

The Bible, the Spirit, and You

Building a Christian Mind

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, as we come to our time in God's word here this morning, I invite you to turn to the book of Romans 8. I'm going to read a portion of Scripture that, in part, will frame the things that we have to say about God's word here this morning. As you're turning there, the title of today's message is "The Bible, the Spirit, and You." The Bible, the Spirit, and you and in Romans 8:1, Paul having set forth the great doctrine of justification, that reality that through faith in Christ alone, all of our sins are forgiven and God accepts us as righteous for the sake of his Son. In Romans 8:1, we start to read the consequences of that, the blessed reality of forgiveness and acceptance with a holy God. Romans 8:1,

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

As we gather this morning, we are completing, this is the final message in our series "How to Know the Bible is True," and there is no more fundamental question in life than to be able to understand the reality of the truthfulness of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, the finality of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture. We've covered all of those things to one degree or another leading up to today. It's part of our mega-series

"Building a Christian Mind," and to have a Christian mind is to necessarily have an understanding of the place of the Bible in reality and an understanding of the things of God, the things of life, the things of death, the things of forgiveness, and what we've said in this series is that we believe the Bible, we accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God, based on the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who guarantees the authority and the accuracy and the sufficiency of Scripture to us. We receive it on his authority. Not on the authority of a church. Not on the authority of a scholar someplace who thinks that he knows what is best. No, Jesus Christ is the highest authority in all of the universe. He said in Matthew 28, "All authority has been given to me," and so when we need to know the things that are most essential to our soul, we don't go to lesser authorities, we don't go to fallen men or to fallen institutions in order to learn what is true, we go straight to the Lord Jesus Christ himself and we ask what does he say about the word of God.

And as we've seen, this is all review, as we've seen, Jesus Christ affirmed the authority of the Old Testament during his earthly ministry. He quoted freely from the Old Testament. He spoke of it as historically accurate and he lived under its own authority. The words of the Old Testament were on his lips even at the crucifixion; from beginning to end there is an affirmation of the Old Testament as we know it today. And then we saw that he commissioned the New Testament. He authorized the New Testament that would be written after his ascension as he appointed an exclusive final group of men called apostles who had the authority to write and speak on his behalf, and the writings that they gave were directed by the Holy Spirit in a way that safeguarded them from error so that we know that we have the word of God in the 66 books of the Bible. It's a wonderful thing to contemplate and to understand the basis on which we receive the authority of the word of God is to have a great clarifying effect on your mind and on your thinking and truly sets you as it points you, as it were, like a compass to true north and sends you in the direction that you need to go. There is no higher authority than the Bible. Jesus Christ said in John 10:35 the Scriptures cannot be broken. He said elsewhere that not a dot, not an iota of Scripture will ever be broken. It all must be fulfilled. And so there is this wonderful fullness of authority and trustworthiness found in the Scripture.

Now, before we get into today's content, I just want to give you a sense of the implications of what we've seen over the past three or four weeks and what the doctrine of Scripture as Scripture does for us. In what I'm about to say, I'm not talking about what Scripture teaches in other areas, we'll get to those things in due time, but what an understanding of the divine inspiration of Scripture means for us and what it helps us understand and the things, what this does for us in terms of understanding spiritual reality. To look at the Bible and to understand what it is points us to Jesus Christ as the Lord and authority over our souls and over all of the universe. To understand the Bible for what it is clarifies who true teachers and who false teachers are, not simply today but throughout the course of church history, because the exclusivity of Scripture immediately excludes those who try to speak on an equal plane with the authority of the word of God. As we're going to see here later today, when you understand the Scripture, you are introduced and brought inevitably into the doctrine of sin. Why is it that some men reject Scripture? Why is it that for the majority of people in the world, the Bible is a closed

book that makes no sense to them, that carries no persuasion of power, no power of persuasion in their hearts? Why is that? To understand Scripture is to have answers to that question. To understand Scripture is to understand something about the veracity of God. If Scripture comes from the God of truth, and it does, and Scripture cannot mislead us, and it cannot, then we are seeing something about the utter truthfulness and faithfulness of God simply by understanding what Scripture really is. To understand Scripture for what it is is to affirm the historicity of Christianity. We do not follow some abstract philosophy when we study Scripture, when we follow Christ. We are following that which is rooted in time and space history that is based on things that actually happened in time and space on earth. Scripture was written in the course of time and expresses those things that happened in time and then gives us an understanding of them. To understand Scripture and that Scripture is the word of God, it exposes Satan and the angelic realm because Scripture, as it were, it salts that realm and exposes it for what it is. And all of those things we have discussed. To understand Scripture is to understand where you go in times of adversity when times of complete confusion, difficulty of broken hearts and, "What do I do next? I have no idea what to do next," you say to yourself. To understand Scripture is to realize that the answers are somehow found within the corners of the 66 books of the Bible because the word of God is sufficient to make the man of God adequate, equipped for every good work. And so to understand Scripture is to realize that we are not cast out to sea, lost on heaving waves of uncertainty in the midst of our affliction, in the midst of our difficulties. No, we have an anchor that we can go back to that is unchanging, that is stable, that is true, that is powerful, to equip us to face whatever God has given us in life. This is an amazing book. This is a remarkable book and the multifaceted splendor of this perfect diamond radiates clarity and beauty as far as the enlightened eye can see.

Now, today as we contemplate those things, it leads us to a final question that I have hinted at already. Most of us, as we are gathered together in this room, we accept the authority of Scripture. We believe the Bible and hopefully the things that we have studied over the past few weeks have deepened and strengthened us in that conviction. But the reality is we know all too well, sometimes people close to our hearts, the reality is that many, many, more people do not believe the Bible. They reject it as ultimate truth, perhaps consciously reject it or even worse, they just have an attitude of cold indifference to it. "If you want the Bible, that's fine for you, but it means nothing to me. And you know, you can have your truth and I'll have mine." How is it, beloved, that you and I believe the Bible when so many men do not? What was the distinguishing mark? How did it come that we came to see the glory of this book and the glory of the Christ revealed in this book when so many others do not? Well, beloved, the answer is very humbling. It's not because we are smarter than they are. In fact, Scripture says it's not many noble that come to the truth. It's not because we're smarter than they are. When you understand what Scripture is, you come to realize that a gift has been given to us, that hasn't been given to others. What has happened and what makes, what has enabled us and given us the power to believe that does not reside in the hearts of others, the source of that is this: the Holy Spirit from God gave us a new heart to believe the Bible, to receive Scripture as an authoritative word from God. The Spirit of God graciously worked in our hearts in a way that has not been given to everyone else.

And so we want to answer two questions here this morning and in the simplicity of the structure here, we're just going to answer two questions. Why do men reject the Bible? And secondly, why do we believe the Bible? Why do we receive the Bible, you might say. Why do men reject the Bible, generally speaking, why do we receive the Bible? Those of you, especially that were like me saved in your adult life, could frame the same question in this way: what was it about your earlier years where you rejected Scripture but now Scripture is a living book alive to you that when you read it, you know intuitively, you know intrinsically, you know in the depth of your heart, "This is true. This is true. This is true." Where does that come from? Where does that deep heart conviction come from when you didn't have it before? Was it just a matter of one day you picked up a book and started reading? There's a deeper spiritual explanation than that but we need to go back to the original source. Why do men reject the Bible? Why did you reject the Bible in your younger years? Well, there's a dual answer that we can give to that. It's related to sin and it's related to Satan. There's a spiritual dynamic that causes men to reject the Bible and we saw this, in part, in what we read from Romans 8 just a moment ago.

Why do men reject the Bible? Well, first of all, they're in bondage to sin. They are in bondage to sin. And beloved, it is not natural to receive Scripture. It is not a natural capacity of fallen man to believe the Bible because the fallen man, the natural man is opposed to Scripture. He naturally rejects Scripture from the very core of his being, and we need to see some Scriptures to help us understand this because this will give us a lot of light and understanding into the dynamic of interacting with unsaved men in a fallen world.

You're in Romans 8, look at verse 6, Romans 8:6, Why do men reject the Bible? It's because they're in bondage to sin. It's a moral dilemma that they have. It's not a lack of information. It's a matter of morality and a matter of the fallenness and the deadness of their heart, of the inner citadel of their being, it is fallen and corrupt and unable to receive the word of God for what it really is. Verse 6, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." Now verse 7, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God," in other words, the carnal, unsaved, unregenerate man has an inbred hostility toward God that causes him to reject the things of God and this is a supernatural force of fallenness in his inner man that makes him incapable of receiving the word of God for what it really is. Verse 7 again, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." He does not have the ability to submit his mind to the word of God because his mind is taken hostage by sin. And verse 8, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." They cannot receive God. They are hostile to his word. They are hostile to him. They are hostile to Christ and that is a fundamental starting point of understanding the world in which we live.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2, 1 Corinthians 2. What I want you to see here, beloved, to simplify and clarify things, is the utter inability that man has in order to receive the Bible for what it truly is. 1 Corinthians 2:14,

14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

The problem that the unsaved man has is that he is dead in sin. He's physically alive but he's spiritually dead and the things of the Spirit of God are alien to him. They are foreign to him. They are outside him. They are in a realm and in a jurisdiction to which he does not have access and he does not have the ability to pry into them. He can't work his way into them. He can't repent his way into this. He is utterly fallen and utterly unable to do anything to receive favorably the word of God. He likes to boast about his free will. He likes to boast that he is the captain of his own destiny, he is the master of his own soul. Even within the church there are those that want to exalt the free will of man. Well, beloved, these passages and others like them put the lie to that and says there is an utter inability because of the fallenness of man and his domination under sin in order to be able to see these things and understand them rightly.

Look over at Ephesians 2. I'm really going to Ephesians 4, but we might as well pause at a rest stop at Ephesians 2 by way of reminder of this very familiar text and to see how it fits in here, the theme of this morning. Ephesians 2:1 through 3,

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Dead in sin. Under the power of the devil. By nature children under the wrath of God like the rest of mankind. Beloved, where is there the ability to receive Scripture as the word of God there? Where is the ability to respond to God there? It doesn't exist. Death is a condition of non-life, non-ability.

And if you look over at Ephesians 4:17, Paul speaking to believers, contrasts their present condition with what the nature of the rest of mankind is and what they used to be themselves. Ephesians 4:17.

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Beloved, that's the spiritual condition of every unsaved man, darkened, alienated, ignorant, hard, callous. There is no capacity of responsiveness to the word of God found in the natural man. And so here's the spiritual reality and this is why men reject the Bible. Beloved, I'll say this again throughout the course of this morning's time together, the problem is not with the Bible. The problem is not that Scripture is somehow inadequate

or is imperfect. The problem resides within the heart of man. Man is born, women are born with a natural disposition against the truth. They are born in sin. They are lost in sin. They are helpless spiritually and have no ability to receive anything spiritual or to receive or to act upon anything that is rightly presented to them.

Men are lost in sin and helpless. And beloved, we were all in that condition. We're all born into this condition. No one is born a Christian. No one is born into a natural responsiveness to God. And no amount of splashing water on a baby can take away the original sin that binds their heart and closes their minds to the truth. This is a spiritual problem the physical water cannot wash away. And you know, you talk about baptizing infants and the same thing goes for those who believe in adult baptismal regeneration, that you can be baptized and receive new life. That's not true. It's not an outward work that we need, it's not an outward motion on our physical flesh that can open our spiritual minds to the truth. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "Apart from the enlightenment given only by the Holy Spirit, the things that pertain to salvation are not known and cannot be known to any man." The things that pertain to salvation are not known and cannot be known to any man.

Beloved, that's bad. That's bad. Why do men reject the Bible? It's because they're in bondage to sin. Their hearts are dead and incapable of responding to light and life. It's bad but it gets worse. It's worse than that. It's worse than simply what's inside the man that keeps him from the truth. Yes, he is in bondage to sin but he is also in bondage to Satan. He is in bondage to Satan. There is a supernatural deception that is at work that disposes men against the truth, that restrains them from coming to the truth, and those of you that have loved ones that are so hostile to the truth, this gives you a sense of perspective and takes away a little bit at least, takes away a little bit of the sense of personal rejection when they won't hear your words, takes away a sense of frustration as they continue to go deeper and deeper into darkness, and you start to realize and discern the spiritual reality of these things. There is, as I said, a supernatural deception that is at work in their minds and in their lives.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 4 with me. 2 Corinthians 4. We'll begin reading in verse 1.

1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case...

...the case of those who do not see the glory of the gospel, in the case of those who are perishing, who reject the truth, who are hostile to Christianity, who are hostile to biblical preaching, who are hostile to biblical authority, who are hostile to the exclusivity of Scripture, what's happening in their lives to make them like that? Paul explains it, he says,

4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This is frightening. This is troubling. This is humbling. This makes everything at a new level of urgency as we understand it, that those who are rejecting Scripture, who are hostile to it, or indifferent to it, there's something spiritual going on. There is a supernatural foe to their souls, the devil who is also called the adversary, the God of this world, and he has supernaturally blinded their minds so that they cannot understand, they cannot receive, they cannot respond to the things of truth that are so plainly set forth in Scripture. It's supernatural. This isn't simply a matter of intellectual debate. Personally, I believe it's foolish for a Christian to get on stage with an unbeliever and give him an equal platform because there's so much more going on than just an exchange of information for a mixed audience to choose what they think is right. Do you know what? A mixed audience is always going to side with those who share their disposition against the truth. In Matthew 13, Jesus said it himself. He said when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

You know, and so I don't think about this as often as I should, I suppose, I think about it a lot, but you know, as I stand before a group of fine folks like you, preaching to some that are saved and others that are not, you know, there is a supernatural element to everything that transpires when any preacher opens the word of God and preaches it to men. Satan is right there at the door waiting to snatch the word from your heart and then to the extent that men, women, boys and girls come with a hostile attitude, they're just enabling Satan to rob them of that which would be the instrument of God's grace to their souls. Satan is a malignant force. He's not a cartoon character. He's real. He has power greater than we do. He has the ability to hinder men from understanding the truth and he not only has the power to do that, he does do that. He delights in doing that. There is nothing that Satan finds greater delight in than in turning men away from Christ and turning them to his own service and their own destruction, whether men are conscious that that's what they're doing or not. You know, you're either a child of God or you're a child of the devil. There's no, you know, there are no spiritual free agents that way. So the devil snatches the word away as Jesus himself said and holds men captive.

In 2 Timothy 2, you don't need to turn there, but in 2 Timothy 2, beginning in verse 24, we read this,

24 ...the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Do you see it, beloved? Do you see it? Those that are opposed to Scripture, that are opposed to the gospel of grace found in Jesus Christ, they are under the snare of the devil. They are under his power. They are under a power that they do not have the ability to

deliver themselves from. A supernatural enemy holds their soul captive and thus blinds them to the truth.

Why do men reject the Bible? Jesus also said in John 3, John 3, he said this, he said, John 3:19,

19 ... this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

And so beloved, here we are, we have somebody that has no ability to receive the word of God, has a love for sin that causes them to reject the word so that their sin is not confronted and that they would have to give it up, and on top of that, on top of that you have a devil that is active and is instigating all kinds of resistance and confusion both within the hearts of men and in the false philosophies and false religions that surround the proclamation of truth. There is a very real sense in which the presentation of the gospel, the proclamation of the gospel, the call to repent, the desire for men to be saved, it's a work that is impossible. It is humanly impossible for us to accomplish this in our own power because you and I do not have the power to release someone from the bondage of Satan. We do not have the power to turn their hearts, their inner man, away from their love of sin, away from darkness and unto light and unto a love of truth. That power is not given to men. It's not given to parents or grandparents.

Why do men reject the Bible? Beloved, it's so crucial for you to see this. There's no defect in Scripture. The problem is not something that is intrinsic to the character and nature of the pristine word of God. The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. It is clean. It is pure. It is accurate. Everything good that we know about spiritual things comes to us through the pages of Scripture and it is an unmixed blessing. The reason men reject the Bible is because they are in bondage to sin, they are in bondage to Satan.

Think about it this way, I've used this example and it's very necessary and helpful for us to see it in these simplistic ways. Beloved, we're filled with light in this room, literal light coming down from the ceiling, lamps that are above us. We go outside, we've got the light of the sun. We see it, it's clear, the light is there. Now, if a blind person entered into the room, he or she would not be able to see the light. If we measured the existence of light or the goodness of light simply through the perspective of a blind person, we would completely miss it because a blind person does not see light. But beloved, that doesn't mean that the light isn't there. The fact that the receptor doesn't have the capacity to appreciate it says nothing about the external reality of light. In the same way, the fact that a majority of mankind, the fact that people close to you, reject the truth and mock you for holding it, says nothing about the perfection and the purity of the word of God. It's simply an indication that they do not have the capacity to receive it and in that distinction, and in that difference, is a world of understanding about the nature of Scripture and what is necessary for us to come to believe it.

Why do men reject the Bible? No failure of Scripture whatsoever. That could not possibly be the explanation. It's not that the Bible is boring. It's not that people don't like to read that they reject Scripture. There's none of those kinds of explanations. The fault lies within the heart of men. They are lost. They are dead. And we can't overlook that reality as we deal with these issues.

Well, that brings us to our second question this morning. In light of that, in light of the fact that all men are born into that condition, second question we want to answer today: why then do we believe the Bible? Why do we believe the Bible? How did we pass from darkness into light? How did we pass from ignorance into some measure of understanding? How did we go from being hostile fools, speaking autobiographically here, how did we go from being a hostile fool to one whose mind is in subjection to the word of God? Because we were all born bound. We were all born blind. We all loved our sin. Well, beloved, the answer to that question is completely humbling. To understand the answer to that question is to realize that there can't be anything about me, about you, if you believe Scripture today, there's nothing intrinsically good, meritorious or better about you that puts you in that condition today because you were just like the rest. We were all just like them, Ephesians 4, we all dwelt in that realm of darkness. So it can't be that we have some kind of superior wisdom over which we can boast.

So what happened to us that we believe the Bible? How is it that what we were once blind to we now can see? And you remember how in John 9 Jesus came and took the man who was physically born blind and, you know, and he applied things to his eyes and the man was able to see. The Pharisees questioned him, "How is it that you can see now when before you couldn't?" And this man in the simplicity of what happened to him said, "All I can tell you is Jesus applied mud to my eyes and whereas before I was blind, now I can see." That's the reality of it and the distinguishing factor in that man's ability to go from blindness to sight was the work of Christ on him. In like manner, beloved, what happened to us is, the reason that we can believe and receive Scripture today, it's because the Holy Spirit did a gracious work in our hearts that he did not have to do. God showed favor to us that we did not deserve. Christ showed a kindness to us under which he had no obligation to extend. The Holy Spirit took Scripture and made it real to us. In an act of undeserved kindness, undeserved favor, God opened our hearts to understand that which we previously rejected, and not simply gave us a new mental perspective, he reoriented the entire moral disposition of our heart in salvation.

Go back to Romans 8 where we began. Romans 8 where we began, and don't let me forget to go to Ephesians 2. I won't. We're going to go to Romans and 1 Corinthians and then to Ephesians 2. Immediately after those verses that we read in, verse 7, the mind that set on the flesh does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. We're all there, then how did we ever get out? Verse 9, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Verse 11, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." The Spirit of God does a work in the hearts of those that once were dead but now are alive, the Spirit of God has done a work. He has taken out, in the language of

Jeremiah, he has taken out the heart of stone and put in a warm beating heart of flesh. One that was before cold and dead in his inner man has been given a new life from God himself that is responsive to the things of God. The Spirit of God dwells within you and that's not because you made him come in, as if you had control over the sovereign Spirit of the universe, it's because he sovereignly worked and exercised on your heart to do something for your benefit that you did not deserve.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2. 1 Corinthians 2. We're talking about things that a pastor does not have the power to convey by laying on of hands, it's something that no priest can do for you, parents can't do this for their children as much as they would love to do so. We are rendered helpless before the Spirit of God and the sooner, beloved, the sooner that we embrace and accept that the sooner we can be in the realm that God can bless. When we are divested of our pride, when we are divested of our self-sufficiency, when we are cast upon the mercy of God alone to help us in these spiritual realms, then we are in a position for the manifestation of the blessing of God.

Look at 1 Corinthians 2:12.

12 Now we have received [Paul speaking in the inclusive "we" to these believers at the church of Corinth] not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

What a great reality to enter into. What a great reality to understand. We have received the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God has come to us and part of his coming to us was to enable us, to give us an ability that we did not have beforehand, to give us the ability to understand the things that were previously locked away from our minds, to give us a receptivity to the things that we previously rejected, to know the things of God that previously were foolishness to us. It is a work of the Spirit of God.

One of the aspects, one of the reasons that God saved you, stated another way, one of the benefits of true salvation, one of the marks of genuine regeneration, is that God puts into the heart of the one that he saves an ability to understand the things from the Spirit of God that previously was not in that man's mind, that was not in that man's heart, that was not within that man's ability. That's why those of you that go to foreign places, talk with believers there that haven't had, you know, a lot of exposure to biblical teaching but they're genuinely saved, it's remarkable to see the insight that they have in spiritual things. It's not because of superior intellect and superior study necessarily, it's the fact that the Spirit of God has intervened to help them and to give them something that they didn't have, a gift from God to know the things of God, that person might henceforth live to the glory of God.

Beloved, if you and I, if you and I believe Scripture today, if you and I have a heartfelt conviction that it is the word of God, we desire it, we believe it, we want to grow in it, we have grown in it, we have that because the Holy Spirit of God worked in our hearts so that we would receive Scripture. He brought a sovereign supernatural influence greater than the supernatural resistance of Satan, greater than the power of sin in your heart, God

sovereignly, God graciously, God powerfully, overcame that, overcame that principle of resistance within you, that principle of ignorance within you, and put within you his Spirit, gave you a new nature so that whereas once you were blind, now you are able to see.

The Spirit of God does an inner work to give you a new capacity to discern, receive and believe divine truth. That, if we can just take a moment of application for the way that that affects us in our minds and in our disposition, this is completely humbling. This is completely humbling. I can't take any credit for that. I didn't have the power to get out from it and I had no way to obligate or to expect or to demand God to be gracious to me; wasn't anything I could do to provoke God to be that kind to me. I was dependent before I even knew it for him to be gracious to me. I can't take credit for it. This does not make me better than the person next to me who rejects Scripture. It doesn't make me better as a man, somehow superior to them in my intrinsic being. It's the same way for you, beloved. If you believe the word of God, if you treasure the word of God, it's because the Spirit of God has been gracious to you.

The Baptist Confession of 1689 says this, remember, we're answering the question why do we believe the Bible? The Baptist Confession of 1689 says it this way. "The authority of the Holy Scripture for which it ought to be believed depends not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, its author who is truth itself, therefore it is to be received because it is the word of God." Now going on, listen to this, "Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." The reason that we believe, the reason that we have conviction, the reason that we are animated about the word of God, is because the Spirit of God is doing a work in our hearts, testifying to the truth of the word and with the word that this is the word of God and we receive it on the authority of nothing less than God himself, nothing less than the Spirit of God working in our hearts. That is the source of full persuasion of the truthfulness of the word of God. It comes from the Spirit.

And so beloved, when God saved you, when you heard the gospel, God opened your heart like Lydia in Acts 16 to believe, understand that he did more than simply forgive the guilt of your sin, he did more than just rescue you from hell and put you on a path that leads to eternal life, the multifaceted wonder and the multifaceted gift of all that he has done for us includes the fact that he enabled you to believe the Bible as the word of God. Part of his gift in salvation was to turn your heart toward Scripture and he does this for everyone that he saves. If God, think about it this way, if God is going to bring men and women, boys and girls, under the authority of Jesus Christ, he must bring them under the authority of the Bible if it's going to be true and it's going to be real. And so to ensure the right direction of the principles that work in your heart, part of his gift is to influence you in your inner man to accept the authority of the Bible.

Louis Berkof says this, "Through the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his heart, the Christian stands in the unwavering faith that God is true in his revelation, and therefore as a matter of course, he accepts the testimony of Scripture respecting itself." There's an inner testimony of the Holy Spirit that is at work in the heart of a true Christian that leads

us to say, "This is true. I believe it. I accept it." And we accept the testimony of Scripture because the Spirit of God not only inspired the word of God, he inclines our heart. He moves in our heart. He works in our heart. He changes and influences our heart so that we receive what he himself has produced.

Another theologian says this, "The Christian is persuaded and assured of the infallible truth and the divine authority of the Bible by this inward work of the Spirit within his heart, who opens his mind to perceive the true nature of Scripture, and who applies the word with force and conviction that man may experience the truth that the Bible is from God. It is God, the Christian gladly declares, who testifies to his own word. It is God who identifies what he himself has spoken." To have that conviction is to have something, a gift from God given to us.

Now, that has a really practical effect for those of you that are wandering in darkness, those of you that feel the weight of uncertainty, perhaps your convictions on these things are not settled, they are unsettled and you have a sense that you're lost and you're searching, you are groping in the darkness. You know, that sense of groping in the darkness, that's what you're doing, you are groping in darkness and it's a darkness that is within as well as without of your soul. What this teaching does for you is it gives you a great sense of hope and a great sense of direction into what you need to do. What you need to do is you need to humble yourself before a holy God and say, "God, I don't get this. God, I am confused, I don't understand. I read Scripture and it's a closed book to me. God, I need you to be gracious to me. I ask you to be gracious to me. Send your Spirit upon me that I might understand in the way that's been held forth to me from the word of God." You go and you humble yourself before God and ask him to help you in a way that he has not yet done.

You thought I was going to forget Ephesians 2, didn't you? No, I had, but I remembered just now. Go back to Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2. We looked at the first three verses, dead in sin, dominated by the devil, doomed to suffer the wrath of God. How is it then that Paul is writing to Christians when we were all in that position? What was the distinguishing factor? Verse 4, "But God,"

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

There you were, beloved, there you were a colossally lost soul and God looked on you with mercy. God, having ordained this before the foundation of the world at a point in time in your life said, "Now I will show mercy," and the Spirit of God came upon you, gave you a new heart and the Triune God full of love and mercy despite accusations against his character to the contrary, God, in mercy to you, in love toward you, in kindness toward you, made you alive together with Christ. It is by grace you have been saved.

How do we know the Bible is true? It's a Triune work of God. The Father chose us before the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ authenticated the word during his ministry. And then the Holy Spirit did a distinguishing personal work in our hearts. Beloved, he came to you and me, speaking to Christians here, he came to you and me by name and said, "I will have you as my own. You will come to me. Come to me. You will come." And the Spirit who saved us, who applied the work of redemption to our miserably lost souls, it is now through his infallible testimony, it's through the one who saved us and what he testifies in our heart that we have our final assurance and persuasion of the truthfulness of Scripture. The Bible is a spiritual book that must be spiritually discerned. May God the Holy Spirit help us to that end to draw us to Christ, to receive his word as the final authority, the sufficient authority in our lives. May God have mercy on each one of us to that end.

Let's pray together.

Thank you, Father, for this holy book divine. Thank you for the work of your Spirit who opened its pages to us and continues to do so. Thank you for the Spirit who led us to Christ, drew us to him so that we would most certainly be saved. Father, we disclaim any credit, any merit. We realize that this is all a gracious gift that you have done for us and we give you all the praise and the glory and pray that you would continue it in the hearts that you would help and illuminate those who are struggling, that you would convict of sin, righteousness and judgment in the unbelieving hearts, Father, and that you would send forth your word with even greater force and power in the days to come, not just here but throughout the world, Father, send a sweeping revival of the Spirit drawing men to Christ, drawing men to truth, drawing men to the new birth and to justification by faith alone, Father, so that the glory and the majesty of your name might be extended further and further and further for the glory of God alone. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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