

# The Canon and God's Existence

*Building a Christian Mind*

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 19:7-11  
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I want to start tonight's message with a little background maybe to set the stage for what we have to see from God's word tonight. It's a little bit combination of two personal anecdotes that have a spiritual purpose, not a self-display purpose to them. I've told you in the past, mentioned it from time to time, the night before I was converted to Christ, I thought that I was a Christian, a friend and I got together, there's a lot of drinking, things like that that were done; in the middle of my wickedness I thought, "I'm sinning against God and I don't care. I'm going to do what I want to do." And did and, you know, I woke up the next morning greatly convicted about my sinfulness and it was at that point that I repented and put my faith in Christ. Don't need to go into the details of that any more than that, but just that there were on that night before November 19, 1983, that night there were certain laws that I broke, I knowingly, willfully broke, and I realized that in the morning and the Spirit of God moved in my heart awakened me and led me to Christ, for which I am very profoundly grateful. And for the longest period of time, I look back at that and, you know, thought just what a great sin that was. What I didn't realize until quite recently was that there was a prior episode in my life that I want to describe to you again because it sets the stage for what we're talking about so critically here this evening, and I've mentioned this a time or two as well, but I've never quite put them together, even in my own mind in quite the same way.

A few months prior to that drunken night of which I am ashamed, there was a night of even greater shame that, you know, I didn't appreciate the significance of it at the time. I made this silly profession of being a Christian. I was not a Christian, but I claimed to be one but there was absolutely no fruit in my life. I had no interest in the word of God. I could not say the name of Jesus Christ. I literally could not force those words off of my lips. I prayed only when I wanted things. I had no church that I went to. I had no love for the people of God. So it was a completely bogus claim to being a Christian is my point, but still there was this thing in my mind that I needed to be a Christian, that I needed to do something about that, and so one night in particular, I remember, I don't have the exact little Bible, it was a little Gideon's Bible. Did any of you ever get Gideon Bibles on a college campus or something like that, those noble people handing out the word of God? I had one of those that had been given to me on the college campus some time earlier, and I thought, you know, what I really should read the word of God tonight. And so I picked up a little Gideon's New Testament about the size of this and I was actually laying

in my bed. I was half asleep. I was tired and I didn't care one wit about what I was reading. I just felt like I needed to go through the motion of reading the word of God, and so I turned to, as I recall, I turned to the book of Galatians. Don't ask me why, you know, it was just a random human act there, and I read the first five verses of the first chapter of the book of Galatians. I couldn't have told you five seconds later what I had read, but I remember this very, very distinctly. I closed the Bible and I'm lying on my bed, I won't lay on the platform for the sake of theatrics, but this sickens me to remember that this is what I did. I, laying on my bed, I took a precious copy of God's word and I tossed it over on the dresser, and as I did, I thought deep in my heart, "There. God ought to be satisfied with that." What I want you to see and understand is this, is that that moment of tossing the word of God aside, was a far greater sin than anything that I did to become intoxicated on that night later when I was actually converted to Christ because what that act did and what that was an expression of, was in my heart I despised the word of God. I held it in utter contempt. It's the only way that you could do something like that. I remember distinctly the motions of my heart at that time, and it sickens me to remember that. I wish I could cut off the hand that did that in order to disassociate myself from the act. And here's what you need to understand, beloved, as we enter into this, that distinction and the greater sin being the tossing of the Bible rather than the night of drunkenness, that may not be immediately apparent to you but, believe me, that is by far the greater sin. In fact, it is that greater sin of despising the word of God that enabled the subsequent sin of intoxication to take place. There was no fear of God in my eyes. That's why I could hate his word enough to just treat it with that kind of contempt, and that action was a reflection of a heart attitude toward the word of God that was far darker, far more sinful than what would come later.

Now let me be very clear so I'm not misunderstood here: it is sinful to be a drunk, it is sinful to be intoxicated and to pursue that, and there is no question that that night of intoxication was a dark sin all of its own, but there are degrees of sin and it is far more sinful, beloved, to despise the word of God than anything else. Despising the word enabled me to pursue that night of intoxication later. It was a prior greater sin which enabled the fruit of my heart to come out on the night prior to my conversion. The word of God is precious and it must be treated that way. It must be honored that way. And if you can grasp something of that distinction, you can enter into the spirit of what we have to say this evening. In Isaiah 66:2, you don't need to turn there, I'm still getting used to my new ESV Bible, but in Isaiah 66:2, God – actually, let's go to verse 1 because it's a great tie into what we said on Sunday about creation and God's existence. Now we're moving into the Canon and God's existence. In Isaiah 66:1 and 2 it says, "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?'" Verse 2, "All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD." He's speaking about creation there, but then he goes further than creation as we are going to do tonight and he says, "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." Beloved, the the measure of a godly heart is the response to the word of God and contempt for Scripture, neglect of the Scripture, despising the teaching of the word of God even, is all an indication of a heart that is deep and dark in sin just as mine was that particular night as a student at Indiana University. And I start this way

and I emphasize these things to help you see that as we go to the word of God tonight, and you can turn to Psalm 19, I want you to have a sense that we are making, we're going to be teaching an understood theme that Scripture is the word of God, but as we are saying that I want you to, maybe better stated, I pray that the Holy Spirit would help you see that we're reaching for some of the the greater, broader, easily overlooked significance of the fact that we have the word of God in our hands and that the word of God when it is properly respected and properly seen and understood for what it is, it has a profound effect on the heart to cause the heart to tremble before it, a sense of respect and a desire to honor that word which is a unique distinguishing mark of true conversion. Someone that does not respect the word of God is not a Christian, no matter what else they may say, no matter what kind of visions they may have seen or claim to have had. It doesn't matter if someone says, "Jesus stood at the end of my bed and told me all about himself." None of that stuff can overturn the fact that central to true conversion is this deep conviction that the Bible is the word of God and that conviction has a framing way in which the Christian mind works.

And so tonight we're looking at Psalm 19 again. We looked at the first six verses on Sunday. We're going to look at the next five verses here this evening. But let me just say this, that we're beginning a series that I've titled "Building a Christian Mind," and we are responding to the existential challenges from the culture, the evangelical church itself and the cosmic forces of Satan, and we are bringing the word of God to bear on all of those forces and trusting the Spirit of God to use his word to build up Christians in right thinking and developing a biblical mind. And I want to say that as I introduced this some two or three weeks ago, it is only by ignorance or carelessness or foolish pride that we could minimize the threat that that combination of the culture the evangelical church and the cosmic forces of Satan pose to our well-being and to the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ. It is essential, it is essential for us to understand the depth and the supernatural aspect of that threat. That's why we're doing this series and we recognize the threat and we take it seriously.

Having said that, I want to be clear that while we are, you know, we are sobered by what we face in the environment around us, we're confident as we look to the future. We will never forget, we will never lose confidence in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church." Despite the cosmic forces of Satan, despite a weak and insipid church, despite a culture that has abandoned any pretense of concern for truth and absolutes, we're confident in the Lord Jesus Christ to build his church, but we also know something else that the Lord who appointed the end, that is, he will build his church and bring his bride to completion, the elect will be saved and they will persevere and they will be secure in the end and we're aware of that, we affirm those things gladly and enthusiastically, but we also are mindful of something else, we know that that the Christ who appointed the end, that his church will be built, appointed the means by which that church would be built. He doesn't simply zap the church and everything's perfect and great. It's not like that at all. No, he uses means that he has revealed and commanded in Scripture for his people to follow, for his people to heed, and that comes through the teaching and the proclamation of the word of God. Jesus Christ builds his church through the teaching of his word to his people, Matthew 28:20,

"teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." What is that saying to us except this, it's that Christ, by commanding the teaching of his word by his appointed representative speaking to the apostles there in Matthew 28, Christ expands his kingdom by reaching the minds of men so that the Apostle Paul could say in Colossians 1:28, "Him," meaning Christ, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ." Maturity comes through receiving the teaching of the word of God, and that's why I'm glad that each one of you are here with us here this evening.

When you realize the centrality of the word of God and the special, you know, there aren't words to convey how precious Scripture is, you realize how precious it is in and of itself, you realize that it is the word of God that he uses in order to create faith in people and draw them to Christ, it is the teaching of the word of God that he uses to build up his people and that he uses to build up his church, you realize the central function of Scripture in everything that is at stake in these challenges that we face in the age in which we live. Well, you know, I mean here at here at Truth Community Church, we embrace that and we embrace our duty to engage the battle for the mind and we gladly instruct out of the word of God as that which is central to our worship and central to our fellowship, and we consciously avoid things that, while they may seem good in and of themselves, actually just function as a distraction from keeping people's minds focused on Scripture. And so the word of God is central to this and this word, this word that we hold in our hands collectively together here this evening, is God's appointed means by which he communicates the knowledge of himself and in which he has made himself known.

So on Sunday, we started this series how to know God exists. There are two aspects to the series, there's the overarching thing taking months titled "Building a Christian Mind"; part of the way that you build a Christian mind is that, you know, you understand why God exists. You know that. You don't simply believe it, but you know why you believe it. How do we know that God exists? There is nothing more fundamental than that. You realize that when we say that Scripture is the word of God, there is a presupposition in that, by saying it's the word of God you're presupposing the existence of God simply by ascribing that title to the book that you hold in your hands.

So how do we know God exists? Nothing is more fundamental than that. Last time on Sunday, we looked at the first six verses of Psalm 19, "The heavens are declaring the glory of God and, you know, the skies are declaring the handiwork of his hands." I paraphrase. And what we said last time, we said that we know that God exists by the creation that is around us. To know that God exists starts with the recognition that God has imprinted himself on the universe in which we live. We said last time that you live as a guest in the realm of God. You are not God. You are not supreme. You are not the most important person in the universe. God is. And you live in his realm and as a result, you are accountable to him. And without rehearsing all of the points and different things that we said on Sunday, what we saw last time is that the reality of creation around us, the physical universe, the physical realm in which we live, creation puts man on notice of the existence of God. The nature of the universe, the magnificence of its magnitude, the magnificence of its precision, the glory of its beauty, all of that and more puts us on

notice that there is a God who is responsible for what we see around us and Scripture says those who deny that are suppressing the truth that they know inside to be real, and that God will hold them accountable and judge them for that. And so creation puts man on notice of the existence of God, and the the corollary of that, the implication of that is that man, meaning you and I, we are responsible to seek this God who placed us in his creation and has made himself known for us. There is a moral obligation to seek him and God holds accountable those who do not do so. Those who live in defiance of him, those who sin against him, those who ignore him, all the different ways that sin manifests itself in illicit immoral behavior, in careless, godless living, living for pleasure rather than living for the glory of God, living for the accumulation of wealth rather than for the glory of God, all of those things are morally culpable, and the nature of creation is such that everyone is on notice that that is not the way to live. God has spoken in creation and therefore we know that he exists by what we can observe with our senses and take in and compute with the minds that he has given to us what it is that we see all around us. And so every day, every day that every person, all 7 billion people or whatever, walk in the world, they're walking under an umbrella that calls them to seek God and they are responsible to do so.

Now, so we know God exists because of what we see in creation. Pivot now to the word of God, we see that he has spoken in a second area as well. Not only creation but he has spoken in his word, and here we turn now to our text for these series of three messages. Psalm 19, looking at verses 7 through 11 as we kind of go through this Psalm sequentially as we look at its verses together. Let me read verses 7 through 11 where it says,

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Just as an aside to tie my introduction in with the reading of the Scripture there, the preciousness of the word of God highlighted there in verse 10, more desirable than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb, David is saying this is one precious word that God has given to us, and it is in this word, as we're going to see, it is another place where God has made himself known. He has revealed himself and it is in and through the word that we know that God exists.

John Stott, the late Anglican teacher of God's word, said in his book titled "Your Mind Matters," he said this, he said, "God has revealed himself in words to minds. His revelation is a rational revelation to rational creatures. Our duty is to receive his message, to submit to it, to seek to understand it, and to relate it to the world in which we live. One

of the highest and noblest functions of man's mind is to listen to God's word and so to read his mind and think his thoughts after him, both in nature and in Scripture."

Now when it comes to building a Christian mind, beloved, one of the most foundational planks in creating that structure of thought and the way that your mind operates, is to understand this, that preeminently your mind has been given to you to search after the revelation of God, to know him and to respond to him, to respond to him preeminently as he is offered to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ, but to respond to his creation and honor him as Romans 1 says, to honor him for what you see, by what you understand with your mind, to use your mind to enter into the written word of God. Your mind has been given to you, beloved, think about it this way and realizing that God gives different mental capacities to different people so we're all going to engage these things at different levels of depth, I suppose you could say, but understand this, beloved, this is so so critical to the whole series we're going to be gladly doing for many months here: God has given you a mind capable of rational thought of processing information, he has given you that mind so that in a very real sense you can give that mind back to him, give him back a mind that you say, "My mind belongs to you. Your will be done not mine. Transform my mind. Renew my mind. Strengthen me in my thinking, God, for my desire and the highest use of my mind is to aspire after and to think like you think to the extent that you enable me to do that, and to interpret the world around me not according to the godless presuppositions of the world, but to stand out, to stand apart from that, and to process what I see and how I think through what you have revealed in creation and in the word."

Now Psalm 19 certainly reflects that spirit as we continue on in the text, and our first point for tonight, our first point for tonight is this, it is simply the perfection of God's word. The perfection of God's word. Now, as you read about creation in the first six verses, the transition to verse 7 seems abrupt on a first reading. Verse 6 says, speaking about the sun, it says, "Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat." Then without any apparent transition David says in verse 7, "The law of the LORD is perfect." It seems abrupt and he goes on to describe the word, and the contrast is not just in terms of the theme and the topic of the different sections, he even uses a distinct name of God that does not appear in the first six verses. In verse 1 he said, "The heavens declare the glory of God," but in verse 7 he says, "The law of the LORD is perfect," the Hebrew name Yahweh. So in contrast to a more generic name of God used in the first half of the Psalm, here in verse 7 and following David uses the personal covenant-keeping name Yahweh or LORD, as it's indicated in our English text. And here's what is going on just in terms of following the flow of thought in the Psalm, that switch and the abruptness of it, by the very abruptness of the change in theme David is stressing the superior revelation that is given to us in the word of God. Creation puts men on notice in a nonverbal way. In Scripture, God addresses the highest faculty, the rational faculty of man and communicates the knowledge of himself and the knowledge of his will to the highest faculty of man. And David uses six words to describe God's written revelation as we look at verses 7 through 9. You see him referring to it as "The law of the LORD, the testimony of the LORD." Verse 8, "the precepts of the LORD, the commandments of the LORD." Verse 9, "the fear of the LORD, the rules of the LORD."

Now you could look at each of those words individually with word studies, and I've done it that way in the past, but it's sufficient for tonight to simply say this, that together these words and these terms collectively show the practical purpose of God's revelation in his word. They bring the will of God to bear on the one who reads and hears. And for our purposes, going further, remember we're talking about building a Christian mind and we need to stop and just think at these most fundamental levels in order to have these things grab our hearts with the conviction that is necessary to sustain us in the midst of the hostile environment in which we live, the fact that God addresses verbal revelation to the mind of man tells us that he is seeking an intelligent response. He is evoking intelligence, reverence, well-founded trust and detailed obedience. The very fact that it is in a written form and not in some kind of mystical communication that cannot be rationally described, tells us that God intends for your mind to be engaged at the most fundamental level of responding to him. Let that sink in. You know, you think and I include myself in what I'm about to say here. We're all, you know, if we think about the different ways that we squander time, the trivial things that we talk about, the trivial things that we engage our mind with so often, we realize that the way that we use our minds falls short of the glory of God. We need to recognize that and come to grips with that and realize that if you've been called to Christ, you've been called to a higher purpose, and just as you have been given physical abilities, you've been given material resources to be a steward of, God has given you preeminently a mind which is to be given over to him.

Last time we talked about general revelation and the fact that creation is a general revelation that is nonverbal and it goes out to all men and all men have a capacity to see that and understand it to some extent, but general revelation does not communicate a full knowledge of the attributes of God. It does not tell us about the gospel of Christ or how a man is to be saved from his sin. You can't learn that by just looking at the skies. That's why it's so foolish to say, "I'm just going to worship and go out and sit in my tree stand and wait for the deer to come by," because that sentimental sense of communing with nature is neglecting the special revelation of God, that revelation of God that is found in the human languages in the Scriptures. There's no need to talk about worshiping God by communing with nature if you have no interest in his word. You're despising it and you're tossing it aside just like I did so many years ago as a college student. No, in Scriptures, what makes Scripture so perfect, so wonderful, so delightful, is that God has declared in words that can be understood, spiritual truth about his attributes, about sin, the nature of Christ, salvation, judgment, and so much more. These eternal things which are of surpassing significance, can only be known through the Bible.

And as you continue to read on in David's Psalm here, the word of God given through David, you see a few attributes of Scripture itself. First of all, we see that Scripture is perfect. You see this in verse 7 and let's look at the adjectives now. We've seen the synonyms that are used, the nouns that are used to describe the word of God, now we see the attributes that God assigns to his own word as we read on, and it should just build up that sense of reverence, that sense of contrition of spirit, that sense of treasuring what we hold in the 66 books of the Bible. David says, "This law of the LORD is perfect. The testimony of the LORD is sure." Verse 8, "the precepts of the LORD are right. The

commandment of the LORD is pure. The fear of the LORD is clean. The rules of the LORD are true." So we see it there, it's perfect, it's sure, it's right, it's pure, it's clean, it's true. You know, just contemplating it as a believer and just seeing how Scripture describes itself, that in itself has almost, you know, a cleansing, sanctifying effect as we just contemplate what the word of God is in and of itself realizing that here is something that is pristine, here is something that is good and true and reliable in contrast to the filth that pours out through media every moment of every day. And these six terms in those three verses, together they express the flawless and the inerrant nature of the Bible. The Bible is unique and supreme and final in its truth claims and every other truth claim is evaluated by Scripture, not the other way around.

Let me just say a word to clarify the confusion that surrounds the concepts of natural and special revelation here, and again this goes to the way that your mind works and the way that you structure your mind to think rightly about competing truth claims, beloved. All of this is fundamental, essential and should never be neglected by a long-term pulpit teaching the word of God. There are voices in the professing church of Jesus Christ that love to use the phrase, "All truth is God's truth." You've heard that, right? And it almost sounds like a truism. Well, of course that's true, but what you need to understand is that there's a hook in that bait, especially when it's in the mouths of scientists who are arguing for evolutionary ideas and, you know, billions of years of existence of creation. They say, "All truth is God's truth," what they mean by that, the way that they wield that against unsuspecting Christians is this, they use that general statement to silence dissent against specific ideas that cannot be shown from Scripture so that they will say, "Well, evolution is an established scientific fact. That's truth." Or it is truth that homosexuality is normal behavior and has no moral connotations, that it is not sinful, "That's true, and we know that by what the experts say. And all truth is God's truth." Well, in theological terms, what they are doing is they are arguing from their sense of general revelation in order to contradict the specific special revelation that is found in Scripture in order to advance their idea of science or their idea of ethics and to silence a biblical critique of it. Well beloved, that violates what we're reading here in Psalm 19, and you must understand this. I use these words "must," and I emphasize it, and I plead with you just because it's so urgent even if it's not immediately apparent to your mind as you hear me as we speak tonight. This is fundamental. This is a principle upon which the man or woman of God should be willing to contest and even die on if it ever came to that, beloved, because it goes to what the final ultimate authority for truth is, and Scripture is perfect and Scripture alone. Scripture is sure. Scripture is right. Not nature, and certainly not the fallible passing opinions of men about what nature even means. Scripture alone interprets nature with authority.

And let me just give you a little if you want this, you can make a little assignment here, you can take this out and you can see what I mean. Sometime do a Google search using the search terms "debunked medical practices." Debunked medical practices, and what you'll find when you look into that, you'll find that there are scholarly medical journal articles that evaluate what used to be the standard of care in the medical world in different types of medical procedures. This was the science. This is what was true. This is what they did. Is that even just within the past 30 or 40 years, 40% of those things have



been rejected as not a valid medical treatment. Now looking back, you know, just within the passing of a few decades, what once was established as true and the way to do it is now viewed as something that would be malpractice if it was done by a doctor today. Beloved, don't let pompous men of science hook you with false claims of expertise to get you to turn against the word of God in favor of their secular ideas that deny the final authority and truth claims of Scripture. It changes. It changes. It's just the opinion of the moment and for the Christian mind, the Christian mind must understand that, must embrace that and have settled in his mind beyond all contradiction, beyond all contest that what this word says, properly interpreted, is the truth, and to the extent that anything in the world, any philosophies in the world, any so-called science of the world, contradicts it, it's not Scripture that's wrong, it's the philosophy and science of the world. That is essential to have a proper Christian mind because it goes to what the ultimate authority for truth is and it's essential for us to know and to understand that and to be rooted in it. If Scripture is the word of God and God is the God of all truth, and God can never lie as Titus 1:2 tells us, then what Scripture affirms and what Scripture actually teaches is what is true no matter what the thinking of men might do to contradict it. So we determine truth by comparing an idea with Scripture, not by aligning ourselves with current and shifting views of science or culture. That would apply to the way that people understood COVID and the way they responded to that, and in all other manner of things that intersect with our daily life. Scripture is perfect and therefore it has no errors in it in what it positively affirms in its teaching.

Now going further, Scripture is not only perfect, Scripture is powerful. Scripture is powerful. The flawless nature, the inerrant nature of the word of God was not an abstraction to David. This was not some theory of his. This was not academic theory, theoretical knowledge to him that was just in the realm of philosophy but had no connection with his life. No, the fact that Scripture is the word of God, the fact that Scripture is perfect means something very significant, very practical. Its perfection means that it has power in human lives. It has the ability, it has the might as the spirit of God applies it to our hearts, it has the power to change us, to perfect us, to convert us. And David expresses this in verses 7 through 9. Look at it with me where he says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts 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 forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether." Look at the power that is expressed in this description of the word of God. Verse 7, it revives the soul. It makes wise the simple. It rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It is clean. It is true and righteous altogether. And what the true Christian knows by experience, Scripture claims for itself and its ability to do in broad principle. Scripture brings joy. Scripture brings understanding. Scripture brings enlightenment. Scripture brings eternal perspective that is found nowhere else. Scripture has the ability to convict men of sin and lead them to salvation in Jesus Christ, and we'll consider all of those things more in the next aspect of this series when we come to consider how to know the Bible is true.

For now, we simply emphasize the power of Scripture. This is a living word. This is a dynamic word with power to redirect the human heart, to redirect the human mind in a

way that is unlike any other piece of human literature. And as Christians, we rejoice in the fact that Scripture has the ability to help us overcome our sin, to overcome our discouragement, to instruct us in righteousness, to correct us. All of those things and when we see how perfect Scripture is and we see its power, and we know something of its force in our own heart experientially, then we come to the realization that David describes in verses 10 and 11, that Scripture is precious. It's precious. Verse 10, "More to be desired are they than gold," he's still talking about the word of God, the commandments of the Lord and he's writing this a thousand years before the New Testament. He's looking back, you know, predominantly at the law of Moses, and even looking at that, he says, "Oh, this is more to be desired than gold, much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Beloved, anyone, anyone who understands something about the precious nature of God could never manifest the contempt that I showed when I tossed it away. It's not just about the physical book itself and the pages that are within its binding, it's the content of the truth that it reveals and the knowledge of Christ that it conveys. Oh, this is precious so that you treat even the physical copy with respect, so much so that in the early days of persecution of the church, one of the ways that the New Testament Canon was established was that the early church, the way that it was recognized better stated, the way the New Testament Canon was recognized, is that the authorities would come and demand people to hand over their books to be burned in order to squash the spread of Christianity. What those early Christians did is that they made a distinction in their mind, the writings of men may be explaining the word of God which could be handed over, and the word of God itself which could not be handed over. They would either hide it, or they would do something to protect the word of God even with their blood. They would protect it in that way because there was a distinction between the word of God and the word of man. And I've never held one, I've only heard men speak of these and read just a little bit about them, there are things called martyr's Bibles from the Reformation that are actually stained with the blood of martyrs who shed their blood over the word of God instead of handing it over and denying the Christ who saved them.

Beloved, when it comes to thinking about pouring out your blood for the sake of the word of God, now we're starting to see this is precious. When it comes to saying, "I'll structure my life or I'll structure my day so that the word of God can be a part of it," we're saying the word of God is precious, and by the way that we use our time and our resources, we are displaying whether we consider this word as something valuable or not. What David was saying here in verses 10 and 11, you know, gold at the time was the most valuable commodity in the ancient world and David says, "This word is more valuable than that." Honey was the sweetest of foods at the time. David says Scripture is better than both. The best that this world has to offer, in other words, David says, "Scripture is better. Scripture is sweeter." That's how a Christian mind thinks. The word of God is more valuable than anything else. "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill, God's word abideth still. His kingdom is forever." Luther wrote those words because he understood Scripture is precious, more valuable than anything, more valuable than life itself.

Now that's what Scripture is intrinsically. It's the word of God. It is perfect. It is powerful. It is precious. Now at some point, I need to relate this all to the question at hand which is, how do we know that God exists? How does Scripture enable us to know that God exists? Well, what we need to understand, beloved, is we said that God has revealed himself in creation. He's made himself known there. What we have to understand is that because this is the word of God, all Scriptures inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, no prophecy of Scripture is given by the interpretation of man but the Spirit of God carried them along, as 2 Peter 1:20 and 21 says. And the point of it is this, point number 2: the Canon and God's existence, C-a-n-o-n, the Canon and God's existence, we use the word Canon to refer to the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments as we have them in the English Bible. And the fact that Scripture is the word of God means that God has made himself known there. Through the process of inspiration, God moved in the minds and in the hearts of the human authors of the Bible so that they wrote precisely what he wanted them to write so that Scripture, by the work of the Holy Spirit through the human authors of Scripture, the Holy Spirit moved them to write precisely what God wanted so that it is right and proper to say that Scripture is the word of God. It is not the opinion of man. Scripture is not the culmination of an evolutionary process where mankind gathered up his religious thoughts and finally came to some right conclusions. No, from the very beginning God moved so that it was the word of God from the start.

The human writers wrote the very word of God without error to his creatures, and then God providentially preserved it throughout the subsequent centuries, and so if you look at the history of the Bible from the time of Moses through the first century completion of the New Testament Canon, over the course of 1,500 years, through 40 some human authors who wrote those 66 books, God has spoken in the Bible and here's what that means, beloved, as we say, how do we know that God exists? What you must understand, and the way that your mind should reason this out is to understand this: our faith, our knowledge of God, our certainty of conviction of the existence of God is not subjective. It is not based on our personal opinion as the authority by which we believe. No, no, no, no, no, a thousand times no. This is so fundamental and it's easy to miss the significance of this. Beloved, you and I know the existence of God based on something that is outside of ourselves, something that preexisted us, something that will exist after us, something that will continue on after the heavens and earth pass away, Jesus said. "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away," Matthew 24:35 says. The fact that Scripture is the word of God means that God has revealed himself there. We can find and know the existence of God through the pages of his word.

Now listen, again, it's critical to understand what we're saying and why we are saying it. You know, one of the things that I think sometimes well-meaning apologists, teachers of Scriptures are concerned to do is that they start by trying to construct an argument that will somehow gain favor with an unbelieving critic. That's a serious mistake. It's a serious mistake and it's not our goal tonight to impress unbelievers with our argument even though it is true and they will be accountable for their response to it. Beloved, what you and I need to do as Christians is we need to understand our position for ourselves. We

need to know what our position is and not try to calculate how we articulate that in a way that will be least offensive or the least likely to provoke a ridiculing response from someone who does not agree with us and who does not believe the word of God. That's not the way to reason in the Christian life. No, we accept at face value the claims of the Bible to be the word of God. We accept God's testimony about himself and about his word. And so we understand that in this book God has made himself known. That's how we know, that is a second reason for how we know that God exists. We are not trying to build a case, in other words, I'm talking like an attorney, aren't I? We're not trying to build a case to convince unwilling people, people who have hardened their hearts against Scripture and against Christ and against the gospel. We're not trying to convince them, we are building the case, you could say, that God himself has made, that God himself has established, that God has appointed. God has appointed that we would recognize him in creation and honor him accordingly. God has appointed that we would recognize that he has revealed himself in his word and there is no higher authority than God himself. And so it doesn't matter if skeptics are unimpressed with the argument. We're not trying to please them with how we use our minds. We're trying to please God with how we use our minds. God says, "I've spoken in the skies." And we say, "Yes, Lord, speak, your servant listens." God says, "I have spoken in my word." And the Christian mind says, "Yes, Lord, I believe. You have words of eternal life. Speak Lord, your servant listens." In both positive and negative ways, Scripture emphasizes this point.

Where does faith come from? Where does the ability to believe come from? I was having this discussion with someone not long ago, said faith isn't something that we work up on our own. It's not our contribution to the process. What does Scripture say? Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ, Romans 10:17. Scripture says the ability to believe is given to us by the Holy Spirit through the word of Christ. That's where it comes from. The word of Christ is critical and essential to that. And so we just make the argument that God makes and we're satisfied with that. I really don't care what kind of philosophy doctor would mock what I say here. I'm impervious to that. I don't care about that. I'm not going to stand before a philosophy professor in the day of judgment. I'm a lot more concerned about what God has to say about the matter.

Now when it comes to the critics, let me just remind you of something in the gospel of Luke 16, if you would turn there with me. Luke 16, and I want you to see how this emboldens us to use Scripture in our own minds and in the people with whom we interact. You remember the story of Abraham and Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16:19,

19 "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my

tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

Now stop there. I know this is a familiar section of Scripture to you. But just grasp the condition of the rich man as he suffering there in Hades. He realizes that this is a bad place that no one should come to, and so he thinks of the ones that are still living, those that are in his father's house, and he wants them to be warned about this. And you can see that his heart is still impenitent. He's still a proud, arrogant man, because he's suffering in Hades and yet he presumes to tell Abraham what to do. His suffering is not a reflection of any kind of repentance. But in verse 27 he says,

27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send [Lazarus] to my father's house-- 28 for I have five brothers--so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

Listen to what transpires after that as it pertains to the word of God.

29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

And he continues in his impenitent ways. He argues from hell against God's representative.

30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 [Abraham] said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

The rich man said, "If only they see a sign. If only they see a resurrected man, Abraham, they'll believe and they'll turn and they won't come to this place of suffering that I have myself in". And Abraham in effect tells him, "Friend, your whole presupposition is wrong. You think that something miraculous will turn the mind of an unbelieving person. They have the word of God. If they won't listen to the word of God, they won't listen to anything else even if a man comes back from the dead." Beloved, that gives us a sense of the priority and the preeminence and the perfection of Scripture. It's a serious mistake to neglect Scripture when you're trying to evangelize somebody, to try to make human arguments that they'll listen to. And this has simplified my thinking on this for a long, long time: if they won't listen to the word of God, they're not going to listen to anything else, so you might as well get to the Scriptures. If God uses that, praise be to his name. If they reject that, they weren't going to listen to anything else you had to say anyway. So get to the word of God. God has revealed himself there and God uses his own word.

In John 6:63, Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." In Hebrews 4, "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." James 1:18, "Of [God's] own will he brought us forth by the word of truth." 1 Peter 1:23, "you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

Now look, beloved, in one sense, all that we're saying for tonight because we're going to come back to Scripture in the future, all that we're saying tonight, how do we know that God exists, he's revealed himself. He has made himself known in this word. And when people turn to the word of God and the Spirit of God works in their heart, God makes himself known to them. And so the Bible itself, independent of creation, but in conjunction with creation, is sufficient to prove the existence of God. The existence of God can be known and is known conclusively and without doubt through God's own self-disclosure in creation and in the Canon of Scripture. And so. It is wrong and it is foolish, no matter how well-intentioned they may be, it is wrong and foolish for churches to marginalize Scripture, to marginalize preaching in the midst of the chaos in our culture, the church and the resistance of cosmic forces.

Look beloved, and I'm so grateful for the truth of what I'm about to say, the personality of a pastor can't convert anybody and I'm glad that your salvation doesn't depend upon my winsome personality because I get who I am. You know, if it depended on my winsomeness, we'd all be in a lot of trouble here. It's just grievous to me. You know, from time to time I go to other church's websites and I see what pastors say about themselves in their bios, and how cool they are, and how hot their wife is, and what their favorite sports teams are. Paul said, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus is Lord." You and I must meditate deeply on these kinds of truths to grasp them personally and let them shape us at a most fundamental level, and then we must be strong and courageous against the foe.

So beloved, a true Christian, and here at Truth Community Church, we do not apologize for our confidence in Scripture. We do not and we never will. It is the word of God. Why would we apologize? Why would we try to curry the favor of people who reject the thing that we know is precious and perfect and powerful? Why would we apologize for that in order to win the temporary superficial affection of someone who is an enemy of God? And so personally and together corporately, we do not retreat before unbelieving skeptics. We make Scripture central in evangelism and in ministry and we trust the Lord to bless our very inadequate faithfulness as we seek to do this. And do you know what will happen? Do you know what happens as we do that? Do you know what happens as we make Scripture central to ministry, central to our evangelism, central to our lives, and the way that we establish our priorities? Do you know what happens? God makes himself known. God makes his existence known as his people believe and live in that way. It's exactly what 2 Corinthians 2:15 and 17 say, and with this I'm going to close. In 2 Corinthians 2:15 to 17, "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death,

to the other a fragrance from life to life." In other words, as we proclaim the word of God, as we cling to the word of God, we create a spiritual aroma that people using the metaphor, "There's something different here. I sense something here." And as that sensing happens, God is making his existence known through biblical ministry, biblical testimony, and biblical evangelism. Paul says, and I line up behind him in what follows, he says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who is adequate for the transcendent importance of these things? Who's adequate for the transcendent glory of God to be an instrument of making him known? Who's sufficient? Paul says in verse 17, "we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ." Beloved, grasping the role of the Canon to establish God's existence is central to the building of a Christian mind. May the Spirit lead us all to Christ as he is found in his word.

Let's pray together.

*Yes, Father, your word is perfect. It is powerful and it is precious to us. O God, won't you make it precious to each one in this room, each one under the sound of my voice in one way or another in days to come? By your Spirit expand and deepen our appreciation for your word even if we've known this and taught it and defended it for years and decades on end, Father, we certainly haven't plumbed the depth of how great it is. And so we ask for the illumination of your Holy Spirit to expand our minds and deepen our understandings to grasp these things even more strategically, even more powerfully, and to wield them more effectively in the realms that you have given to us. Thank you, Father, for your precious word. May it go forth with great, astounding power as we stand on its sure foundation and as we seek to build a Christian mind together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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