

Systematic Theology: Scripture

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Tonight I want to take a little one week break, I believe it will be, a one week break from our study of the Psalms. We are up to Psalm 51 which is a key Psalm, of course, but I wanted to take a short break from the series on the Psalms to fill in one final gap from our study of systematic theology that we opened this past Saturday. We studied the concepts of authority and of revelation on Saturday talking about the Scriptures and there was just something that I felt like we really needed to fill in. What we're going to see this evening is crucial for your Christian life, it is vital for you to understand every aspect of what we're going to talk about today because it goes to the impenetrable fortress that our faith finds in the revealed word of God in the inspired holy Scriptures, the inerrant Bible that God has given to us. And we need to understand these things and, you know, I opened the time on Saturday for those of you that weren't with us, saying that this study that we're going to have over the next several months in systematic theology is vital for our church but it is also preparatory for future leadership in the church. These are things that we need our future elders to know, to be able to articulate; not simply to affirm in their own heart, they need to be able to understand it, they need to be able to articulate it, they need to be able to defend it and committed to that. This is essential. That's how important it is and so we're kind of laying a foundation and we're setting a bar for leadership as we go through this study on systematic theology every first Saturday of the month.

Now, with that said, God has revealed himself so that men may know him. Finite sinful creatures like you and me could never know an infinite holy God by trying to reach him with our own efforts. Every effort that man makes to save himself or to find God apart from God's revelation is futile and doomed to failure and so we are dependent upon an infinite holy God who is spirit in and of himself, to reveal himself to us as finite creatures of flesh if we're ever going to know him. What we said on Saturday was there are two aspects to God's revelation. There is that aspect known as general revelation, the way that God has imprinted his existence on the creation that is available for all men to see, to understand and to have some knowledge of the existence and the power of God. Secondly, we said that God has revealed himself in special revelation, which is found preeminently in the 66 books of the Bible. Incidentally, whenever you hear me talking about the Bible, I am usually pretty consistent in specifying the number of books, 66 books of the Bible in English, in order to make it clear there is always an implicit rejection of the Apocrypha as a claim to Scripture when I make that statement. That's why I'm always saying 66 as opposed to the Bible which some would say, "Oh, that

includes the Apocrypha." The Apocrypha is not part of God's revelation. That's why we don't have it in the Bibles that we carry about with us; it's why we don't teach them as the word of God. That's important.

Now, so, God has revealed himself in one aspect in general revelation, in a second aspect in special revelation. We got a little more specific as we went along. We said that the product of God's revelation is the Bible, the 66 books of the Bible, I might add; having just made that statement, I need to be consistent. Revelation resulted in a product and there was also the process of revelation meaning that the way that God delivered the product of revelation to us in the 66 books of the Bible, he did by a process of revelation in which the Holy Spirit moved on the writers of Scripture in such a way so that what they wrote is properly called the word of God. We talked about all of that on Saturday. I'm just giving a very brief overview. It's not my intention to repeat the content of those messages. CDs are available out in the lobby if you weren't able to be with us. I encourage you to take several. Take one and give them to your neighbors, your friends, your family. Give them away. We would love for that material to be out.

All of that to say this for this evening, my friends. It's so good to see so many of you out here tonight. Because the Bible is the word of God, meaning that God produced this word through a supernatural act of his Holy Spirit on the writers of Scripture, preserving the writings from error, repressing the effects of men's sin as they wrote so that there was a clear channel of holy revelation that they recorded so that we say that it was God's word that they wrote, here's the thing: because it is God's word, that means something really basic but something very fundamental. It means that God's character determines the nature of Scripture. Because the Bible comes from God, because it is his very word, the Bible is going to be a mirror of, it is going to be a reflection of the character of the one who produced it. That is essential for you to know and to grasp and to make that connection. The view that we have of Scripture, that it is God's word, because it is God's word gives us an indication, gives us an imprint of what the character of that word is going to be.

What can we say about God? We could save many things about God but one thing that we can say about him for certain is this: God is perfect and God is true. And what does that mean for his word? It means that his word is perfect and his word is true. Titus 1:2, if you want some verses to jot down, Titus 1:2 says God cannot lie. It's impossible for God to lie because he is truth. It is an essential attribute of his so he cannot lie. He cannot violate his own character so that the word that he gave us – mark it – his word cannot lie. It's rooted in the character of God. 2 Samuel 7:28 says, "Your words are truth." Psalm 119:160 says, "The sum of Your word is truth." Your words, plural, individually are truth. The sum of your word is truth. Truth through and through with no admixture of error, nothing deceptive, nothing misleading – watch it – nothing mistaken in God's word whatsoever. That's the only way that it could be. The character of God who revealed his word determines the product that we are left with.

What do we mean by this? Well, it's funny how you just have to get down to defining every term that you use. What do we mean when we say that the word of God is truth?

That God is truth? What do we mean by that? Well, let me put it really simply: what God says is the way things really are. What God says conforms to fact and reality without any exceptions. What God says, what God's word says is accurate. It is right. It is true. It cannot be broken. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35 that, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Again, that's Matthew 24:35. So what we believe about the Bible is it's the word of God. What we believe about God is that he is perfect and true and he cannot lie therefore we add $2+2 = 4$ meaning that Scripture is true, Scripture cannot lie, Scripture cannot mislead. God is perfect, Scripture is perfect. Alright? This is basic.

Now, let's say this: there are many forms, many kinds of subtle unbelief that would be all too happy to undermine what we just said about the Scriptures. There are many subtleties that people will try to inject. On the one hand, using a term that I came up with on Saturday and I intend to use this a lot more, actually I used it on Sunday. That doesn't matter, though. There are a lot of men, especially in academic circles, who because they need to keep their jobs, will make a head fake toward the perfection of Scripture. They will make certain affirmations of words that say, "Yes, I believe in the inspiration of the Bible," but when you watch what they say closely, you'll see they do not mean the same thing that you and I mean when we say that and so we have to be aware of that. They make you think with a head fake like on the basketball court, that they're going to go in one direction when actually as they're making the head fake, they know exactly that they're going to go someplace else.

We want to be aware of men like that. We want to watch out for them. We want to protect ourselves from them, and not just protect ourselves, beloved, what you and I should want to do as believers in Christ, and I'm speaking to you all as Christians here this evening, realizing that there may be some of you that don't yet know Christ, but it's not just for our sake that we want to do this and to protect it and to uphold God's word. Don't we owe a duty of loyalty to this book? Don't we owe our allegiance to the God who gave us such a wonderful book? To the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Incarnation of the word of God and this word that testifies to the spiritual truths that resulted in the deliverance of your soul from sin, judgment and hell? Don't we owe an allegiance to a book like that, to defend it? Wouldn't you, heads of households, if a robber broke into your home, wouldn't you act to defend your family if they were a threat to your family? Wouldn't you step up like a man and defend your family from the threat? Well, you see, that's what we do as Christians toward this book. When there are a multitude of attacks and questions that are cast upon the Scripture, it is our blessed duty, and I would say, our blessed privilege to step up and to give our efforts, to give our mind, to give our energy, to give our support, to whatever is necessary to support and defend this word by which our souls have found the true knowledge of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins. You see, this is a matter of character for us. This is a matter of allegiance and loyalty and the kind of people we should be, that we're not indifferent to things that would attack and undermine the Bible. No, we'll step forward, we'll defend it, we'll honor Scripture as a church and trust God to do with that as he will no matter what men may say against us, no matter how they may mock us as being unsophisticated hicks or whatever they might

want to say. We don't care what men say because we are more preeminently concerned to defend this book which we love and which is the word of God.

So with that, I want to give you five simple points tonight that are essential to kind of flesh out your understanding of the inspiration of Scripture. These are just an outworking of the principles that I've already stated here this evening as well as on Sunday morning. I'm going to state these five points in simple everyday language but I'm going to use them to introduce some technical theological terms that will help you as you know and read and study theology. So that's going to be the idea, five simple expressions of the truth of Scripture, implications of the truth of Scripture, and under that we will give technical terms that will inform your future theological reading. And those of you that may perhaps have a position as a deacon or an elder in the church in your future here, it is the expectation that you would be able to understand these technical terms, to know what they mean and to be able to explain them to others. That's the bar that we're setting here with this series. That's what we want from the men in our church so that there would be a number of men that are committed to these central truths and we gather together and we stick together in order to uphold God's word and honor it as it deserves.

Now, one preliminary matter as we begin that I need to make an acknowledgment of. Technically speaking, and this is kind of a parenthesis and if you forget this, it's okay, but I do need to say it for the sake of this study and for the sake of accuracy. Technically speaking, the inspiration of Scripture as we have described it, refers only to the original autographs, what's called the autographs, the original manuscripts that came from the pen of the biblical writers. And we don't have those original manuscripts any longer and we should be thankful to God that we don't because men would be predisposed to worship the manuscript itself or, as we've seen in recent years with the rise of Islamic terrorists in the Middle East, if they were kept in a museum someplace, they would be subject to army forces going in and destroying them. God did something better to preserve his word than preserving the original manuscripts, what he did was he worked through the people at the time who understood they had something precious and multiplied copies upon copies so that with the New Testament we have thousands upon thousands of partial and complete manuscripts of the original word of God. They are copies and so they sometimes have little minor disagreements between each other, but that doesn't hinder our study at all and it doesn't hinder us in believing and affirming dogmatically that we have the word of God in our hands as it was originally given to us. This is essential for you to understand. The entire science of textual criticism evaluates the manuscript evidence and the history of the transmission of those manuscripts and compares them and shows us in a way that is clear and compelling, this is what the original must have said, and that is a well-developed field of study. Through its results we can dogmatically say that we have the word of God as it was originally given, even though we don't have a manuscript that bears the handwriting of the Apostle Paul, for example.

Now, that's a whole realm of study that I just gave two minutes to and that's all that I'm going to say about it. Maybe at some point in the future we could go into much more detail about the theories of textual criticism, do we refer to that which the manuscript that have the greatest number or those of which are the oldest and closest to the original time.

That's a fascinating discussion. It's not what we're here to do today. I just want to acknowledge that for the sake of someone who might be here and be listening for that issue or if it comes out later on. We acknowledge that issue but we move on, assuming that we have the word of God in our hands today as it was originally given to us, and that is a safe and worthy assumption. We'll leave further comments on that for another time but I feel better having said it and I hope you feel better too. I really do.

Now, with that said, our first point for tonight as we consider the truth of Scripture. Point 1: all Scripture is inspired. All Scripture is inspired. That's our first point here this evening. All Scripture is inspired. Now, why do you even need to say that? 2 Timothy 3:16 is very clear, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Well, you and I would take that at face value but as I said, there are men who want to make a head fake; they want to give one impression when they mean something else. So there are some men like this who will affirm superficially the inspiration of the Bible but if you talk to them in a coffee shop or you talk to them privately, if you get them off-line, they'll say, "Well, it's not really all inspired." They might affirm that Scripture is inspired when it's teaching on faith and doctrine but not inspired and minimize its scientific or historic accuracy when it is convenient for them to make that accusation against God's word. We could call their view partial inspiration, and what that does is, and watch what happens here, this is so evident, it is so obvious and you can see why it is such a mortal threat to the truth of Scripture: as soon as a man does anything other than say all of the Bible is inspired by God in all of its parts, Genesis 1:1 through the end of Revelation, as soon as he says some but not all, who is now the authority? Who is the authority once a man makes that statement? You're not in your heads. You see it. It's no longer that the Bible is over him making judgments on him, he is standing over the Bible and saying, "I will determine, I will tell you that this part is from God but this part is not." It is a wicked form of treachery against the Scripture to make statements like that. It leaves to the judgment of man what parts are or are not inspired and that is a false view of Scripture. As I said, in 2 Timothy 3:16, the Bible says that, "All Scripture is inspired by God," and you can look but there is no footnote making exceptions for Genesis 1 and 2 or the historicity of Adam or other important doctrines of Scripture.

So all Scripture is inspired by God and I'm going to give you a technical term now that you need to know, especially you men that have aspirations for spiritual leadership at Truth Community Church. You need to know this term. We hold to a view that is known as plenary inspiration. Plenary inspiration, p-l-e-n-a-r-y. Plenary inspiration. It simply means full or complete. You talk about going to a conference and a plenary session is one that is open and all of the attendees of the conference are intended to be at a plenary session. It's for everyone. Well, when we speak of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, we mean simply this: that the inspiration of God extends to all the Bible equally and fully. There are no diminished parts of the Bible. It is all inspired by God and therefore since it all comes from God, going back to our original points at the beginning of the message, since it's all from God, it's all true and accurate and trustworthy. That is an essential part of the view of God. So to talk about plenary inspiration is to say, we look at the Bible as a whole, we say all of it, we affirm that all of it is inspired by God and therefore truthful, accurate and trustworthy. Speaking about it collectively as a whole unit, all of the Bible is

like that. All Scripture is inspired by God. That's point 1. Plenary inspiration is the term that is used to describe that aspect of Scripture.

Now, secondly. Some of this, if these terms are new to you and this level of discussion of Scripture is new to you, it might surprise you that these terms are even necessary but over the course of defending Scripture over the decades and centuries, theologians and the true men of God have found it necessary to define things with great exactness so that it is not open to attack from those who do not share our convictions. So this second point is like that. It sounds a bit like the first one but it's different. Secondly: the words of Scripture are inspired. The words of Scripture are inspired.

Now, some people might say, "Well, I agree with you that all of Scripture is inspired. Of course we have to say that. We agree with you on that." But again, they might mean something different as they say that than what we mean. They will minimize inspiration by saying something like this, "Well, we believe that the ideas of Scripture are inspired but not necessarily the precise words on the page. God gave the human writers the ideas to write but then they wrote it out in their own words and God kind of left it at that without getting involved in all of the details of Scripture." This view would give us a general but not a precise inspiration of God's word. We don't believe that. We hold to a view that is known as verbal inspiration. Verbal inspiration, which simply means this: God directed the writers not only in the ideas about which they wrote, the concepts or the historical facts about which they wrote, God guided them in the choice of the very words that they used. This is verbal inspiration so that we cannot separate the ideas of Scripture from the words that are used to express them.

That's a very important point. Think about it from your own perspective: aren't the words that you choose important to expressing your ideas? You know, you think about a young man with a young woman who is going to write her a love letter or a love text, whatever romantics do these days, he's going to choose his words carefully to express the thoughts of his heart to communicate exactly what he thinks about her and her to him, certainly in days gone by when letter writing was more prominent. But the words matter. The words used to express the affection of your heart to the woman or the man that you are interested in matter. The precise words that are said matter. Isn't it obvious that the precise words that God would use to express his revelation to man are a matter of utmost importance to him? That he would express it accurately, not in a general way? But a God of precision, a God of detail, the God who knows when a sparrow falls, the God who knows the number of hairs on your head, if he is involved in his creation in that level of detail, isn't it obvious that he will give an extraordinary level of detail to the way that he expresses himself when he reveals himself in words to men?

This is obvious and so we hold to verbal inspiration. Jesus said in Matthew 5, a text that we'll get to in a few weeks in our study of the Sermon on the Mount on Sunday mornings, Jesus said, "Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished." He extended inspiration, as it were, to the very letters; to the truth of the words, to the very letter. And you can find places in Scripture where the difference between singular and plural like in Galatians 3, makes a huge difference. The use of a

verb tense makes a huge difference. All of this expressing the fact that significant matters of truth hinge on the exact way that thoughts are expressed in the words that are used and so we believe in verbal inspiration. Not simply the ideas but the very words of Scripture as given in the original language were inspired by God.

And so if Jesus said that the smallest letter, the smallest stroke could not be broken and – watch this, all of this is tied together. Your view of Christ, your submission to Christ is tied up in this doctrine. If Christ said that the smallest letter couldn't be broken, how could we as his disciples hold a lesser view of Scripture than he does? What the Lord teaches about his word is what we believe about his word because he is our Lord and teacher and whatever he says is right and we submit to him gladly and we follow his thoughts. We think his thoughts after him and we don't accommodate ourselves to a spirit of unbelief in the spirit of our age.

So plenary inspiration, all of the Bible is equally inspired; verbal inspiration, the very words of Scripture are inspired. Point 3 here this evening: Scripture is without error. Scripture is without error. Now, people would approach Scripture perhaps this is more common outside the church as inside it, to say something like this, "Men wrote the Scripture and to err is human and therefore since men err and men wrote the Scripture, therefore Scripture has errors in." They undermine trusting the Bible at face value by impugning the Scriptures by pointing to the human element of the authorship in it.

Now, before I address the technical term that describes Scripture is without error, let's just say this and go back to our understanding of the whole process of inspiration. This is really crucial and as you start to see these things, you see how they fit together and you see the implications of doctrine and you already know, every one of you that has heard the teaching on Saturday, every one of you already knows the answer to that objection that, "Oh, if it was written by men, then it must have error in it." You know the answer to that. You know how to refute that. You know why that view is wrong. It's based on our view of inspiration. God through the power of his Holy Spirit, influenced and directed the men who wrote the Scripture, repressing the effect of sin on their writings and also excluding error from their thinking in such a way that what they wrote was true, accurate and a correct expression of the very words that God wanted them to write. Only when you deny the inspiration of God in the writing of the Scripture can you ever say that because it's a human book therefore it has errors in it. That's not true. We affirm, we recognize, we embrace the human element of authorship but those men – watch this, this is so important – those men were not writing simply according to their own natural abilities. They had a supernatural enablement from the Holy Spirit that enabled them to transcend their human limitations to express the very thoughts in the very words that God would have them to do. It is the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit that protects it from error. There you go.

So there's a term that most of you will be familiar with that expresses the idea that Scripture is without error and it is this: we hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. The inerrancy of Scripture, simply meaning that Scripture has no errors in it. There are no mistakes. There are no mistakes of history, archaeology, of scientific fact. There is no

mistake in faith, doctrine or record of anything. It's all accurate because it's all from God. The determinative influence on the final product of revelation was the Spirit of God.

Now, beloved, watch this, and ultimately setting aside the thoughts of future leadership and all of that and just talking to us all as individual Christians, what should be welling up in your heart as we discuss these things is this tremendous sense of confidence and gratitude at what God has given. To have a book like this in your hands is to have the greatest treasure in the universe because in this book is the mind of God, is the Creator, is the Savior, is the Redeemer. The word of God expresses the mind of God. What Scripture says, God says. So it is precious and what this means is that as you open your Bible, as you read it, you can have absolute confidence that what you're reading is true; that it is free from error; that the Bible is right even if all men in the world contradict it. It gives you a place to stand. And look, beloved, when you and I are all walking through this life with an ultimate destination at the judgment seat of God, don't you want something that you can absolutely rely on? To know for certain that what it says is true? You know, there is a very real sense in which those of you who are Christians here today, is that we rest our eternal well-being on what we're saying tonight is true, that God's word is true and accurate and it can be relied upon. If it can't, your hope in Christ is in vain because it's only in the Scriptures that we know anything about Christ. So, you see, you can't compromise on the authority of Scripture without ultimately compromising and giving up biblical salvation. They are a package that go together because it is the Scripture that testifies to the reality of salvation, and it is only in the written word of God that we have any sure word from God. There is no other word from him. So what does inerrancy mean? It means that we're confident that Scripture is free from error.

Now, just to be a little bit more precise on this. This is worthy of a message in and of itself. What we're saying is, what that applies to is when we interpret a passage correctly that is in accordance with the writer's intention and it is in harmony with other biblical passages, we're saying that Scripture never affirms anything that is contrary to fact and so we read Scripture with the confidence that it is true but we understand that we can't just make up our own ideas, quote a Bible verse out of context and say our ideas are inerrant. It has to be the truth of what Scripture is actually teaching that this attaches to. Properly interpreted, we can say that Scripture – I like this word. This comes from Robert Raymond's "Systematic Theology," page 70 – Scripture is incapable of teaching error. Scripture cannot teach falsehood when it is properly understood; when it is viewed consistently with itself. There is a roughly equivalent term called infallibility. Inerrancy and infallibility. Infallibility simply meaning that Scripture can be trusted. It is not misleading because it is God's word. So I'm going to wrap up this third point here. We believe that Scripture is absolutely without error. It is absolutely trustworthy in whole and in part because it comes from a God who is absolutely trustworthy, who cannot lie and who would not like. He would never deceive you.

Now, let me back up and go off on a little bit of a tangent here and help you understand something very practical that you wouldn't necessarily think about in terms of what this means for life decisions that you would make. It is not a trustworthy basis to live your life and to make decisions as you seek the will of God simply by what you think or feel in

your mind or simply by the way circumstances seem to fall in line and in place. That is not a trustworthy way for you to determine the will of God for your life because you hear people talk this way all the time. Again, this is a message for another time, but say, "Well, you know, the Lord opened the door for me to do this and therefore I'm going to go do it." Well, you know, that may or may not be true but that is not a safe way for you to exclusively try to determine the will of God for your life. The safety for you in determining the will of God for your life and looking for God's guidance in your life is to have this fundamental conviction of your soul that you say I will never violate, and you say to yourself, "I will never violate a biblical principle no matter how convenient it may seem to be, no matter how right it may seem to be." So because Scripture – and this is tied to our view of Scripture – if you believe that Scripture is infallible meaning that it is trustworthy and that it will never lead you astray, then when it comes to making decisions about marriage or about family or about finances or things like that, you say, "I'm never going to violate a biblical principle."

Let me give you a specific illustration of how this would work out. Here's something that you can understand perfectly and everybody can relate to. If you're just guided by your emotions and just guided by the thought that circumstances are a reliable way for me to understand God's will, and this happens all the time, a Christian, let's say a Christian young woman says, "I can marry this un-Christian, this non-Christian man, this unbeliever. God brought our relationship together, after all, and he loves me and he wants to marry me. The door is open. You know, I've been waiting a long time. I'm going to do this and this is because God has opened the door for me to have this marriage to this non-Christian man." And all of your emotions and all of the circumstances line up and you have foolish professing Christians saying, "Yes, go for it. God will work it out in the end." Then you spend your life in a miserable marriage unequally yoked and wonder how did it ever go wrong. Well, what went wrong was that you relied on your emotions and your interpretation of circumstances over the biblical principle that says, "Don't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. You should only be married in the Lord."

And so because you've been conditioned to think that circumstances and whatever is possible must be what God's will is and you neglect biblical principles, you walk right into an earthly hellhole for your marriage. And why are you in that position? It's because you violated a biblical principle. And you should honor in that scenario the woman, the man who is considering marriage, should honor the biblical principle above his emotional attachments, above the circumstances, above the pleadings, above the pull of his desires and say, "Everything is subordinate to that one biblical principle and I'll rest and stand on that and if I'm never married, I'm never married. I'm just not going to violate a biblical principle about what biblical marriage should be." That illustrates for you how the Bible guides you and sometimes will contradict your sense of circumstances and you must live that way. You must honor that and you take the long term view and say, "Whatever else happens to me in life, to the best of my ability, I will honor biblical principle over even my own desires."

That you can carry – listen to me – you can carry that biblical approach to life because of doctrine, because Scripture is infallible, which means Scripture is trustworthy, which

means it will never lead you astray, which means that when you make decisions based on biblical principle, you're always doing the right thing no matter how it feels to the contrary. So you see, beloved, God has revealed himself and he has revealed himself in this word. That means that it is true and it's trustworthy and it's right and it means that you can trust the Bible all the way to the point of specific life decisions that you make. And you say, "But all of my life is at stake here, buddy." I say exactly. All the more reason, I say in response, for you to do what Scripture would tell you to do. The more that's at stake, the more you trust the Bible.

So, point 4, having said all of that and just helping you to see that this has practical implications for Christian living, point 4: Scripture is clear. Scripture is clear. Beloved, this is all so very important. Every one of these points could be a separate message but I won't do that to you. God inspired the scriptures because he wanted to communicate, and if God wanted to communicate to man, you can assume and know that he wanted his communication to be understood. He wrote it so that it would be understood by men, not to hide the truth under a bushel. Jesus said, didn't he in Matthew 5, "Don't hide your light under a bushel," speaking about the nature of the way the Christian life is to be lived. We'll see that in a few weeks also. Well, look, don't you think that God applied his own principles to his own revelation of the way that he revealed Scripture? If Christ commands us not to put our light under a bushel where it cannot be seen and understood and observed, isn't it obvious that when God communicated in Scripture that he intended it to be light that would communicate and be clear rather than hiding it and cloaking it in obscure language and in mysteries that only a few could understand? This is obvious. God inspired Scripture in a way to ensure that it would communicate clearly and the term, the technical term that we want you to know, and I like to just say this word. You know, there are times where I could just look in the mirror and just say this word just in the privacy of my own home: perspicuity. Perspicuity. Don't you just love the sound of that word? The sound of that word is good. Perspicuity. Perspicuity simply means clarity. It means that Scripture is clear. The Bible's main teachings – watch this – are sufficiently clear so that they can be grasped without special expertise. The Bible claims that kind of clarity for itself.

Earlier this evening Andrew read Psalm 19:7, "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Making wise the simple. God gave his testimony in order to give wisdom even to men who are prone to making mistakes and being deceived. People like you and me. You say, "I'm not an expert." That doesn't keep you from God's word. You say, "I'm a simple man. I have only a high school education." You can read God's word with profit. It is stunning to me to talk to mature Christians, I think of one man in particular who was a close friend who is in heaven now, had nothing more than a high school education, had some of the deepest profound spiritual insights that I did not get in seminary all because he was simply a man of the word. Thank God for Bob M. And what Scripture says is that it is so clear that it profits men from all walks of life and it can do that because it's clear. Its main teachings can be understood without special expertise and the way of salvation is clear to any sinner that would open a Bible and honestly look for it. Now, that's all I'm going to say about that. I preached a message a few months ago entitled "Why Scripture can be understood," that deals with this doctrine in length. You

can find that on our website if you're interested in it more. The doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture.

So here's what we've said. We have said that all Scripture is inspired; every word of Scripture is inspired; Scripture is without error; Scripture is clear. It brings us to our final point for this evening and it's this: Scripture is sufficient. Scripture is sufficient. Scripture is enough and this is a truth worth dying for. All of these truths are worth dying for. These things are sacred that we're talking about here tonight. We're talking about God. We're talking about Christ. We're talking about his word. We're talking about how he makes salvation known, how he reveals himself with clarity and accuracy to men. These are things for us to spill our blood over if the occasion would ever come to it, and the fact that Scripture is sufficient is one of those truths.

What do we mean by that, Scripture is sufficient? Simply this: the Bible contains everything that is necessary to find salvation in Christ, to trust him and to obey him in a way that is acceptable to God. I'll say it again: the Bible contains everything necessary to find salvation in Christ, to trust him and to obey him acceptably.

Let me show you one passage. I've kind of been quoting passages without having you turn anywhere in your Bible. That's highly unusual for this pulpit. Turn to 2 Timothy 3:15 and we'll wrap this up for this evening. 2 Timothy 3, just before the book of Hebrews, the book of Titus. 2 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 15, and there are two parts to this: Scripture can lead a man to the knowledge of Christ and Scripture is sufficient for a Christian to lead a godly life. You don't need anything else. Don't waste your time looking for words of God from other sources whether it's Catholic tradition, books that the Mormons proclaim or of private voices in your head. Don't do that. Scripture is enough. You honor Scripture by honoring its sufficiency.

2 Timothy 3:15, Paul said to Timothy, "from childhood," notice the simplicity, notice the clarity, even a child can understand this, "from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It's enough to lead a man to Christ, Scripture is. Then he goes on talking about bringing Christians to maturity. Verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate," watch it, "equipped for every good work." Whatever comes to you in your life whether it's joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, sickness or health, riches or poverty, conflict or peace, everything that is necessary for you to lead a godly life through those circumstances that God providentially ordains for you is found in the Bible. That's why we need to be students of Scripture. That's why you need to be reading the Bible every day, to feed off of it, to have it shape your thinking.

And the sufficiency of Scripture is reinforced by its finality. Look at the final verses of the Bible in Revelation 22. We'll end with this, almost. Revelation 22. What should be impressed upon your mind as we close out this time tonight, is to have such a high and elevated view of the Bible, to respect it, to honor it. That's the only way that a Christian could properly respond to God's word is to respect it; when you understand its

trustworthy nature and the source from which it came. And God sets his own seal that is not to be broken upon the finality of Scripture when he says in Revelation 22:18, in essence the final words of the Canon saying, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book," remember, this is the final book of the Bible, "if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy," parenthetically I might say, by denying their inspiration and taking away and saying that part's not God's word, "God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." Then there is this final affirmation, this attestation, this is a horrible analogy but the notary seal of authenticity placed as John concludes his book, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen." Scripture ends on a note that says, "Don't tamper with his word. Don't add to it. Don't take away from it." Why? Because it's inspired by God. It's a treasure. It's trustworthy.

Friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, you can trust the Bible and as corporately we move forward as a church, we're not only going to trust the Bible, we're going to defend it to the very best of our ability.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this absolutely perfect book which you have given to us. It tells us all that we need to know about you and to walk in obedience to you. We thank you that we can trust the Bible. Father, we pray that you would affirm deeply in the heart of each person here, of each person that comes into contact with this material in subsequent media, that they would be reinforced, that they would be strengthened to love your word, to trust it, to obey it, to teach it, to uphold it, to proclaim it to the lost. Father, we thank you that in your word we have a fortress and a refuge of truth in a world that's gone mad, in the absolute insanity of our age, we can set it aside and open a Bible and still find the truth, the truth unchanged and unchanging. O God, thank you for Scripture and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for this time together with so many wonderful friends in Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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