

We Proclaim the Bible
Various Scriptures
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 14, 2018

Well, we've had a full morning already, haven't we? As I look back over that PowerPoint, like many of you, I think I get emotional, because I've got some great memories up there. I remember baptizing all those people on Easter Sunday to the point that my arm got tired. And I wondered "Lord, are there any Garrah children left? Have we baptized them all, or is there some more that I haven't met yet?" It's such a wonderful day. I remember seeing so many join our church on Membership Sunday and hearing all your testimonies. We actually went through 60 something testimonies in the scope of about three month's time. And it was such a wonderful blessing to hear all the Lord has done in your life, by needing Christ, and how the Lord has brought you to new life in Him. It's just wonderful. And we had a picnic after that. I got to see you serve each other there. We had a family camp. I got to see you serve again. You do a wonderful job of service. You even bought me that big red chair. I remember that. I never did get Carl sit in that thing. I call it "the chair of humility", and he never did ("chair of condescension" was another name). Christmas Eve service, wasn't that a blessing? Lake Day fellowship, the annual general meeting and then the other annual general meeting and the other annual general ... We only have one a year. I promise – that's our goal. So it's been a good year together, hasn't it? It's been a good year in the Lord. And it makes you wonder what's next; where do we go from here? How do you build on such a wonderful year?

I would say that's an important question to ask, because a lot of people aren't really sure what to do with the church today. A man was once asked in a phone survey, "What are you looking for in a church?" And he said, "Red brick. I want a red brick church." I think there's a lot of believers that that may be all they would know to say today, if you said, "What are you looking for in a church?"

According to a recent article on the McLean's website, Canada is still a very religious country. It's secular in many ways, but a lot of people still go to church in our country. But if you ask them why, they might tell you anything. Some would say they go for causes. They go to church to feed the poor, cloth the needy. They want to stop human trafficking or save the environment, that sort of thing. Good things. That's why they go to church. Some would say they go for the music. I was looking at someone's Facebook post the other day, and they said that their church felt like a big warm hug. And then they went on to describe the music because that was so important for them - that was what church was all about. Some go for programs; kids' programs, youth programs. Some go for outreach. Some go for tradition. A joke in the south, where I grew up, "Why do you go to church?" "Well, because my grandparents went to this church." Some go because their friends are there. But why do we go to church? What's the point of this thing? Where are we taking this ministry? What's next for us?

If you think about it, you can't do everything, there's only 24 hours in a day. So how are we going to spend the 24 hours we have? And that's what the vision statement is for. The vision statement helps us figure out what we're going to do in the next year and the following year. The opening paragraph is up here on the projector, but if you've got your iPhone, you can read it

there too. It says, “Our vision at Grace Fellowship Church is to proclaim grace upon grace to Chilliwack, British Columbia,” we actively sang about that, by the way, “and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17 says, ‘For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.’”

Then it says,

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack, we believe that salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives, and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus earns the Father’s approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. Since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace upon grace in several ways:

And the vision statement goes on to list those ways out for you in the document. There's several sections on each of these. But it says, “We proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. We proclaim grace upon grace through worship. ...” And we proclaim it through evangelism and through service. We proclaim God's grace through counseling and leadership and we proclaim it through equipping the saints.

And finally, the document (to kind of round it off) ends with,

Please pray for us as we put this vision into practice. Pray that the Lord would use us to make His name known to Chilliwack and the surrounding communities. Pray that His Word would go forth and the Gospel would ring out from among us, to the glory of God. In fact, if you are in need of God’s grace, we would love to help you. Please contact us and we will tell you about “grace upon grace.”

That's our goal as a church. That's how we want to spend our time, and we want to tell people about the grace of God, that is found in Jesus Christ. And God saved us through grace. None of you are going to heaven by works. You're all going because of the mercy of God. And we want to tell others about that grace, too. And this is how we do it, we do it through the Bible and worship and evangelism. We do it through service and counseling and leadership and equipping the saints.

And I was wrestling to get that all into one sermon, and I couldn't figure out how. So what I want to do this morning is just look at one of these areas with you; the first one there: “We proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible.” The second paragraph of the vision statement says,

Because the Bible is a revelation of God’s grace, we at GFC are committed to preaching it in our pulpit and to teaching it in every aspect of our ministry. The Bible has been called the traveler’s map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, and the Christian's charter. It is the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, a lamp for our feet, and a light for our path, because it proclaims grace. It loves to talk about the unmerited favour of God and to tell people how to find it through Christ. Therefore, we love to teach the Bible as a church.

If you've been with us for a while, you know that last sentence is very true of what we're doing here. We love to teach the Bible as a church. Amen? We love to tell people how to find Christ. And in the words of Charles Spurgeon, "We bleed Bibline." You cut us and the Bible pours out. You open up our church, and I hope you'll find Scripture there. In the words of John Wesley, he said, "We are homounius libri." We are a man of one book, a people of one book. The Bible is of utmost importance to us. John Bunyan said he was never out of his Bible. You could say the same thing for us. Martin Luther said, "I have asked God to neither send me dreams, nor visions, nor angels, but to give me a right understanding of this book." That's what we want. We want a right understanding of this book. We want to know what it says.

In fact, I bet if I went around the room and asked you what book changed your life more than any other, what book would it be? The Bible, right? If I went around the world and asked people the same question, you know, many of them would say the same thing. The Bible changed the way people thought about everything.

For centuries people only had one book in their home and what was that? It was the Bible. And it married and buried them. It was read at their wedding, it was read at the funeral. For some people, it was read at their birth. The first thing they heard coming into this world was Scripture. For others, their family records are kept in the Bible. Do any of you have a family Bible for all your records; family records you've kept, births and deaths? My grandmother has one of those. And for generations (before computers and the Internet), the names of my family were kept in a big black Bible on my grandmother's mantelpiece. And it was passed from generation to generation.

The first book every printed on the printing press was the Bible. And it was that book that created many modern languages. It was said that Luther's German Bible made the German language what it is today. And that Tyndale's English Bible did the same for English. There are words that we have in our language right now that came straight out of the Tyndale's Bible: scapegoat, atonement etc. In fact, the Bible's been translated into more than 2,000 different languages. There are more than 50 English versions of it. There are currently about 5 billion copies of the Bible worldwide. That's about one for every person on the planet. And if you do the math, that means that 50 Bibles are bought and sold every minute, or stolen actually. The Bible is the most shoplifted book in the world, due to its availability. That's pretty ironic, isn't it? I hope those people take it home and read it.

But it raises an important question, why is it important for us? Why is the Bible popular here in our church? You can't answer that question for every person on the planet. We were going to answer it for ourselves, why we hold the Bible in such high esteem. And I want to answer that question for you this morning by looking at what the Bible says about itself. What does the Bible say about itself?

The word "Bible" literally means "the books." The Latin word means "the books." It's a reference to the ancient books the Jews and Christians considered to be sacred. They considered them special. They knew these were not ordinary books. They knew there was something different about them. And what was it? I don't have to tell you the Bible is special. You don't

approach the Bible with the same reverence you approach the encyclopedia with. They're different books. Why is that? Well, let's talk about that this morning. Let me give you some reasons why we hold the Bible in such high esteem. So let me tell you what it says about itself.

First, it says it's the Word of God. This is the first thing the Bible says about itself, the first reason it's special is because this is the Word of God. More than a thousand times in the Old Testament and about 40 times in the New Testament, the Bible claims to be God's Word. Over and over again, the author said that this is a special book, because when it speaks God speaks. When the Bible says something, God says something. And if you want to open your Bibles to see this in Hebrews Chapter four. We're going to be looking at a lot of passages this morning, so just kind of hang in there with me. Hebrews Chapter four will be the first place we'll go this morning. The Bible has a lot to say about this book. So we're going to look at quite a few passages.

I mentioned all those reason why people go to church. Some of you came because you wanted to meet God today. And I want to tell you if that's why you came, you came for a good reason. Because in the Bible, that's exactly who you meet. You meet the Lord of heaven and earth and we see this spelled out for us in Hebrews Chapter 4:12. It says, "For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Just to point out a couple of things in this passage of the Word, the word in Greek is *logos*. Some of you have heard the word *logos* before. It was a term that meant "word," but it can also mean "teaching or doctrine." Philosophically, the *logos* was the reason or cause of something. The Greek philosophers were constantly looking for the reason or cause of all that existed.

I remember, as a university student, reading about the *logos* in Plato or Aristotle long before I ever read it here in the Bible. But they would ask questions, the philosophers would ask questions like, "Why are we here?" and "What's the point of it all?" Or, "How is man different from the animals?" Or they wanted to know what was the thing that held the universe together. And they called it the *logos*. Some said it was air or water. Some said it was fire or earth. One of them called Democritus, get this, in the fifth century BC said it was a tiny particle he called atoms. Fifth century BC.

The author of Hebrews says the *logos* is the Bible, the Word of God, the Old and New Testaments. If you can see and read the context above that, you get the best of what he's talking about here. And he said that it's living and active. And that it constantly working, constantly moving. And it's sharp, meaning it makes an impact. That phrase, double-edged sword, means it will cut you on both sides. One author said, "I've read a lot of books in my life, but no book has read me like the Bible." That's what he's talking about. And here it says, "As far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow". It cuts through everything. It opens up everything. Nothing can hide from the Bible. And it's "... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." I've had people say to me, "Did you follow me around this week and spy on me? Because that sermon was exactly what I'm going through." "Well, no I didn't. I don't have to, because the Bible can judge the thoughts and intentions of your heart. It can tell you exactly what you're going through because it's the Word of God."

Another way of saying this is that you can't read the Bible and walk away unchanged. You can't hear it, I mean really hear it, and go away unaffected. It will affect you. It will draw you to it, or it will repel you from it, but it will affect you.

A story is told of a husband who just got saved and he started reading his Bible to his wife, because he was blown away with it. He couldn't believe what he was reading, so he started reading it to her at dinner time. And she said, "Stop it! Stop it! I don't want to hear that anymore! It makes me feel guilty." The Bible does that. It makes you feel guilty. It makes you feel relief. It makes you feel sin. It makes you feel the Savior. It raises you up and tears you down. It does all of this, because it's the Word of God. You can't hear God speak and walk away and shrug your shoulders. And you can't hear His Word and do the same.

To draw this out, this idea of the Word of God, right when the Jews were copying the Old Testament, they would write it out without putting any space in between the words. If you saw an ancient Hebrew document, you would notice that there are no spaces in them. It's just words right across the page. And they would do that for a couple of reasons: one is because of space, paper was very expensive. But also they wanted to emphasize that this is the Word of God, not words plural, but the Word of God, the whole thing, the unit. This is what God wanted to say to us. This is what He wanted to tell us. If you want to know who God is, you open this book and read it.

They would also bury copies of the Old Testament in the ground that had mistakes in it. So they would actually find a spot in the synagogue called a Genizah and place the scrolls there until burial. They bury the scroll if they found errors, because they believed it was a lie and the error killed it. This is what the Bible says about itself. It's the living and active, sharp Word of God. Just as God spoke at creation and gave man life, God spoke in this book and gave it life.

And that leads to another thing the Bible says about itself. (We got quite a few stacked on each other here, so we're going to just go through them). First, this is the Word of God. Second, just building on that, this book is God breathed. It is the Word of God because it is God breathed. It has God's breath in it, and it has His life in it. You can turn over to 2 Timothy chapter three and you can see this. 2 Timothy is a couple books to the left of Hebrews. If you get to the book of Titus you've gone too far. (I'm sorry, Titus is right behind it. I'm sorry). If you get to the book of 1 Timothy you've gone too far. So, 2 Timothy chapter three.

If you remember at creation the book of Genesis says that the Lord formed man out of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. I was doing some research on that this week. I couldn't quite get my mind around what the breath was, it seemed a little mysterious. It could refer to the Holy Spirit, it could refer to something kind of like that. But the idea is that God breathed into man, and man lived. He blew His breath into him and man came to life, the dust came to life.

And in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul uses a similar expression. The idea here is that these are not just pages. This is not just ink – there's more to it. And it says in verse 16, 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture," the entirety of it again, "All Scripture is inspired by God. And profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness." The Word inspired there is where we

get our “inspiration.” Today, that means encouragement. You know, “That song inspired me.” That book inspired me.” But here it actually means more than this. The word “inspired” is *theopneustos*, which means “God-breathed.” Some of your translations say that. It actually says “God-breathed”; breathed out by God. It's a compound word in Greek from *theos*, “God,” and *pneustos*, “Spirit”. The idea is that God put His Spirit into the Bible. He breathed into it, so that what He says, it says. So that what He tells us, it tells us. This one author says, “Some say to err is human. Scripture is human, therefore, Scripture errs.” “But the reality,” this guy says, “is that to err is human, therefore God gave the Scriptures by inspiration, so that they do not err.” There are no errors in this book. There are no mistakes because God breathed into it. He inspired it, so there's no need to bury it in the graveyard outside of the synagogue. It is a living book.

2 Peter 1, let me just read this passage to you. 2 Peter 1:20-21 describes it this way when it says, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.” Peter says the men who wrote Scripture didn't just make up whatever they wanted to. They were moved by the Spirit of God.

The word “moved” gives the idea and mode of action like that of a ship being carried along by the wind. Peter says the authors of Scripture were carried along by the Holy Spirit, the wind of the Holy Spirit, when they wrote. He moved them along to say exactly what He wanted them to say. Now this doesn't mean that the authors of Scripture lost their personalities when they wrote, because they didn't. If you read through the gospels, you'll know that Matthew didn't write like Mark and Luke didn't write like John. Peter had his own ways of expressing things, his own subjects he wanted to talk about. And this doesn't mean it wasn't their words, too. It was their words. It was the Word of God, and the word of man; His book and their book. Because it was God breathed, He blew His breath into them as they wrote.

And if you're wondering what that looks like, wrap your mind around that some. B. B. Warfield, in his book on inspiration, he says, “That as light passes through a stained glass window is colored and stained, so the Word of God is colored and stained through the human authors who wrote it.” “But,” he says, “what if that was just the way He wanted it to be? What if the colors of the window have been designed by the architect just the way that He wants.” He says, “When we think of God giving His Word to us, we must remember that He is a God of providence and that He holds all the lines of preparation under His care. The men who wrote the Bible wrote just the way that He wanted, because He was sovereign over their training and background.” You see what he's saying there?

It's been said if you want to train someone, start with their grandparents. And God did that with the authors of Scripture, He started with their grandparents. In a special way, He prepared them way back with their families and their communities to give the exact personalities He wanted them to have, to write His Word. He took Matthew, the tax collector – a very precise man. Some say that he was probably the scribe of the Apostles, and he gave a very precise book. Matthew has more quotes than any other gospel in it, because of Matthew's background. He was a reporter. Take Luke, the doctor, and he wrote a great doctoral book, a very historical book. He took Paul, the former legalist – passionate man. I heard someone say, “You would never have a conversation with Paul and say, ‘Paul what do you think about this?’ And Paul would say, ‘I don't

know. I haven't thought about that before.'” That's not his personality. See, He colored and stained the window just the way that He wanted it. He held all the lines of preparation under His care and He gave us a totally unique book. A book that has made an impact on millions worldwide.

I'll tell you this story. I knew the head of a large missionary society in Zimbabwe. He gave the New Testament to a very evil man who said, "If you do that, I'll just smoke it." He said, "If you give me that book, I'll just light it up and smoke it." And the missionary said, "Okay, that's fine, but just promise to read it first." And the guy did. And several years later they met again and the smoker had gotten saved. In fact, he was an evangelist, telling everybody about Jesus. And the missionary asked and said, "What happened?" The man said, "Well, I smoked Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but when I got to John 3:16, I couldn't smoke anymore." He said, "That book made an impact." That's because it was breathed out by God. God breathed it through these authors.

That leads to another thing the Bible says about itself. That is, it's sufficient. It's the Word of God, and God-breathed, therefore it is sufficient. It contains all you need. And we saw this in 1 Peter, "God is enough for you." You don't need to turn to secular psychology. You don't need to turn to pills or drugs or the world's philosophy. You just need to turn to this book. In 2 Timothy 3, if you read on in verses 16 through 17, he says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The adequate here means "fitted" or "complete" for every task. Paul says, if you know the Word of God, you are fitted for every task. Before a soldier went to war, he was always fitted for battle. He was given a shield and a helmet and a spear. The Bible gives you that, you have all you need for combat.

I looked it up the other day, and the average Bible has 1,200 pages, 1,100 chapters, and 31,000 verses to give you all that you need. You're not missing anything. And it talks about everything from marriage to parenting to work. It talks about politics and music and money. It tells you how to treat people. It tells you how to forgive people. It tells you how to suffer, how to succeed, how to handle grief and loss – everything. It's all in here. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "... His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." You see the word "everything" there? The Bible has given us everything. This doesn't mean you don't go to the doctor for physical problems. That's not the idea. But with the nonphysical things, you turn to the Word of God.

It's because of this that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:6, he said, "Do not exceed what is written". You don't have to go beyond what is written. This is all that you need. You don't need another word from God. This is the Word from God. You don't need to search for His will. His will is right here. One author said this, "You hear people say. 'I'm searching for the will of God.' Is God's will lost? They think God is the celestial Easter bunny who stashes His will in the bushes and then sits in heaven saying, 'You're getting warmer,' or 'You're getting colder.' That's not true." He says, "God's will is easy to find. It's right here in the Bible."

I grew up in a church, maybe some of you did, where we were constantly looking for the will of God. You might have grown up in a church like that. And we would say things like, "God, if you want me to marry that person, please make that leaf fall from that tree." Can I tell you that is a horrible way to make a decision like that? But we would say that. "Lord, if you want me to move

to Africa and be a missionary, please make it rain tomorrow." Here in British Columbia, we would have a lot of missionaries, wouldn't we? Let me tell you, you don't have to make decisions that way. Because God's will is found right here. His Word is sufficient for you.

Another thing the Bible says about itself, and I like this one (we're going through these next ones quickly), it is clear. The Bible is a clear book. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." Which means that God can be found. You can seek Him and find Him. God is not playing games with you.

If you want to look over to Luke chapter 16. In Luke chapter 16, (it's probably a familiar passage to you) it's the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It's one of the few times that hell is described in such vivid detail in the Bible. But in this story, two men die. One is a righteous man, one is an unrighteous man. One dies and goes to heaven to sit with Abraham, and the other one dies and goes to hell (the rich man does). And while he's in hell, verse 24 says, the rich man calls for mercy. He's in agony. He's in torment and he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to help him. And Abraham refuses and says, "There's a gap between the two of us that can't be crossed. You can't reach across it." So in verse 27, the rich man begs Abraham another time to send a warning to his brothers, so they will stay out of hell. And again Abraham refuses. And this is the point, if you look in verse 29, this is why he refuses: Abraham said to him, "They (your brothers) have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them."

Moses and the prophets is a reference to the Old Testament, the 39 books in the Hebrew Bible. In another words, Abraham tells the rich man that the Old Testament is clear enough to keep the brothers out of hell – let them read it. We often say the Old Testament is so hard to understand, right? My little boy and I are trying to go back over and memorize the minor prophets. There's some hard names in there, right? Jesus says (Abraham says), those books are clear enough to keep a man out of hell. And then he goes on to say this (the rich man), "Well, I know my brothers. They're not going to do that." He says in verse 30 (the rich man says), "No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead," in other words, if you send Lazarus back from the dead, "they will repent." But Abraham said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't be persuaded, even if they see someone rise from the dead." Get the point?

You guys know those people who say, "I'll believe when I see a miracle." Anybody know somebody like that? Abraham says, "No, they won't. They won't." If you don't believe the Bible, you're not going to believe if you see a miracle. If you don't believe this Word, you're not going to believe if you see someone come back from the dead. Pharaoh saw all kinds of miracles in the Old Testament. Pharaoh didn't believe, right? A lot of the Jews saw all kinds of miracles in the promised land. They didn't believe. This book is clear enough to keep a man out of hell. You have miracle right here. You have the Word of God. And it's so clear, that if you ignore it now, you wouldn't believe then.

Another passage on this line, and I'll just read this to you guys, 2 Peter 1:19 says, "We have the prophetic Word made more sure, to which you'd do well to pay attention." In that context, Peter's talking about the transfiguration when Jesus went up on the mountain and transfigured before

them, showed the glory of God. And Peter said, "I saw all that. I saw the resurrection. I saw these miracles, but the prophetic Word," he said, "is more sure than that."

Now, just an interesting background about this, the New Testament was written in what is called Koine Greek, which is fisherman Greek, you want to call it today. It was the Greek that was spoken by fisherman, by ordinary people. There was a Greek, a version of Greek, that was for the scholars used in the academy, used by the really smart people. And there was a Greek that was used by everyone else. And this is the Greek that was used by everyone else, because God wanted to be clear. He wanted there to be no misunderstanding. He wanted everyone to understand this book. This doesn't mean there's no mysteries in the Bible, there are. But it means the whole book itself is not a mystery. Now, that leads to a final thing the Bible says about itself. The Bible says it's the Word of God and is God-breathed. It's sufficient. It says that it's clear. And that's why we believe it and cherish it here as a church. It's a special book. It's a supernatural book.

So to round this off, let me give you one more thing the Bible says about itself, and that is that it is finished. It's a finished book. If you turn over to one more passage with me, and thanks for your patience by the way. We're turning all over here. Revelation chapter 22. (This is last chapter in the Bible). So just go to the concordance and turn back a couple of pages to Revelation chapter 22. When the apostle, John, was writing the book of Revelation, the church was under heavy persecution. And people wanted to know when it was going to end, they were tired of dying. They were tired of being tortured. And so prophecies started coming up around this time in history. You see a lot of prophecies about the end of the world floating around. And so in response to that, a lot of scholars think John wrote these final words in the book of Revelation. If you look in verses 18 through 19, in response to all these prophecies, in verse 18 he says, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

If you notice, this is kind of a very sobering way to end the book like this. John says, "If anyone adds to the prophecies in this book, God will add to him the plagues." If you remember there's quite a few plagues written in the book of Revelation; plague of swords, plague of blood, plague of hail and darkness, and all this. John says you will receive all that if you add to this book. But his point is, that the book is over. The book is complete. The Bible is finished. Some have argued that this only refers to the book of Revelation. And in a sense, that's true, because John refers to "this book", in verses 18 and 19. But the book of Revelation is about prophecy. It's about the Word of God. "In regards to that Word", John says, "From now, it's finished." This is final Word for our age.

Jude 1, verse 3 (the book of Jude 1, verse 3) says, "Beloved, ... I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." In that passage of Jude ... (You can look there. I see some of you guys turning there, that's fine. Jude is the book right in front of Revelation, if you want to see that for yourself. I'll read it again to you; the third verse of the book of Jude, again, the book right in front of Revelation.), Jude says, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt

the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all handed down to the saints."

That phrase "once for all" means it's not continually being handed down. In other words, it was created, or finished, once for all. I told you before that the apostles laid the foundation for the church. (Several passages talk about that). You don't keep laying the foundation. You lay it once and then it's there. It's the same idea here. This doesn't mean God doesn't speak to us today. Of course, God speaks to us. He speaks to us through the Bible, for the things the Bible talks about. You can go out and learn about God in nature, but you filter that through the Scriptures, right? And when you step outside of that, there's only danger and confusion.

I remember several years ago, I was talking to a man who said that God told him go to the seminary. He got a direct word from Him to go to the seminary. He was praying, and the Lord spoke to him and told him that. But the interesting thing about that conversation is that he wasn't in seminary at the time. I remember wondering, "Was he in sin? I mean, if this is a word from God and he believes it is, should I confront him, because he's not obeying the Word from God? Shouldn't we bring church discipline on him?" And you see there's all kinds of confusions that come when you get outside of this book. You filter everything through the Word of God, because it's finished. It's a complete book for us. We're not going through the bushes wondering, "Is this God's will?", or "is that His Word?" It's here for us to know. And again God speaks to us other ways, but we always filter it. God can speak outside the Bible, but He doesn't speak independently from it. He speaks to us in nature, things like that.

We could mention other things the Bible says as well. For instance, it says it's authoritative. It's an authority for us over. And over and over again, you see the Bible give us commands. It's an authority. It's an empowering book. Romans 1:16 says, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone believes..." It's an enlightening book. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." It's a cleansing book, and we could go on and on and on. But this is no ordinary book. As you've seen this morning there's something special about this. There's something extraordinary. One author said, "The Bible is a book that if man could have written it, he wouldn't. And if he would have written it, he couldn't have." It was written by the hand of God, which raises the question, "So how does this impact our church?"

Okay, so we proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. That's good. That's important. And we do it because it's the Word of God. And it's God-breathed, and it's sufficient, and clear and finished. Now what does that mean for us today? How does this move us forward in the new year? Well, let me answer it this way. This means that we know what we're trying to do as a church. We know what we're trying to do. Like I said, this is a clear book. It can be understood. It tells us what to do. I mentioned to you a moment ago, a lot of churches today are confused on what they're trying to do. They don't have to be, if they understand the Scriptures.

And you can open up this book and see good and bad examples of churches. If you want to know what your church is supposed to look like, you can look at churches like the Thessalonian's, and they did a great job. And if you want to look at what your church is not supposed to look like, look in Revelations chapters two and three. These give you a whole detailed outline of what

church is not supposed to be; the church in Corinth, same thing. It tells you how to lead the church, how to join the church. It tells you how to do the Lord's Supper. All these kinds of things are spelled out here.

Also, we can know that the church will prevail. That's another way this impacts our church. The church will prevail. If you follow the Scriptures, you know Jesus will build His church. The Lord said in Matthew Chapter 16, "I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." I give you everything in that passage, other than point out that nothing will over power the church. As far as we know, Jesus was a carpenter. And this is the only time that He talked about building something in the Bible, that was His church. And He says nothing will prevail over what He has built.

I was preparing for this sermon and I came across a story of a pastor who grew up near the ocean. And he said he liked to build sand castles on the beach until the local bullies came along and kicked them down. So what he decided to do was put a boulder on the beach and put the sand on the boulder, so that when they kicked the sand castles it wouldn't knock them down. And his point was that Jesus built the church on a boulder. He set it on a rock, and it's not going to fall. Which means that God will bless His church. And this is just one more way that it impacts us. God will bless His church.

Luke Chapter 11 says, "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it." That's what we want as a church, isn't it? You want to be blessed? You obey the Word of God. Other passages talk about you want to be found faithful when the Master returns. And that's what we want, we want to be faithful when the Lord returns.

And if you're wondering what that looks like, you can look in your bulletin. We've got a calendar for 2018 in there. And you can see that we're going to be teaching the Word of God through our Easter service, our Good Friday service and our membership Sunday (just some of the things we've got scheduled there). We're going to be applying it in our Agape picnics and our outreach events and youth camps. We're going to be teaching the Scriptures on Sunday mornings and through our care groups. We're going to teach it for counseling and doing discipleship. Everything we do is going to be built on the Word of God; based on this book. We're going to stand on the boulder, and not on sand.

When I was in the seminary, we got to do a Q and A once with John MacArthur. He opened the floor up for questions and I remember thinking, "Well I came a long way to be here, so I want to ask this guy a question. And so I raised my hand, and I asked. (In a trembling voice, because I didn't want to sound really stupid in front of my whole student body). But I asked him, I said, "Did you plan on your church getting this big?" I said, "When you came here, there was a couple hundred people, and now there's thousands of people. Did you plan on the growth and all that?" And he said, "No, we didn't." He said, "We just taught the Bible, and people came." He said, "When I first came, the Jesus movement was in full swing. This was in the 60s and 70s in Los Angeles and," he said, "all the hippies were getting saved and trying to find out where they could find the Bible." He said, "So, they found out we were teaching the Bible here, and they all came in." He said, "It was so crowded at times that I would be preaching and there was no room in the pews, and so the hippies would just sit on the floor all around me, in their jeans and no shoes on,

and long hair." He said, "We taught the Scriptures and God blessed us." That's what we want to see as a church. We want to teach the Scriptures and see God bless us as He sees fit. We want to teach the Bible. Can you think of a better New Year's resolution than that? Can you think of a better way to start 2018 together? We want to proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. Let's pray for the Lord blessings as we do that.

Father I pray that our time this morning would be encouragement to everyone here. Lord we thank You for Your Word. I know we turned to a lot of passages this morning, and thank You for the patience of these dear people as we did that. We thank You for the kind of book the Bible is, how special it is, how unique it is. We thank You that we're able to live in a country where we can teach it and where we can live it out. And we pray for this next year as we think of the new year together. Lord, may we stand on this work as we stand on the rock of Scripture, the rock of Jesus Christ. Thank You for the grace You've shown us in Him. Thank You for the supernatural work You've done in each of our hearts, to all see Christ. Lord if there's any here who don't know this grace (we're talking about the unmerited favour) if they don't know Christ, Lord I pray this would be a wonderful time for them to find someone, reach out, and come to a saving knowledge and get saved. Thank You for our time again, Lord. We pray that You would use this for eternity. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.