated Him." Terry makes a good point - there are only two kinds of people in this world:

1. The saved
2. The lost

There are not many WAYS to get to heaven - ONLY ONE - *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)*

There are not many PATHS - ONLY ONE - *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (Matthew 7:13)*

There are not many SAVIORS - ONLY ONE - *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12)

And so, the first thing we are reminded from the phrase "ARE YE SAVED" is that there is a need for salvation. (We'll discuss this more in a minute.)

First, some other things we learn from this phrase:

1. God has provided the means of salvation.
2. Salvation is a "present possession" of the believer.

Note that it doesn't say "will be saved" but "are ye saved." Present possession!
"Saved" is, in Greek, the "perfect passive participle". This is important because it points to a completed action with a continuing result. So, there is a component of our salvation which is "point in time." There was a "point in time" when you became SAVED.

Do you remember a point in time? What is the "point in time" when you were saved?

3. Once obtained, that salvation is a continuing possession of the believer.

Remember we said the perfect passive participle describes a completed action WITH A CONTINUING RESULT? So salvation is something that starts at a point in time, and CONTINUES! GLORY!

QUOTE - (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary) "Translate as in *Ephesians* 2:5, 'Ye are in a saved state.'"

This is a GLORIOUS TRUTH! Think what it means to you! It means that once obtained, salvation cannot be lost. That once in a saved state, you cannot be in an unsaved state.

And so, in the phrase "are ye saved" we see two great truths - we can be saved, and once saved we are saved forever!

BTW - there are many other verses that support this:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)

"By grace"

Definition - Usually we hear "grace" defined as the unmerited favor of God.

Consider the religions of the world. What do they consider necessary in order for one to have a relationship with God (if they even make allowances for such a thing)? We could spend time talking about various religions, but we would find that they all fall into two categories:

1. Those that teach salvation by works (all except true Christianity).
2. Christianity, which teaches salvation by grace.

The WORKS take many forms in differing religions:

- Some religions use the "scale of righteousness" - if at the end of your life, your good works outweigh your bad, you are in.
- Some add certain requirements in addition faith. (e.g. the requirement for baptism - foreign to scripture)
- Some teach that if you DO a particular thing you are GUARANTEED paradise - e.g. Islam and martyrdom.

But our text is clear - salvation is by grace alone. Other verses support this as well:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

We mentioned in our 1st point that there is a NEED for salvation. Let's make that more personal now:

YOU NEED SALVATION BECAUSE YOU ARE A SINNER.

Do you deny that?

ILLUS - Try keeping the 10 commandments. Let's start with number 1 - (Called the greatest commandment by the Lord) - *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart..."* We can't even keep the first one!

The Bible makes it clear that you are a sinner, and therefore unable to please God.

1. You are a sinner by nature.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12)

ILLUS - Scorpion and the frog.

2. You are a sinner by practice.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

3. As a sinner, you cannot reach the mark of God's righteousness, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY!

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

ILLUS - "A man was traveling on his donkey when he came upon a small fuzzy object lying in the road. He dismounted to look more closely and found a sparrow lying on its back with its scrawny legs thrust upward. At first he thought the bird was dead, but closer investigation proved it to be very much alive. The man asked the sparrow if he was all right. The sparrow replied, 'Yes.' The man said, 'What are you doing lying on your back with your legs pointed towards the sky?' The sparrow responded that he had heard a rumor that the sky was falling, and so he was holding his legs up in support. The man replied, 'You surely don't think that you're going to hold it up with those two scrawny legs, do you?' The sparrow, with a very solemn look, retorted, 'One does the best he can.'"

We are much like that sparrow. No matter how hard we try - even if it is our best effort - it is not good enough. The best effort we can put forth is inadequate to provide what we really need. When the sky is falling, our reaction might be to lift our hands to stop it, but it will do us no good.

It is ALL OF GRACE. There is nothing you can do to earn it.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (Romans 3:24)

"Through faith"

QUOTE - (Robertson's NT Word Pictures) "Grace" is God's part, "faith" is ours.

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (Acts 16:31)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

QUESTION - When the Bible refers to FAITH and BELIEF, is it referring to simple mental assent? For example, is belief in Jesus Christ (the kind that leads to salvation) the same as belief in George Washington or Abraham Lincoln?

ANSWER - No. Otherwise Satan and his demons would all be saved! (cf. *James 2:19 "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble"*)

Saving faith, or saving belief affects the WILL as well as the MIND. It is a matter of the HEART as well as the HEAD.

ILLUS - There is a beautiful illustration of the faith that saves in the story of Peter walking on the sea. (READ Matthew 14:22-31) Simple mental assent (such as the devil has, and such as the lost could have) would have stopped short of reaching to Christ and asking for the salvation that Peter knew to be in Him.

Conclusion:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Let's sum this wonderful verse up: You need to be saved and you can be saved by trusting in Jesus. There is no other way.

- There are not may WAYS to get to heaven - ONLY ONE
- There are not may PATHS - ONLY ONE
- There are not many SAVIORS - ONLY ONE

And so I encourage you to examine yourself, whether ye be in the faith. Are you trusting in Jesus alone? Or are you trusting in your own good works?

ARE YOU IN A SAVED STATE?

You can be today. The transaction can happen today. John W. Peterson said it so well in "Heaven Came Down":

Born of the Spirit with life from above
Into God's family divine,
Justified fully thru Calvary's love,
O what a standing is mine!
And the transaction so quickly was made
When as a sinner I came,
Took of the offer of grace He did proffer -
He saved me, O praise His dear name!

Invitation

"Are ye saved?" I ask it now, with heads bowed and eyes closed, as a question. Are you in a saved state? Do you know you are going to heaven?

If not, let today be day that you take of the offer of grace He does proffer. He'll save you - today.

Baptism, membership, prayer - if the Holy Spirit has spoken to you today, respond as He leads...

Chapter 7. He Shall Be In You

READ - *John 14:16-26*

TEXT - *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)*

THEME - The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Godhead, who indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power when we walk in step with Him.

Introduction:

Continuing in our series on "What We Believe," let's consider this statement - "I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ."

We'll concentrate on just the first two thoughts:

1. The Holy Spirit Exists
2. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer.

I believe that the Holy Spirit exists.

To make such a statement is to remind ourselves that we believe in a thing called the trinity.

The word trinity does not appear in our Bibles. Yet the truth of the trinity is clearly taught.

DEFINITION - "We teach that there is but one living and true God (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4*), an infinite, all knowing Spirit (*John 4:24*), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14*) - each equally deserving worship and obedience." (MacArthur Study Bible, pg. 2192)

The Holy Spirit exists as the third person of the trinity. He is not some "force" like in Star Wars, but a real person - a member of the Godhead - just as much God as the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is seen in creation - *Genesis 1:1-2* (as is God the Father, and God the Son *John 1:1-3*)

From the beginning of our Bibles, we learn about this Person, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost. He exists. He is called by many names:

Holy Spirit
Holy Ghost
Spirit of God
Spirit of Christ
Comforter
Spirit of Truth
Spirit of the Lord

The Holy Spirit exists. There is much more we could say about Him, but for today's purposes, understand that He exists.

He indwells every believer.

When it comes to describing the Holy Spirit's relationship with you and I, there are basically three terms used in our Bibles:

1. There is the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit.
2. And there is the "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit.
3. And the "filling" of the Holy Spirit.

Much confusion exists about the Holy Spirit, and it is often caused by confusion over these 3 terms. For example:

Some believe that after you get saved, you need to pray for the Holy Ghost to come - you need to pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Do you?

Some think that receiving the Holy Ghost into your life is a second blessing - something that happens only to some Christians after they are saved. Is that correct?

Some teach that the "sign gifts" which were given to the apostles in the New Testament (things like tongues, healing, etc.) are given to Christians today to indicate they have received that extra bit of the Holy Spirit. Is this correct?

Let's see if we can make sense of what the Bible says about this by looking at those three words - baptism, indwelling, and filling:

1. What is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost?

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a HISTORICAL EVENT that took place at Pentecost.

QUOTE (notes taken from lecture by Dr. Harry Carr - instructor at Midwestern Baptist College) "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an altogether different thing than the filling of the Spirit, in that the Baptism is historic. It refers to the constitution of the Church at Pentecost. There are 7 (possibly 8) verses in the Bible referring to this event. Five are prophetic, one is historic, and two are didactic, or teaching passages. All point to *Acts 2:1-3*, which is the historic account of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost, ushering in the Church age, he baptized all believers into the body of Christ."

- John the Baptist mentioned it as being future:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: (Matthew 3:11) cf. (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33)

- Jesus mentioned it as being in the very near future:

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:5)

- It occurred on Pentecost:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (Acts 2:1-3)

- The only other verses refer to it as being in the past, and an event which each individual Christian takes part in through salvation:

For by one Spirit are (were) we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

Here is the important point - NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE ARE WE COMMANDED TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT because it's automatic for the Christian.

SO, you don't need to seek it. SEEK CHRIST AND YOU'LL HAVE IT! It's part of the package when you become a Christian!

2. What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

It is important to note that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost marked a change in how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. In the Old Testament (before *Acts* 2:1-3), the Holy Spirit CAME UPON people. In other words, He equipped and empowered them for particular things as needed. However, our text points out that this changed after Pentecost. His ministry now is one of INDWELLING. He WAS with us (pre-Pentecost), but He is NOW IN US (post-Pentecost).

The Bible teaches this great truth two ways - as a positive, and as a negative.

- POSITIVE - It is something EVERY CHRISTIAN already has. ("I believe the Holy Spirit indwells EVERY BELIEVER...")

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. (2 Timothy 1:14)

- NEGATIVE - If you DON'T have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, then YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN!

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

The point is this - if you are saved, then you were BAPTIZED into the body of Christ when you were saved, and you were immediately and forever INDWELT by the Spirit of God at that moment.

So, we DO NOT PRAY be baptised by the Holy Spirit or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. There is no more of the Holy Spirit for you to get! He is a PERSON, not a LIQUID. You have ALL OF HIM from the moment of your salvation.

3. What, then, is the FILLING of the Holy Spirit?

We are nowhere taught to seek the baptism of, or the indwelling of, the Holy Spirit. BUT, the Bible DOES command that we be filled with Spirit - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (Ephesians 5:18)*

We ARE commanded to do this, so what does it mean? Is it possible to be only partially filled? Like a glass can be half-filled with water? Is it possible, then, to be empty - like my gas tank so often seems to be?

The answer is YES... but not quite the way you might think. We have all the Spirit we're going to get, so if we're running on empty it's not because we need more of Him. What we need is more of His influence, or more of His control in our lives. We need to SURRENDER more to Him.

The word "filled" in our Bibles simply means "controlled by" or "influenced by" or "under the sway of." Some examples:

And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (Luke 4:28)

Does that mean that they had wrath spilling out of their ears? NO - it means they were under the control of that emotion - wrath had taken control of them.

ILLUS - I remember reading of an incident of road rage that occurred in Akron some years ago. A man was cut off by another driver, and so enraged that he

chased the driver to the next intersection. While they sat at the light, the angry and offended party got out of his car, yanked open the door of the other party, dragged him from his car and through him into the path of oncoming traffic where he was killed. This man was filled with wrath - he was completely under its control.

The same Greek word is used of Zacharias in *Luke 1:67*, *And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost...*

But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. (John 16:6)

Was sorrow leaking out of their hearts like a liquid? Were their heart valves leaking sorrow? NO - this means that they were under the control of that emotion - sorrow had taken control of them and was influencing them.

The same Greek word is used in *Ephesians 5:18*, *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*

There is a third Greek word translated "filled" or "full" in our Bibles, and it is seen in *Acts 13:10*, *And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

That same word is used of Barnabus in *Acts 11:24*, *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*

AND SO, all of these examples teach us that being FILLED with the Spirit simply means "BE CONTROLLED BY" or "BE INFLUENCED BY" the Spirit of God. Another example (one of my favorites):

And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. (Acts 19:29)

Clearly, this means the city was "UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF" or "CONTROLLED BY" confusion.

ILLUS - Some of you may remember my brother, who is now a Lieutenant in the State Highway Patrol. One of the things he has had to do many times is to pull people over and give them a sobriety test. Perhaps they were weaving around on the road. Or perhaps they wrecked their vehicle and as he talked with them he noticed evidence of inebriation. When he comes across such people he makes them do three things. He takes his pen from his pocket and holds it in front of them. He then moves it to each side and asks them to follow it with their eyes. After that he makes them stand on one leg, holding the other leg about six inches off the ground in front of them for 30 seconds. Finally, he makes them walk a straight line, heel to toe, for nine steps, and then turn around and walk back the same way, heel to toe, on the line. What is he testing them for? He is trying to determine if they are "UNDER THE INFLUENCE."

And isn't it interesting how the Bible contrasts being "filled with the Spirit" with drunkenness in *Ephesians 5:18*? It does so because being drunk and being filled both convey the idea of INFLUENCE and CONTROL.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be CONTROLLED BY and UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF the Spirit of God.

And so, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are automatic for the Christian, coming in the salvation package. Get Christ, and you have the Holy Spirit as well.

The FILLING of the Spirit, on the other hand is to be sought continually. Weekly, daily, hourly, every minute we need to surrender to Christ and seek to be under the Spirit's control.

Conclusion:

So what does this have to do with you and me? Why should we care about this? May I take the last few minutes of our time this morning to suggest a couple of applications?

- If the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are both descriptive of phenomena that occur to ALL CHRISTIANS, then you and I who are saved, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. And so I ask you this morning... are you indwelt by the Spirit of God? Because if you're not, then you're not a child of God, and you are in real danger.

Do you want to experience the baptism of the Spirit of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God? THEN TRUST CHRIST - COME TO CHRIST - BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND BE SAVED, for it is a package deal.

- If the fullness of the Holy Spirit is something we need to surrender to daily, then I ask you... are you daily and continuously surrendering to Christ, and allowing the Holy Spirit to control you?

Imagine what your life could be like if you allowed the Holy Spirit to totally control you. Imagine what you could accomplish for God.

ILLUS - The Apostle Paul was probably such a person. And he reached the known world with the gospel in his lifetime.

ILLUS - Moody was to have a campaign in England. An elderly pastor protested, "Why do we need this 'Mr. Moody'? He's uneducated, inexperienced, etc. Who does he think he is anyway? Does he think he has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?" A younger, wiser pastor rose and responded, "No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Mr. Moody." (Source unknown)

QUOTE (J.S. Baxter) - What God chooses, He cleanses. What God cleanses, He molds. What God molds, He fills. What God fills, He uses.

Imagine the influence our church could have in our community and our world, if we had a membership completely surrendered to and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. Nothing would be impossible!

ILLUS - I was listening to a wonderful sermon by Dr. Stanley Toussaint of Dallas Theological Seminary. He told a tale that took place during the gas crisis of the seventies. Remember the gas lines? Remember how everybody tried to unload their big powerful cars and buy little tin cans that got better mileage? Dr. Toussaint told of a friend who wanted to sell his big Mercury Marquis, which had a 460 cubic inch engine, and nobody wanted it. Dr. Toussaint loved that big car though, and so he bought it. He couldn't afford to drive it because of the gas crisis, so he just parked it in his driveway, and went out periodically to sit in it and listen to it run. He would sit there and rev that engine until all the neighbors thought he was nuts. There he would be sitting in the driveway, with all that power available to him, and going nowhere. Dr. Toussaint pointed out how that is like so many of us. All that power available to us via the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we are not going anywhere.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)

Invitation

Two questions this morning, while your heads are bowed:

1. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9) Are you indwelt by the Spirit of God? Are you saved? Do you know you are going to heaven?

If you cannot answer such questions in the affirmative, your soul is in danger, my friend. Look to the Lamb of God. He will save you.

Chapter 7. He Shall Be In You

2. Christian - you are baptized and indwelt, but are you surrendered? Are you filled with the Spirit? Is His power and influence in control of your life?
Will you let the Spirit fill you today and everyday?

Chapter 8. How Do I Know He Is In Me?

READ - *Galatians 5:16-25*

TEXT - *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)*

THEME - If we have the Holy Spirit within, He will show up without! We will bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Introduction:

Continuing in our series on "What We Believe," we are considering this statement - "I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ."

Last week we learned the difference between the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the filling of the Holy Ghost. (REVIEW)

Today, let's consider this question, "How Do I Know...?"

If He is in you, your natural sinful tendencies will be diminishing.

Paul begins with bad news.

1. In our natural state, we are a mess!

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17)

The natural man is inherently evil and prone to sin.

ILLUS - Toddlers don't need to be taught to be selfish. Don't believe me? Put two toddlers in a playpen and throw in just one toy. What happens? Who taught them that?

2. Our natural state leads to certain things (the works of the flesh).

For sake of order, we'll combine the first four which are SEXUAL SINS:

- *Adultery (vs. 19)*

Married people engaging in sexual relationships outside of their own marriage.

- *fornication (vs. 19)*

DEFINITION - Greek PORNEIA, from which comes our word PORNOGRAPHY. This word describes any and all illicit sexual activity. It is a broad word, encompassing things like sex before marriage, homosexuality, pornography... basically any sexual activity outside of God's design for sex, which is a man and a woman within the relationship of marriage.

- *uncleanness (vs. 19)*

Impurity, either physically or morally. This seems to be even a more broad word than fornication.

- *lasciviousness (vs. 19)*

A big word that means lewdness, unrestrained living, licentiousness. This is the abandonment of one's self to immorality.

Some could be combined and called WORSHIP SINS:

- *idolatry (vs. 20)*

Basically "image worship" but in a broader sense refers to putting anything ahead of God in our lives.

- *witchcraft (vs. 20)*

DEFINITION - Greek PHARMAKEIA, from which we get our word pharmacy. This word implies drug use / abuse. Drugs were a part of many false worship rituals, and so that is probably the primary meaning here, but general drug abuse also falls into this.

Some might be called SINS OF DIVISION, or SOCIAL SINS:

Note: Notice how these characterize us so much of the time. So many problems in churches have their roots in these sins! *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)*

- *variance (vs. 20)*

Strife, quarrels, contention, debates.

- *strife (vs. 20)*

Rivalries; self-seeking ambition; intrigue.

- *seditions (vs. 20)*

Dissension, disunion, division.

- *heresies (vs. 20)*

factions

Some aren't so easily categorized:

- *hatred (vs. 20), emulations (vs. 20) (jealousy), wrath (vs. 20) (Temper, a flare up of temper), envyings (vs. 21), murders (vs.21)* (which Jesus pointed out is an extension of hatred).
- *drunkenness (vs.21), revellings (vs. 21)* (i.e. carousing; partying)
- *AND SUCH LIKE (vs. 21)*

The list is by no means exhaustive! Rather it is representative.

And so, the question for us is clear. If we want to know "How do I know whether the Holy Spirit is in me?" then we must examine the evidence. Does our life look like the picture Paul painted here of the NATURAL, UNSPIRITUAL, UNSAVED person? If so, it is a warning.

People don't like warnings, but the Bible is filled with them. And I wouldn't be much of a preacher if I didn't warn you when you are in danger.

ILLUS - Little girl who was recently killed on a railroad track nearby. Which of us, seeing that train coming, and her on the tracks, would not have done EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER to warn her?

And so, the Bible warns us here that if our life looks like the picture painted here, we are in danger. We need to examine our salvation. Notice what Paul says in *vs. 21, they which do (i.e. PRACTICE) such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God!*

That word PRACTICE is important:

- You cannot lose salvation once obtained.

The occasional fall is normal, Christian. That's why it's important to know Paul used the word "PRACTICE" here. We are sinners, even when saved, and are working out our salvation daily.

- But when this list CHARACTERIZES YOUR LIFE, it should warn you to EXAMINE YOUR LIFE.

If He is in you, these things will be diminishing.

If He is in you, you will be acting more and more like Him everyday.

The word FRUIT is interesting. It describes something which naturally occurs. For example:

- Apple trees bear the fruit of APPLES. It is a natural expectation. If an apple tree does not bear fruit, what good is it?
- Tomatoe plants bear the fruit of TOMATOES.
- Orange trees bear the fruit of ORANGES.
- And Spirit filled Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit! It is a natural expectation!

The word FRUIT also indicates something that takes time. Fruit doesn't pop out immediately, but rather grows and ripens over time.

And so, how do we know if the Spirit is in us? The things described here as "the fruit of the Spirit" will be in us, in ever increasing amounts, ripening over time, as we continue in this life.

FIRST - The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our relationship with God.

1. *The fruit of the Spirit is love... (vs. 22)*

DEFINITION - Greek AGAPE - godly love (as opposed to romantic love (EROS) or friendship; brotherly love (PHILEOS). This is unconditional love. This is the love of choice.

It describes God's love to us, our love for God, and our love for each other.

ILLUS - The world knows we are Christians by our love - *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)*

ILLUS - And one of the evidences we have, personally, is our love - *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (1 John 3:14)*

2. *joy (vs. 22)*

Not based on circumstances, which may make us unhappy sometimes. Joy is based on our walk with God, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

ILLUS - Erma Bacon - loss of leg, loss of son, never loss of joy.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (1 Peter 1:8)

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

3. *peace (vs. 22)*

How glorious to have peace with God. To know that everything between Him and me is alright.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1)

ILLUS - E.V. Hill's illustration of how he had to be guarded by his deacons from the KKK, and from the Black Panthers, and yet when he went to bed at night he slept soundly. He was awakened by those yelling that a cross was burning on his lawn, and he "turned over and snored." Peace with God.

Preacher, how do I know if I have the Holy Spirit within? Do you love God, can you say that you have the joy of God within, and do you have peace? Can you rest in the midst of the storms of life, because you know without doubt that everything is alright between you and the God of this universe?

SECOND - The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our relationship with others. Uh oh... now it starts getting a little more personal! We like the first three, but these three we struggle with, don't we?

1. *longsuffering* (vs. 22)

DEFINITION - Greek MAKROTHUMIA - patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others.

Charity SUFFERETH LONG.... (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2)

ILLUS - My struggle over "gray areas." My friend who, no matter what I said, would respond with "Well that might be true and it might not!" Hard to be longsuffering.

2. *gentleness* (vs. 22)

This refers to kindness; excellence in character or demeanor toward others.

Compare this to Paul's list of works of the flesh - notice how many this one counters - wrath, strife, variance, etc.

Christians are to be KIND people, GENTLE people.

QUOTE (Rev. Arnold) - "Always be kind."

3. *goodness* (vs. 22)

This is an ACTIVE goodness; an ENERGETIC principle.

The spirit filled Christian does not just think good thoughts and sing good songs and listen to good truths. He / she DOES GOOD WORKS.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

ILLUS - The lepers in 2 Kings 7 who knew of the victory and were not sharing it with the starving masses in the city - *Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace... (2 Kings 7:9)*

THIRD - The fruit of the Spirit will be INCREASINGLY evident in our personal holiness.

1. *faith* (vs. 23)

Faithfulness.

The Bible says that *God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13)* but it also says ... *a faithful man, who can find? (Proverbs 20:6)*

2. *meekness* (vs. 23)

Gentleness; strength under control.

3. *temperance* (vs. 23)

Self-control; the holding in of passions and appetites.

ILLUS - I have a preacher friend who had a weight problem. He tried all kinds of diets. One day he just started eating differently, and began losing weight. When asked how he was doing it, he indicated he had finally gotten hold of this verse - the fruit of the Spirit is self control!

How do we know if the Spirit is in us? These nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit will be in us, in ever-increasing measure. These nine descriptions of Christ-likeness will be in us, more and more with each passing day.

Conclusion:

And so, there you have it. If He is in you:

1. Your natural sinful tendencies will be diminishing.
2. You will be acting more and more like Christ everyday.

If He is in you, the works of the flesh will be diminishing, and the fruit of the Spirit will be ripening in your life, day by day by day by day.

Chapter 8. How Do I Know He Is In Me?

Chapter 9. As Each Part Does Its Work

READ - *Ephesians 4:1-16*

TEXT - *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:16 NIV)*

THEME - You have a gift, and the body of Christ needs you to use it!

Introduction:

Imagine, if you would, a symphony orchestra (paint picture of how each part of required. No instrument is unimportant and no instrument, no matter how flashy, is more important. TOGETHER, they make the music.

Imagine, if you would, a building. Paul uses such an image to describe the church. There are certain parts in a house that are less glamorous than others, but I submit that there are not parts that are less important than others. (ILLUS - time I hit the sewer line)

Imagine, if you would, the human body - a marvel of creation (note I didn't say evolution). Some parts of the body are definitely less glamorous than others - but none are less important.

A symphony only works when each instrument plays its part. A building only stands strong when each part is in its place. And the human body only remains healthy and fit when each member of that body is healthy and fit and functioning.

All of these illustrate what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given to every Christian to build the body of Christ, and to help that body grow into maturity in Christ. And that only happens when each part does its work.

Notice some things about spiritual gifts:

Some general truths

1. There are several passages that discuss spiritual gifts: *Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11.*

I'm not going to go deeply into any of them today, but would like to make some general comments:

In *Romans 12* and *1 Peter 4*, the emphasis seems to be on USING the gift(s) you have been given. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8) As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)*

In *1 Corinthians 12*, the emphasis seems to be on REGULATING the gift(s) you have been given.

In *Ephesians 4*, the emphasis seems to be on EXPLAINING THE REASON for the gift(s) you have been given.

There is overlap in these passages - each dealing with most of the aspects of spiritual gifts, but each seeming to emphasize a major point, as described.

2. There are some key facts about spiritual gifts you need to see.

- Spiritual gifts are given to EVERY CHRISTIAN.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7)

As every man hath received the gift,... (1 Peter 4:10)

- Spiritual gifts are to benefit OTHERS, not you.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man TO PROFIT WITHAL. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

This is the major emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12, where the Christians were seeking only the flashy gifts, and seemed to want to show off their superior giftedness! Exactly the wrong understanding of gifts. As with everything else in Christianity, it's not about YOU, it's about OTHERS. Any time self enters the equation, you can bet you're on the wrong track.

- Spiritual gifts are to be USED.

(Christ is displeased when we are bad stewards of what He has entrusted to us.)

True of money, talents, time, the gospel... we are stewards of all these things. And we are stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)

ILLUS - Parables of the talents / pounds.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22)

QUOTE (George Whitefield, from his journals) "Nothing has done more harm to the Christian Church than thinking the examples recorded in Holy Scripture were written only to be read and not imitated by us."

Consider this - if using your spiritual gift is what builds up the church, what happens to the church when you choose not to exercise that gift?

- A definition.

What are spiritual gifts?

Was Mozart's amazing musical ability a spiritual gift? Is Donald Trump's ability to make money a spiritual gift?

It's important to understand that there is a difference between natural abilities or talents, learned behaviors, and spiritual gifts. All of course, ultimately, have their source in God, but there is a distinct difference about spiritual gifts which needs to be defined. I like this definition:

DEFINITION - A spiritual gift is an ability that is spiritual in character, given by the Holy Ghost to a believer (but only to believers), for the purpose of building up other believers in the local church.

The passages we are studying list several examples (not exhaustive). I'll mention them and move on, allowing you to study the individual gifts on your own. (You should familiarize yourselves with these lists, though, as they are helpful in determining your own gift(s).

In *Romans* we find prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy.

In *1 Corinthians* we find wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues.

In *Ephesians* (where the emphasis is on gifted men rather than the gifts themselves), we have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

In *1 Peter* we have speaking and ministering.

A key truth

Let's consider the *Ephesians 4* passage. I believe there is a key truth here that helps us understand why we have spiritual gifts, why we need spiritual gifts, and why the 21st century church is sometimes so messed up. Consider:

1. UNITY is a major goal of the church. (*vss. 1-6*)

Not just human consensus, by the way, but all of us agreeing with God - having the mind of Christ, consensus with Christ. (And that means agreement with His Word.)

Most Christians would agree this is a desirable goal.

Most Christians would also admit we don't often reach this goal.

2. GIFTS are the means of reaching the goal. (*vss. 7-13*)

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer. (cf. *1 Corinthians 12*)

Christ gives gifted believers to the church (*vs. 11*)

SO THAT:

- a. God's people will be prepared for service.
- b. The body of Christ (church) will be built up.
- c. We will reach unity in faith and knowledge.
- d. We will reach maturity and Christlikeness.

3. But EACH PART MUST DO ITS WORK. cf. *vss. 14-16*

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:14-16 NIV)

Now don't get me wrong - there are other ways to run churches, and there are other ways to try and do a work for God... but why in the world would we ever want to do it any way but God's way?

ILLUS - Uzzah (*2 Samuel 6*) - Putting the ark on a cart and dragging it behind oxen seems like a perfectly workable solution. But it was not God's way, and He didn't bless it. Uzzah reaching up to steady the ark when it shook on the cart seemed perfectly logical, but it was not God's way, and it was therefore not successful! Any time we choose a method other than God's way, we will see less success and less of God's blessing than if we'd just followed His instructions.

If we're going to grow as a church, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

If we're going to have unity as a church, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

If we're going to grow in knowledge and Christlikeness, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

Conclusion:

I've been preaching to Christians, this morning. If you have never trusted Christ, then nothing I've said this morning applies to you... yet.

There is a gift, though, that you may receive today - the gift of salvation.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15)

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Ephesians 2:8)

ILLUS - It's like Christmas morning when you were a kid. You ran downstairs and saw this HUGE gift under the tree with your name on it. There were other gifts there, too... maybe some smaller ones stuffed in stockings hung from the mantle. But you KNEW that BIG GIFT was the most important one, and you couldn't wait to open it. The gift of salvation is the BIG GIFT. Open it first, and then you can move on to the others - the gifts of the Spirit which are poured out on Christians.

If you've never trusted Christ, may I entreat you to accept the gift of salvation He so freely offers you this morning. It is not yours until you accept it.

But again, I've been preaching to Christians, those who have received the gift of salvation, and who possess the gift(s) of the Spirit, whether they use them or not.

Christians, will you use the gift(s) the Spirit has entrusted to you? Our church needs you. If the Lord's work is to be all that it can be here, your gifts are needed. If any one of your gifts, no matter how small, is missing, our church will be damaged.

ILLUS - I opened the message this morning by suggesting you picture a symphony orchestra. One of my favorite movies has just such music as its theme - Amadeus - the story of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. There is a line in that movie, where Antonio Salieri, a rival of Mozart's, was describing the absolute perfection of Mozart's music. Salieri said, "Displace a single note, and there would be diminishment. Displace a single phrase, and the structure would fall."

Just as it is true of music, it is true of our church... or any church... of the body of Christ. Displace a single gift... a single gifted person, and there is diminishment.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK. (Ephesians 4:16 NIV)

Chapter 10. Your Mission (Should You Decide to Accept It)

READ - Acts 1:1-12

TEXT - Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

THEME - The church has a job to do, and if the church does not do it, who will?

Introduction:

Remember our little statement of faith that we are studying:

I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in Whom we have salvation from sin by grace through faith. I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world, through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning. I believe that Jesus is coming again, and I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming.

Over the past 3 months, we've used this little creed as a jumping off point to discuss some of our most important beliefs:

- We learned that the Bible is the word of God - the only authority, our only guide. It is perfect and without error. It is to be read. It is to be lived.
- We learned that Jesus is the Son of God. More than a good man... more than a teacher... more than an example - the very Son of God and God the Son. He is to be believed. He is to be obeyed. He is to be worshipped.
- We learned that salvation is only through the grace of God. You cannot earn it. God gives it freely but ONLY to those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. *For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)* Salvation is a FREE GIFT, but you must ACCEPT IT or remain lost and bound for hell.
- We learned that the Holy Spirit indwells us as Christians, and bears the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives as we seek His filling. He gives gifts to each of us, for the good of the whole church. We are to be filled with Him... surrendered to Him... good stewards of the gift(s) He entrusts to us....

This morning we come to this part - I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world, through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning.

And so, notice a couple of key thoughts contained in that sentence.

We Have A Mission

I've been thinking about this topic for some time now. What is the job of the church? Ask 100 people, and you may just get 100 answers. But that's only because we use something other than the Bible to define it. What is the job of the church, as God defines it in His word?

- Is it the church's primary task to feed the hungry?
- Is it the church's primary task to fight for social justice?
- Is it the church's primary task to take up political causes?
- What is the church's mission?

ILLUS - There is a church in our area that lists as their mission to obey the great commandment, and to fulfill the great commission. I like that.

We have a GREAT COMMANDMENT which we must obey - *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:35-40)*

We might say that the GREAT COMMANDMENT defines the character of the church, the heart of the church - it describes what the church should BE.

We also have a GREAT COMMISSION which we must fulfill:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

May I suggest that the GREAT COMMISSION describes our TASK, our PURPOSE, our MISSION - it tells us what we should DO!

We Need to Focus on Our Mission

1. Our focus needs to be on evangelism

There are many GOOD THINGS that we could do as a church.

ILLUS - Jesus "went about doing good" but didn't say that was His purpose. His good works testified to His authenticity. His good works were to convince people to believe in Him.

It was foretold that this would be His purpose - *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)*

He SAID this was His purpose - that they might BELIEVE in Him - *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. (John 12:46)*

And again - *And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. (Luke 4:43)*

Paul said it - *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)*

Jesus DID many good things - blind, lame, deaf, sick, weary, hungry, thirsty, demon possessed - even DEAD. But ALWAYS the GOAL WAS THE SOUL. The other things were tools to reach the SOUL - to help them believe.

QUOTE - "Keep the main thing the main thing."

ILLUS - In every endeavor we must learn to FOCUS if we want to succeed. Athletes know this. Business people know this. One business man said the secret of success is to pick 1 thing and do it better than anybody else.

2. It's very easy to get off course and lose our focus.

I've been much interested in this idea of FOCUS lately. For I believe Satan has done an amazing job of getting us Christians track.

And consider the tools Satan uses. It's vital to understand his weaponry. ... *we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:11)*

a. Satan redefines truth.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Genesis 3:1)

How many times do we hear truth from the Bible today, and somebody chimes in with, "That's not what it means to me!" And we should hear the hiss of Satan, "Yea, hath God said?"

If Satan can redefine what the Bible believes, even a little bit, he can get you to lose focus... get you off track... make you harmless in the battle.

b. Satan uses GOOD THINGS to get us off track.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

It matters not whether Satan gets us off course with evil and sin, or with good things... either way we're off course!

Some examples of losing focus:

- We SAY that we believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and that it is our only rule for faith and practice.

And yet we find every excuse to not read our Bibles. Satan will use any trick to keep you out of God's Word. He uses good things - family, friends, work. He uses bad things - we spend more timing watching commercials on TV (let alone the programs themselves) than we do in God's Word.

Imagine what would happen if God's people truly spent time in God's Word and began living what it teaches!

But Satan has us off track - we've lost our focus.

- We SAY that we believe in prayer. *Ask and ye shall receive..., If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it..., Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing ye shall receive..., Call unto me and I will answer thee...*

And yet when needs arise do we turn first to God in prayer, or do we turn to other things? How many Christians today trust in science before they trust in prayer - would seek the opinion of Dr. Phil before asking God?

How many churches are truly energized by prayer?

Imagine what would happen if God's people truly got hold of the power of prayer! Jesus said we could move mountains!

ILLUS - *"The place was shaken..."*

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. (James 5:17)

QUOTE - Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

And yet often Satan succeeds in getting us off course... getting us to lose our focus....

- We recently talked about the gifts of the Spirit. We SAY that we believe God has provided each of us with spiritual gifts, and that God's plan for getting His work done in the church is that we would all focus on our areas of giftedness and use our gifts for His glory.

But how many are using their gifts? And how many are frantically working in churches, trying to keep things going, by laboring grudgingly in ways for which they are not gifted?

Note: ILLUS - This is something the Lord has really been working me over with lately. If I really believe my spiritual gift is teaching, then that is what I should be concentrating on. And according to the Bible, that is the pastor's role anyway.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (1 Timothy 4:16)

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2)

READ - Acts 6:1-4 - first deacons were chosen so those who were to teach could concentrate on teaching!

And many churches suffer because the one or ones gifted to teach are off track, pulled into other things in the church.

QUOTE - "It is most notorious that for the iniquity of the priests the land mourns. We have preached and lived many sincere persons out of our communion. I have now conversed with several of the best of all denominations. Many of them solemnly protest that they went from the church because they could not find food for their souls. They stayed among us until they were starved out." (George Whitefield's Journals, 1739, age 24)

I find myself often pulled every which way, and I sometimes fancy I hear God saying, "What are you doing over there?" (kinda like Elijah - "What doest thou here Elijah?") "You are supposed to be using the gift that I gave you." FOCUS!!!

I really would rather see things NOT DONE in a local church, than to see people burning out trying to do things they are not gifted for.

Satan laughs... we are off track... we've lost our focus.

- All these are examples of my larger point, which is that the same is true of our PRIMARY MISSION!

Our mission is NOT social justice - but rather EVANGELISM. If we would concentrate on winning the world to Christ, we would accomplish social justice anyway. Christ is the only one who can bring justice.

Our mission is NOT world peace - but rather introducing the world to the only one who can bring peace - the Prince of Peace.

ILLUS - Peace vigil at local college headed up by an ordained minister who never mentioned Jesus at all in his discussion of peace. He wanted to tie ribbons around trees for peace. GOD HELP THE CHURCH WHEN WE ARE THAT FAR OFF TRACK. God help us when we know the only way to peace and we waste time tying ribbons on trees!

Satan has us off track - he's caused us to lose our focus. We need to get back to concentrating on our mission.

Look how we're off track in our churches - we feed people but don't tell them about the bread of life. We concentrate on righting social wrongs and injustices, but neglect to warn them of the coming judgement before God where TRUE JUSTICE is meted out. We meet people's physical needs only so they can die and go to hell. *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36)*

May God help us to FOCUS ON OUR MISSION - Our GREAT COMMISSION. May we be characterized by the GREAT COMMANDMENT, but may we be busy ever and always in obeying the GREAT COMMISSION.

Conclusion:

In closing, let me share some interesting statistics I read this past week from The Barna Group:

A new survey released by The Barna Group, which has been tracking America's religious behavior and beliefs since 1984, reveals that one out of every three adults (33%) is classified as unchurched - meaning they have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months.

When these statistics are projected across the aggregate adult population, the numbers are staggering. An estimated 73 million adults are presently unchurched. When teens and children are added, the total swells to roughly 100 million Americans.

To put that figure in context, if the unchurched population of the United States were a nation of its own, that group would be the eleventh most populated nation on earth (trailing only China, India, the church portion of the United States, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia, Japan and Mexico).

What is the mission of the church?

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

EVERYTHING WE DO NEEDS TO BE IN LINE WITH THAT MISSION.

EVERY PROGRAM...

EVERY ACTIVITY...

EVERY COMMUNICATION...

For, IF THE CHURCH DOES NOT WIN THE WORLD TO CHRIST, WHO WILL?

Chapter 10. Your Mission

Chapter 11. Sleeping in Class

READ - Mark 13:32-37

TEXT - *Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. (Mark 13:36)*

THEME - Jesus' return is IMMINEENT, and we must be ready for it.

Introduction:

This will be the final message in our series entitled "What We Believe." We have discussed several vital truths during this series, and I won't bore you by repeating them here. I will point out the outlines used in preaching this series will be available on the church website for your use.

We used this little statement of faith to structure the series. Those who were with us from the beginning know we talked about every one of these topics:

"I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and in the deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in Whom we have salvation from sin by faith through grace. I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and gives guidance and power as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. I believe that God has given to the church the responsibility to evangelize the world through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning. I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming."¹

We come today to the last one - I believe Jesus is coming again, and I will seek to live today so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming.

He is coming again, you know!

SONG - Jessie E. Strout, in the hymn "Jesus Is Coming Again" wrote these words in 1872, and they are still true today:

Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring:
Jesus is coming again!
Cheer up, ye pilgrims, be joyful and sing:
Jesus is coming again!

Echo it, hilltops; proclaim it, ye plains:
Jesus is coming again!
Coming in glory, the Lamb that was slain;
Jesus is coming again!

Heavings of earth, tell the vast, wondering throng:
Jesus is coming again!
Tempests and whirlwinds, the anthem prolong;
Jesus is coming again!

Nations are angry - by this we do know
Jesus is coming again!
Knowledge increases; men run to and fro;
Jesus is coming again!

SONG - John W. Peterson said the same thing in his more modern hymn with the same title:

Marvelous message we bring;
Glorious carol we sing!
Wonderful word of the King:
Jesus is coming again!

Coming again, coming again!

Chapter 11. Sleeping in Class

Maybe morning, maybe noon,
Maybe evening and maybe soon!
Coming again, coming again!
O what a wonderful day that will be -
Jesus is coming again!

Do you believe that? One day Jesus will return. Physically... actually... to this very earth. Do you believe it? Let's just do a quick survey of what the Bible teaches about the second coming of our Lord.

1. The second coming is promised in scripture.

READ - *Mark 13:26*

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11)

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

2. Nobody knows the timing of the second coming.

ILLUS - 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Occur in 1988 - remember that?

READ - *Mark 13:32,35*

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. (Luke 12:40)

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:3)

3. We DO KNOW that it is IMMINENT

In other words, it could happen at any time. Perhaps TODAY.

READ - *Mark 13:36 - "suddenly"*

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (James 5:8)

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. (Philippians 4:5)

Several times in Revelation, Jesus said "I COME QUICKLY." e.g. *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7)*

Some might ask, "Why is it taking so long, then?" Perhaps because He is waiting for you! *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)*

And so, the Bible is clear - Jesus is coming again, and it could be at any moment. Here is the timetable:

1. Rapture - second coming in the air

READ - *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

2. Tribulation - great judgement on earth

Seven years of judgement on this earth, described in *Daniel 9, Revelation 11-18.*

Of this period Jesus said, *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:21, cf. Mark 13:19)*

3. Second coming in glory.

READ - Revelation 19:11-16

4. Millennium - 1000 years of peace.

Described in Revelation 20

This is when we'll begin to experience what both Isaiah and Micah described - *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6) And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4; cf. Micah 4:3)*

This will be a time of PEACE - REAL PEACE, when the Prince of Peace will be in control.

5. New heavens and new earth - eternity with Christ.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:4-5)

Note: Repeat the above outline a couple of times until they get the timeline.

Jesus is coming again - do you believe it? I do. And I believe it for the same reason I believe everything else - because God's Word teaches it.

SONG - Jesus loves me, this I know, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.

So... what will you be doing when He comes?

Our text this morning warns us of the SUDDEN and UNEXPECTED nature of His return. What will you be doing?

- Will He find you watching and ready for His return? (cf. Mark 13:33)

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. (Luke 12:37)

- Will He find you working at the tasks He has appointed to you? (cf. Mark 13:34)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

ILLUS - One day in 1789, the sky over Hartford darkened ominously. Some of the members of the Connecticut House of Representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quieting a clamor for immediate adjournment, Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the House, rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either coming or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. It is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought."

- Or will He find you busy about other things less important?

ILLUS - Me and video game yesterday - thought came to mind, do I want Christ to come when I'm doing this?

This does not mean we should never take a break, or rest, or engage in harmless entertainments. Rather it means, when Christ returns, what will He find CHARACTERIZES YOUR LIFE?

ILLUS - Parable of the rich fool - READ - *Luke 12:16f*

- Or will He find you sleeping? (cf. *Mark 13:36*)

This refers not to physical sleep, but rather to a state of unpreparedness.

ILLUS - Boy Scout motto - BE PREPARED.

This is the key thought to our lesson today - ARE YOU PREPARED, or are you sleeping? Jesus' return is IMMEDIATE, and we must be ready for it.

Conclusion:

To the Christian, this is the blessed hope - nothing brings more joy than the thought that Jesus is coming again. May you be encouraged Christian by the truth that when Jesus comes, there will be:

NO MORE sickness
NO MORE pain
NO MORE sorrow
NO MORE death
NO MORE poverty
NO MORE trials and problems and struggles
NO MORE weakness
NO MORE weariness
NO MORE old age
NO MORE politics
NO MORE triumph of the wicked
NO MORE persecution of the righteous
ONLY peace
ONLY good
ONLY righteousness
ONLY joy
ONLY health
ONLY wealth
ONLY JESUS
FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER

To the lost, this is cause for fear and concern. Those without Christ might be caught out! Too late!

ILLUS - I entitled this message "Sleeping in Class" because when I think of this topic, I'm often reminded of an incident that occurred in college - my intro to ed class. Toward the end of the class, the instructor noticed one student, seated just about in the middle of the class, slumped over asleep at his desk. She encouraged us to let him sleep - not wake him. She spoke softly through the rest of the class, dismissed us sotto voce (quietly), and we all snuck out without waking him. I have often wondered what he thought when he woke up, for he had missed everything, and we had all left him behind.

Don't sleep through it, my friend.

Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,

I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

And what was that sound that my ears seemed to hear?
A trumpet - proclaiming that Jesus was here.
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray
I knew in a moment this must be The Day!

The one's who'd believed in this Savior's love
He gathered to take to His Father above.
With those who were ready He rose without sound
While all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;
I had waited too long and this sealed my fate.
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight;
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

(This is a modified version of a poem that is copyright (c)1993
Bethany Farms, Carrollton, IL)

That poem is not perfect, doctrinally, but it does make the point - Jesus is coming - will you be ready?

I believe that Jesus is coming again, and I will seek to live today, so as to be ready to meet Him at His coming.

Notes

1. (Written by Dr. Tom Malone, Midwestern Baptist College, Pontiac, Michigan)

