

## Why Do We Believe the Bible? #2 (The Bible and the Holy Spirit)

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*Why Do We Believe the Bible?*

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We're continuing this series on "Why Do We Believe the Bible?" Christ has affirmed it to us. Well, that leads us to another question. Many people do not believe the Bible. You know this, they reject it as ultimate truth. In fact, we could say that a majority, if not the vast majority of the people would not recognize the Bible as the word of God. The question for tonight is: why do we believe the Bible? How is it that you and I believe the Bible when so many around us do not? Think about it this way: how is it that for some of you, you believe the Bible and love it now when before, earlier in your life, you had no regard for it at all? You didn't regard it as Scripture. You didn't care to read it. You were indifferent to it. In the case of some of us, we tried to read it from time to time and it made absolutely no sense to us. It was a closed book. Well, how did it become an open book to us? How is it that we believe the Bible as we sit here tonight? Well, I want to tell you that the answer is humbling. It's not because we're smarter than everybody else. That couldn't possibly be the case. The Apostle Paul said, "There are not many noble, not many wise," it's not because we had some superior wisdom. And even for those of you born in Christian families and raised in a Christian home, it's not because of anything hereditary or that anything that your family did. If you believe the Bible from the bottom of your heart, the answer is this: we believe the Bible because the Holy Spirit taught us to believe. The Holy Spirit taught us to believe. It was not purely an intellectual exercise as if we were studying a math problem and came to the solution through the powers of our logic. The Holy Spirit had to do a supernatural work in order to teach us to believe.

Now, I want to answer two questions tonight that I think will make this all very clear for us, and this just has immense ramifications. It has immense ramifications for the way that we view ourselves in relationship to God. It has immense ramifications for the attitude of gratitude that we walk about with our Lord for what he has done for us. And it also has implications for us in evangelism, because we realize that if anyone is going to come to saving faith in Christ, that we need help from God; we need help from the Holy Spirit; that we do not have, at our best, we don't have the persuasive powers necessary to open up a darkened heart and to make it believe. That is simply outside the realm of our power. Only God in the person of the Holy Spirit is able to bring somebody to this conviction.

So I want to answer two questions for you tonight and the first one is this, we have to start here: why is it that men refuse to believe the Bible? Why do men refuse to believe

the Bible? And I'm going to give you a two-part answer. I won't pretend that it's absolutely comprehensive because there are so many different ways that you could answer this, but I want you to see the spiritual dimension to this problem. Why do men refuse to believe the Bible? First of all, I'll give you two answer to that question, complementary answers. Why do men refuse to believe the Bible? First of all, their nature binds them. Their nature binds them. It is not natural for us to receive the Scripture. It is not natural for a man to bend his knee to Scripture as the ultimate authority because the natural man does not accept the things of God. The unconverted man is unwilling and unable to believe.

And I want you to turn to the book of Romans. We're probably not going to be here all that long tonight which, of course, is a comparative statement compared to what we often do when we gather together around the Scriptures. I just want to show you some passages here. Why do men refuse to believe the Bible? It's because their nature binds them. In Romans 8:6, Scripture is so clear on this teaching. Romans 8:6 says, and I'll give you a moment to catch up with me here. Romans 8:6 says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." It's a statement of capacity. They are unable to do that. They are unable to do it. There is hostility built-in. The unconverted man is not neutral toward the word of God and simply needs information so that he can make a good decision, he is hostile and he cannot subject himself to the law of God. He cannot bring his mind into submission to it of his own power. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Keep your finger in Romans 8 and turn over a few pages in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 2:14. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God." Well, what is the word of God except for something that is from the Spirit of God, inspired by God? "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction and training in righteousness." A natural man cannot accept that. He does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, "for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." He cannot understand them. He is not able to understand them. He does not have the power, the capacity or the disposition to receive the Bible as the word of God and to believe it as the absolute authority. His nature binds him to the contrary and he is not able to do it. So all men, including you and I, were born with a natural disposition against the truth and they do not have the capacity to receive it on their own. It's foolishness to them.

I remember, I probably said this to you before, but I remember in the months prior to my conversion, I made a very feeble and halfhearted effort to read the word of God. The only Bible I had was a little Gideon's New Testament that somebody had handed me on the campus of Indiana University at some time prior. I remember opening it and reading it and reading the first five verses of the book of Galatians and it made absolutely no sense to me. I had no desire for it whatsoever and I very flippantly, and it pains me to remember this, but I remember very flippantly tossing it over onto my dresser and just before I went to bed, and said, "There, God ought to be satisfied with that," as if

squeezing five verses out of my time in two minutes was going to be an act that was pleasing to God when I had no desire for it at all. I was just, you know, I was just going through some kind of motion. I remember earlier in my life reading the Gospel of John, John 17, the Lord's high priestly prayer which, of course, we know now as one of the great passages of all of Scripture, but I remember reading it and it was just complete gobbledygook to me. It made no sense whatsoever as I read Christ speaking about being with his Father and sharing glory with him before the world began. That made no sense to me whatsoever. That was totally a closed book to me and I could have spent three days reading those verses and it wouldn't have made any difference. I could not understand it. The light was off. It was impossible for me to be able to receive that in my unsaved condition. Like every other man ever born on the face of the earth, I was born with a natural disposition against the truth and I did not have the capacity to receive it on my own. That was just beyond my ability as much as it was beyond my ability to jump to the moon. Both of those things were equally impossible to do. The law of gravity held me down on earth so that I couldn't jump to the moon, and the law of sin held down my heart so that it could not reach up and understand the word of God. That's just this teaching of Scripture.

Now, that's bad. That's really bad to think that everyone's in that condition; that they are so bound by their nature, dead in trespasses and sins and unable to receive the only word of God and the only truth that can save our souls. That's bad. But do you know what? It's even worse than that. It's not just that our nature is dark and black and unable to receive these things and that it's beyond our ability to do so, it's even worse. Why is it that men refuse to believe the Bible? Their nature binds them but, secondly, the second answer to that question is that Satan blinds them. Satan blinds them. Beyond our own natural disposition against the truth, there is a supernatural deception at work which men are defenseless against. There is a natural disposition against the truth and there is a supernatural deception that is at work in men as well.

And if you're in 1 Corinthians, you can take your finger out of Romans now since I never did go back there. I hope your finger is not too tired after that little exercise. 2 Corinthians 4. The Scripture is so clear on this and speaks about it so abundantly. Like I say, this just has immense consequences for our understanding and for the way that we do ministry. 2 Corinthians 4, let's start at verse 1, even though really verse 3 and 4 is what really matters here. "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy," oh, look at that. We received mercy to be engaged in this ministry, the Apostle Paul says. "We do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Now watch this in verse 3. We said that Satan blinds them; that's why men do not receive the truth. Paul goes on and says, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." The god of this world has blinded their minds. There is a supernatural deception at work that prevents them from believing.

Turn over to Ephesians 6. We're going to look at maybe four passages here. Ephesians 6 as Paul is talking about the nature of the Christian life in this very familiar passage to you. Paul says in verse 12, Ephesians 6:12 that, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood," it's not purely a natural struggle, "but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." There is a supernatural battle that is involved here. There is a supernatural barrier between blinded men on the one side and the truth of God on the other side. There is an impenetrable, infinitely high spiritual wall separating them from the truth of the word of God. This is really significant and profound. Why do men refuse to believe the Bible? Why is it that your loved ones refuse to believe the Bible? Why is it that my loved ones are outside the realm of saving truth? Listen, this is so fundamentally important for the way that we view the word of God: you must understand that the problem is not with the Bible. The problem is not the Bible. It's not that the Bible is unclear or that the Bible is not true or that the Bible is confusing. Men have a natural disposition against it and they are supernaturally blinded by the devil himself to prevent them from believing.

Now, a man who is born blind cannot see the light. That doesn't mean that the light isn't there, it doesn't mean that it's not bright, that it's not illuminating, that it's not clear. None of that is true about the light, the problem is with the man born blind. He does not have the physical capacity to receive the light. Something is disconnected in his visual organs that prevent him from receiving the light that you and I do physically. Well, in the same way, Scripture speaks of a supernatural deception that is involved that prevent men from receiving the truth, and Scripture speaks of the devil snatching away the word of God and holding men captive to do his will.

Look over at Matthew 13:19, and actually it occurs to me, this is Jesus teaching the parable of the sower. Look at verse 3, we should start there to kind of set the context. Jesus, as you know, speaks of the sower going out and the seed falls on rocky ground and other kinds of ground and there is only one kind of seed falling on the right soil that bears fruit. Verse 3, "He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, 'Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.'" We can understand that picture. You're throwing out seed, it's on the ground, the bird comes and snatches it away. Look over at verse 18 as he explains that word picture that he used talking about the bird snatching up the seed. He says, "Hear then the parable of the sower." Verse 19, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road." The evil one comes and snatches it away.

Now, one last verse here on this point just so that you see that this is not an isolated theme. 2 Timothy 2:24, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses," in other words, that they could come out of this natural disposition against the truth, "and escape from the snare of the devil," get out of

that supernatural deception, "escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." So there is a natural disposition against the truth that is born out of man's sinful nature which we received from our parents and our children received from us, and there is a supernatural element, a supernatural dimension to it as well.

So there is a complete, hidden, spiritual, invisible dimension that is involved that keep men from receiving the truth. It's more than simply that they need really persuasive apologetic arguments. They need a total radical change to take place before they are going to be able to receive the word of God. So as you talk with family, as you talk with friends and people around your life, and as you deal with obstinate family members, beloved, you have to remember that your struggle is not with flesh and blood; that it is not simply a matter of them being too ignorant or you haven't learned just the right argument to make, you have to realize the spiritual dimension, the spiritual nature of what you're dealing with. And that changes, when you think it through properly, it changes the entire way that you interact with unsaved people. Rather than looking down on them for not getting it, rather than being impatient and angry with them because they disagree with you, there should be an element of sympathy, an element of compassion, an element of urgency, and a dominating spirit of prayer as you try to interact with them because you realize that they are bound and blinded by something over which they have no control. They are in prison, buried 50 feet under the ground with no way out.

So we don't look at them as opponents to be defeated, but we view them with compassion. You know, Paul says there in 2 Timothy 2, "This is why we're not quarrelsome with them. That's why we're kind, we're patient. When they wrong us, we're gentle with them." It's because we realize how desperately bad their situation is and we realize that the outcome of those things is eternal spiritual death; that this blindness and bondage in which they exist is leading them into eternal destruction and we realize that that's where you and I were also, that we were in that exact same place.

So that leads us to this question, that's the answer to the first question, why is it that men refuse to believe the Bible? Well, there are a lot of reasons but basically their nature binds them and Satan blinds them. They are in desperate straits. So that's kind of the negative, dark side of the discussion tonight. Let's move on to the second question where the answers are brighter and more encouraging maybe. Why is it that we believe the Bible? Why do we believe the Bible? And how is it that our disposition is one of receiving the Scripture, believing it, understanding it, desiring to obey it, loving it? Why is it that you would come out after a long day's work on a Thursday night in order to hear the Bible taught once again? Why do you believe the Bible? Well, look, we were all in the same position. We were in that same spiritual condition, bound and blinded, and so if we believe the Bible here tonight, if you're here and you love the Scriptures, it can't be due to anything that you did, right? It can't be due to your superior wisdom. It can't be that you shook off the shackles, as it were. That can't be it because you did not have the power in your natural state to do that. So why do we believe the Bible? Here's the answer: the Holy Spirit, God, the Holy Spirit, took Scripture and made it real to us. The Holy Spirit circumcised your heart. The Holy Spirit removed your blindness. It took a supernatural work for us to be in this position of believing the Bible. We needed a

stronger, greater power to overcome our natural disposition. We needed someone stronger than Satan, more powerful than Satan, to remove our blindness. In short, we needed nothing less than the power of God at work in our hearts in order to enable this to happen. The holy Scripture took the words of Scripture and made them alive to us.

Now you can go back to Romans 8 and we'll go back to some of these same passages because the contrast is set side-by-side. Romans 8, you remember that Paul said, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However," here's the contrast, "However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." The distinguishing mark was not your wisdom, it was the work of the Spirit of God coming upon you. The Spirit removed you from the realm of flesh and placed you into the realm of the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you, and therefore the entire calculation, the whole calculus for you and me is different because the Spirit has taken us out of the realm of the flesh and the devil and put us into the realm of the Spirit. We are no longer bound by that same natural disposition and supernatural deception. You and I have been the recipients of a gracious, unmerited work of God. That's the only thing that could have delivered us from our helpless condition.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2, going back to that same passage we were at a moment ago. 1 Corinthians 2:12, well, maybe we should just go back to verse, if you keep going back, you could start back at chapter 1, verse 1, right, but that wouldn't be the thing to do. Let's go back to verse 10, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit," the things of God, and Paul speaking as an apostle here to the apostolic realm, "God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" You know, who knows your inner thoughts except you? I can't read your inner thoughts. "Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." So in the Bible, we have the word of God, we have the mind of God expressed, revealed to us in the words and pages of Scripture. Only the Spirit of God knows the depths of that. No man can plumb its depth. No man can give adequate testimony to the absolute authority and truthfulness of Scripture. Only the Spirit of God can be a witness to the very thoughts of God in the way that we are speaking of here.

Now in verse 12, he says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God." There was a work of the Spirit in the apostles which made the things of God freely known to them; that the writings of the New Testament Scriptures were not a product of the wisdom of man. It came from the wisdom of the Spirit of God.

And now watch, watch this in verses 13 and following, "which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." You see, Paul clearly shows that we're talking about two different realms. The realm of the Spirit of God is inaccessible to the natural man. Verse 14, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually

appraised." Verse 15, "But he who is spiritual," who is that talking about? It's talking about a true Christian. "He who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ." The Spirit of God has shared with us, has imparted to us, the mind of Christ, the disposition necessary to receive the things of the Spirit of God. No natural man could do that. No human teacher could help us overcome our darkness. We couldn't attain to it on our own. There is no such thing as a truly independently self-taught man who is a Christian because we all had to be taught and led by the Holy Spirit or we never would have gotten out of our spiritual prison. So the Spirit of God enabled the apostles to write the word of God and now the Spirit of God works in the hearts of the redeemed to receive the Scriptures as the word of God.

Taking a little break here so you can take that all in. Someone said you're making it hard to drink from this fire hydrant, so I'm trying to slow it down and just make it a garden hose on high if I can. I don't know. The Spirit of God did an inner work in you to give you a new capacity to discern the Scriptures, to receive the Scriptures, and to believe them. The Spirit of God has affirmed the Scriptures to your heart as you read them and as you heard them.

Just as a point of clarification or a point of interest to me, not clarification, how many of you, like me, can look back at a time where you were hostile to the Scriptures, you were at least indifferent to them, and then can identify, if not an exact time, a season in life where you were converted and afterwards your attitude toward the Scriptures were different? Where before you were indifferent, then you couldn't get enough of them, how many of you can testify to something like that? You see, that is the evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in your life. You look in the past and you say, "Wow, I was dark and I was hostile but then I was changed." This is evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in your heart. What you're testifying to with your raised hand is a testimony that says, "What the Scripture describes is something that I have known to be real in my own life." And as you raise your hand to testify to that, realize that you're in a position of immense privilege. Comparatively few people receive the gift of God like this that you did and that should make you profoundly grateful.

So the Spirit works through the word in a way that makes the Scripture self-authenticating. There is no higher power to affirm them to us. There is no other power that could release us from our nature and the deception of the devil. No higher power could do that. So if you just take the Scriptures at face value, you're driven to your knees and realize that the only way we got here is because God was gracious to us.

Look over at 1 John 2, just a couple of other verses and then we'll actually start to wind this up for the evening. 1 John 2. Of course, we looked at these verses not all that long ago on Sunday morning. Remember that in 1 John 2:19, John was talking about the false teachers that had gone out from amidst the assembly and he said, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us." They were in our physical presence but they didn't share a spiritual union with us. They weren't really of us because "if they had been, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all

are not of us." Sometimes unbelievers will superficially attach themselves to a group of believers like tares among the wheat. They'll look like they are the real thing but in time they drift away, they separate, they show that they had no abiding interest. John says that's the mark of someone who was never truly converted.

Watch verse 20 here, "But," verse 20, "But you have an anointing." He's making a contrast. That's what the unbelievers were like but you, you true Christians that I'm writing to, you have an anointing "from the Holy One, and you all know." He says and he speaks to them comprehensively, he speaks to each one of them and says, "You who are true Christians, you have an anointing from the Holy Spirit that enables you to know spiritual truth."

Verse 27, he expands on that, that idea, and he says, "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." So he says, speaking to these true believers, he says, "Beloved, you have received an anointing from the Holy Spirit." Not in the sense that charismatics describe that as if it makes you some super eloquent person, you've received an anointing that has enabled you to receive the truth. He has separated you out. He has done something for you that he hasn't done for those who were trying to deceive you, verse 26. He says you received this anointing; it abides with you; his anointing teaches you; it's true; it has taught you; and you continue to abide in it. The Holy Spirit taught you and that's why you believe the Scriptures.

This is why we believe the word of God when others do not. God took his own word, which belongs to him, it's his word, it's his revelation, and he took his word by his Spirit and he applied it to the hearts of his children so that they would most certainly receive it. He didn't leave us to our own intellectual spiritual powers in order to sort it out. The Holy Spirit had to come and help us and he did. Bless his name. Bless his name.

Now, we affirm the London Baptist Confession of 1689 in our fellowship. The London Baptist Confession of 1689. This is kind of a long quotation but I want you to gradually, over time, come to appreciate what this confession says because it instructs us well in the ways of truth. I've edited this for clarity's sake. Listen to this extended quote. Bear with me here. Quote,

"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God its author, who is truth itself; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God."

Now, quote,

"We may be moved by the testimony of the people of God to gain a high estimation of the Holy Scriptures. We may be affected by the nature of the Scripture: its content, its doctrine, and its style, which give all glory to



God, together with many other excellencies and perfections. By all the evidence the Scripture more than proves itself to be the Word of God."

Okay, so all of those excellencies are true. All of those excellencies are consistent and testify to the fact that Scripture is the word of God. Yet, quote, continuing on, quote,

"Yet, notwithstanding this, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

And so while you have these other testimonies of the uniqueness of Scripture and the character of Scripture and those different things that we talked about last week, those things are well and good as far as they go, but they are not the final authority; they are not what brings conviction and full assurance to our heart about them. Even their own authors, as we saw last time, present them simply in the form of a basic probability argument designed to overcome the initial reluctance of an unbeliever to receive the testimony of the Scripture. Look, oh, I want to pick this table up and pound it down now. That is not the way to testify to the authority of the word of God. We cannot take God's revelation, the absolute truth of God, and pull it down from its position of unique, absolute authority and say that it is probably true. Is that the way that God testifies to the authority of his word? Does God testify that, "My word is probably true and hopefully you'll find room in your heart to agree with it"? No. No. Jesus was praying in John 17 and he said, "Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth." Period. An absolute statement, "Your word is truth. Your word is inspired by God. The prophets were borne along by the Holy Spirit and wrote what God intended them to write." There is no way that God would testify that his word was probably true.

Well, watch this, watch this: that means that we don't have the liberty to pull it down and say that it's probably true. It's diminishing the authority of the word when we say that. We can't do that. That is a betrayal of our trust. That is cosmic treason to say that the Scripture is probably true which is to say that it's possibly false. We can't do that and the reason that we don't have to, we accept the Scripture not on the authority of the arguments of men, but on the authority of Jesus Christ who affirmed the Old Testament and commissioned the New Testament, and we have received the authority of Scripture as based on the work of God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit opening our minds to the words of Scripture and bringing them to bear on our hearts with force and conviction.

Now look, I understand that that argument is completely unacceptable to a hostile unbeliever. I don't care about that. Oh, listen, we're not concerned to frame our statement of ultimate authority so that it pleases an unbeliever. What we care about, the only thing that we care about is that we frame it in a way that is pleasing to the God of our salvation. That's the only thing that matters and if an unbeliever finds that unacceptable, that doesn't mean we change our position of truth. Why would we do that? That makes absolutely no sense. That's to abandon our fortress; that's to walk outside the fortress and to expose

ourselves outside the realm of our absolute protection. We understand our position for what it is and we bear testimony to the word of God and the way that God himself has affirmed it and we trust him for the results of it. And when that receives a hostile, unbelieving, mocking reaction from those who hear us, we step back and we understand, "Why are they responding that way? Oh yeah, I know. I know why they're responding that way. They're just like I used to be, bound in their nature to sin and blinded by the devil. What a terrible position for them to be in." But the worst thing that I could do to try to help them is to try to make my truth claim acceptable to them on their terms. Why would I do that? Why would I step into the realm of the devil and try to argue on his turf when I can argue from the position of absolute authority we've received from God himself?

What we're talking about here is really important and you see that, right? We're talking about how we know what is true. This is how we know what is true. And so, beloved, let's talk about your salvation for a moment. I want you to think a little more expansively about your salvation and we tend to think of salvation as that time when I got saved, I'm going to heaven, not hell, and that's what it means to be saved. That's all true but that's not all that there is to salvation. You see, when God saved you, he did more than relieve you from the penalty and power of sin. He did more than rescue you from the realm of condemnation. He also did a work in your heart that enabled you to believe the Bible. As part of a comprehensive, multifaceted gift of salvation, he broke the power of sin in your life, he forgave you from the penalty of sin that you deserved, and in addition to that, he gave you a new nature, a new disposition, that was receptive to the truth that submitted to its authority, that believed it as absolute truth when before you did not. Part of God's gift of salvation was to impart to you a disposition that made you submissive to the Bible and willing and glad to accept its truth and authority. Nothing else could explain how you escaped that black, dark realm that the Bible describes as a nature bent against God and blinded by the devil. Nothing else can explain it. Scripture gives the glory to God for the fact that you believe his truth.

Turn over to the book of Colossians 1. Colossians 1:13, this kind of sums it all up in light of everything that we've said. "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." There you were, beloved, blinded by the devil, bound in your natural sinful disposition. God broke into that realm, as it were, picked you up, lifted you out of it and transferred you over and put you into the realm of his kingdom. It was a supernatural deliverance and as part of that supernatural deliverance of bringing you out of the domain of Satan, out of the domain of darkness, he reversed the spiritual blindness and gave you spiritual sight to see and to love his word.

The theologian Louis Berkhof wrote this, quote, "Through the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his heart, the Christian stands in the unwavering faith that God is true in his revelation and therefore it is a matter of course that he accepts the testimony of Scripture respecting itself." Scripture says that it's the word of God. You and I read that and say, "I believe that. I affirm that. I stake my life on it. I would die for this truth if it came to it. I

could never deny it. I could never deny it because it has been affirmed and sealed to my heart by a power greater than myself."

Edward Young, a former instructor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary says this in his book, "Thy Word is Truth," quote, "The Christian is persuaded and assured of both the infallible truth and the divine authority of the Bible by this inward work of the Spirit within his heart who opens his mind to perceive the true nature of Scripture and who," speaking of the Spirit, "the Spirit applies the word with force and conviction that man may experience the truth that the Bible is from God." Here's what we close with tonight, beloved, "It is God, the Christian gladly declares, who testifies to his own word. It is God who identifies what he himself has spoken."

We believe because God has testified to his word. Why do we believe the Bible? The Holy Spirit worked in our hearts and through his testimony we believe the Bible. That's why we believe the Bible. We give the glory to God even for the fact that we receive his word.

Now, the implications of this are just vast and I want to go back and just kind of review where we started. If the word of God is precious to you like I know it is, it's precious to me, it's precious borne out of a work that God himself did. When you are sharing the Gospel with someone that is lost, with a stubborn family member or whatever, this brings us back and reminds you that this forces you to dependence on God in your efforts to share Christ and to share the Gospel with them. "God," you say, "God," you pray, "God, unless you open up your word, unless you bless this to their hearts, I'm laboring in vain. God, won't you help just a little bit more because my arguments are in vain unless your Spirit comes down and works in their heart." It changes your whole spirit of evangelism from one of an arrogant, boastful, brash proclamation to one of a spirit of dependence.

When I first arrived here in Kentucky, they are not in our fellowship and haven't been for many, many, many months, so they are nowhere near anywhere what we're talking about here tonight; they are nowhere near our physical presence. But there were people coming up to me saying, "Yeah, you know, I did ministry at such and such a place and there were 600 and and I converted 614 souls that night." Or, you know, I don't know how you count that high that fast, but that's a reflection of a totally faulty view of it. When a preacher's word is used and he understands this biblical perspective, he never takes the credit. He never wants the credit because he knows he doesn't have the capacity to do it. I don't have the capacity to save anyone. I don't have a single conversion to my credit. Hopefully the Lord has used his word, you know, in the proclamation in the ministry, but that's, you know, I can't claim any of that. If the Lord has used you in evangelism, you can't take any credit for that. God gets all of the glory because we understand that we are totally impotent before the spiritual forces of darkness and the darkened, blind hearts of men who love their sin and want nothing to do with it and are unable to receive what we say to them.

We can't take any credit for that and so it absolutely humbles us, and as we think about the future of our life, the future of our church, and how it goes, you know, we're not

making big plans about how we're going to be at 800 people by this time next February or whatever. Look, all we can do is be faithful to this word and bring it out and ask God to bless it to his glory and to do his purposes. I have nothing to do with it as the pastor or the preacher. The way it spreads is utterly up to the Lord. I can't generate a single result and neither can you. You know, everyone in here, you're all part of the core of Truth Community Fellowship. You're all, you know, I know from talking to virtually every one of you personally, you love the truth and you want to be a part of Truth Community Fellowship and all of that, but what we have to understand and realize is just how utterly dependent we are on the Spirit of God for anything to happen as a result of what we do. We're just helpless. We are like a trumpet that is laying on the counter, a lifeless instrument unless the master musician comes up and blows through us and makes his sound heard.

So it's really important for those of us in this room, it's really important for us to appreciate that and to come together around this and to have a common, unified, mutual sense of dependence on the Spirit of God, and for us to pray for one another that God would see fit to bless this, to bless our fellowship, to bless his word, to bless our individual efforts at evangelism, because we're helpless without him. Then at the same time, and that's actually a positive thing, right? That's not something negative and that's not a downer to say. Once we realize our position of dependence, we're in a position of liberty. All of a sudden the pressure is not on us collectively to make this happen. The Lord has to do this, and yet at the same time, you know, it just makes us really, really grateful. There was nothing about you or me that invoked the motion of God on our soul to bless his word to us like this. There was nothing meritorious about you that made God look and say, "Oh, look at Keith, what he's doing. I will bless him." This was God's grace upon us. So we are humbled by this. We take no credit for loving his word and believing it. We're just amazed and astonished and grateful that this book which is so precious to us is precious to us because God himself made it that way, and so we love him all the more for what we've studied here tonight. Amen?

Let's bow in prayer, shall we?

*Father, it's just so astonishing to see what your word says and to have your Spirit open it to us, and to realize, Father, that it was us of a dark disposition, unable to accept the things of the Spirit of God; it was us blinded by the devil. And yet, Father, it was us that your Spirit came and pulled back the veil. It was us upon whom the Spirit opened our spiritual eyes and that which we previously did not see, now we look and open and say, "This is the word of God," and we say it from a full assurance born from the work of your Spirit in our hearts. Us, Father, here in the middle of the Midwest of the United States on a speck of dirt called earth that is orbiting somewhere in a vast galaxy that dwarfs us and makes us so completely insignificant. It was us like that, here in this place, Father, that you in your Almighty, gracious, marvelous, wonder of love, did this work on our hearts by name. You looked and you said, "Pat, my word is true." You looked and you said, "Ryan, my word is truth." You looked and you said, "Julie, it's time to believe." And by your power you brought us to this blessed place of submission to the authority of your word. Father, the ramifications of that are so vast but above all tonight we would pray*

*that we would appropriate it in such a way that it truly would humble our hearts, that it would crush the remaining remnants of pride in our lives and make us realize just what a recipient of grace we are so that we would be grateful and not boastful.*

*And Father, as we think about taking this word and having it penetrate in the lives of those that we love and, Father, through the ministry of Truth Community Fellowship, we acknowledge with fresh appreciation here this evening that we are totally incapable of making anything of lasting significance, of eternal importance happen; that we can't make any one person believe. So Father, it just brings us to a place of utter dependence upon you. We look to you in dependence. We ask you, Father, in total dependence upon your Spirit, to take your word and just as you used it in our lives, use our lives and use your word to make it real to others as well.*

*And Father, we promise you tonight, we promise you that as you do that and when you do that in greater measure than what we've seen so far, we promise you that we will never take the credit, that we will never say that this was born of my wisdom or born of my evangelism or born of some pastor's preaching. We promise you, Father, that if you'll do that work through us, that we will be quick to give you 100% of the glory and to honor Christ and to honor your word and say, "Of course, this all came from you and not of us." So Father, we ask you to do that for your glory and that we might simply be pleasing servants, slaves really, simply doing what we've been commanded to do. But Father, we will never, never, never, ever say anything other than your word is absolutely true and that it must be believed. We will never say that it's probably true because that would be to dishonor the one who testified about your word to our hearts. So Father, help us to be faithful to those heart aspirations and bless your word as it goes forth through the ministry of Truth Community Fellowship and through the lives of those who make up that fellowship, and we'll love you all the more as you work through us. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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