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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: The Value of the Old Testament

Transcribed Message
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Romans 15:4

Well it was the experience of the early church in about the 3rd century that a man named Marcion rose to some level of popularity. The problem with Marcion was he was a heretic and he was a heretic for a number of reasons, but not the least of which was how he looked at the Old Testament. He did not see the Old Testament as being a valid part of the word of God. He didn't think that the God of the Old Testament was the same God who had sent Jesus to be our Savior. He had the audacity actually to go through his New Testament Bible and in the books that he believed were revealed by God he literally would cut out the portions that quoted from the Old Testament. We know if he was doing that in the book of Romans he didn't have a whole lot of Romans left because Paul quoted the Old Testament a lot in the book of Romans. I doubt if there are very many Christians today who would fall within the framework of Marcionism. Not certainly openly, not blatantly, not in things that they would say that would denigrate in any way the Old Testament Scriptures. But I wonder sometimes if in fact our attitude and maybe our neglect of the Old Testament Scriptures doesn't place us a little bit within that Marcion kind of thinking. The apostle Paul has something I think to say to us about that and especially in Romans 15 and verse 4. We want to see this morning that the Old Testament was written for the New Testament believer. After all the Bible makes it abundantly clear all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and all of it is profitable for us as we certainly know that includes both the Old and New Testament.

Let's look quickly by way of review at what we've seen already in this study of Romans to this point. Remember God values unity in the body of Christ. That's really the heartbeat of what 12, 13, 14 and on in to 15 now. All of this is setting up to say to us God values unity in the body. There are things that we are accountable for, responsible for, attitudes that we are to have that to help maintain that as Paul says in Ephesians 4. What we've seen for 11 chapters in the book of Romans as Paul lays out doctrine after

doctrine and truth after truth. Then we get into these closing chapters, 12 through 16, and he is in effect saying to us this is how you live this truth out. It's not as we've said repeatedly that the 11 chapters previous were not applicable or were not practical. They are. Doctrine is always practical. But in these chapters Paul is saying here are specific things that are happening in the life of your church that I want you to see how this is impacted by these truths.

Then I think with that he is saying this is what it looks like. This is what it looks like in the life of the strong to love the weak because that's what he's calling for in chapters 14 and 15. In just the daily interactions of life, strong are always to be in consideration of the weak. As we said last week, the strong are to lead the way in maintaining unity. You can't expect an immature weak believer to be in any way at the front line of maintaining unity. That is going to fall to those who are strong. That's going to fall to those who have a clear grasp and understanding of the truths of God's word. We are doing all of this to build each other in the faith.

Let's look this morning at what the weak and strong both need. What both need is the power and influence of the word of God in their life. We're going to begin by noting just an exposition of this 4th verse. The second part of our morning I want to put before you some reasons why we should value the Old Testament. But let's begin with an exposition of verse 4 and as we do that not surprisingly we find an explanation. At verse 4 again. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Now we know again that this is an explanation simply because Paul begins this verse with the word "for". The word "for" always tells us there is an explanation coming in that verse for what just follows. That's what we see here. Notice three things about this explanation Paul gives. He has just quoted from Psalm 69. In quoting from Psalm 69 he tells us that Jesus is our example. "For Christ did not please himself (verse 3) but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me'." With that truth in verse 3, what does Paul do in verse 4? What does Paul do at the end of that 3rd verse? He wants to illustrate the fact that Jesus is our example. Does he take us to the gospel and quote from the gospels some incident from the life of Jesus that shows us

that he is our example? No, he doesn't take us to the gospels. If we were just thinking that way, we might think we would say Jesus is our example. Can you show me something? Of course, let me go to the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Here's a biography of the life of Christ. Let me draw something out of the life of Christ from the gospels that will show to us that he is our example. Paul doesn't do that. He goes back to us what might very well seem like an obscure passage in Psalm 69, a passage that was written 1000 years before Christ even came to this earth. Why does he do that? What is he trying to say to us?

It's a wonderful illustration of this truth that we're looking at this morning. I think clearly in the mind of Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit it would have been very easy to go to the gospels and say here is an example and yet that's not what happened. He takes us back to the Old Testament and I think he does that show to us that the Old Testament is to have great value. We've already said this, and I just commented on it before. I looked just this week there's like 75 some quotes and allusions in the book of Romans to the Old Testament Scriptures. Romans quotes the Old Testament Scripture more than any other book of the New Testament. No other book even comes close to how many times he quotes from the Old Testament. So it is quite natural here for Paul to do that. When Paul says for whatever was written, or if you have the NIV he says everything that was written. What is he underscoring?

He is underscoring secondly this matter that the word of God comes to us by means of verbal plenary inspiration. Don't let those words throw you off because they are important and are very helpful. When we talk about the revelation of God's word to us we talk about the fact that it is a verbal plenary inspiration. Verbal means the very words of the Bible. Those very words that the Holy Spirit intended for us to be reading this morning are the inspired words of God. There's a view of the inspiration of Scripture that says it's not really the words that are important; it's just the thoughts. Who gets to decide what the thoughts are that are important? Of course not. That's not what it is. It's the very words and verbal words God has given to us, his revelation.

Plenary. That means full and complete. There isn't any part that is more or less inspired. Again, today in our world and our minimizing of the authority of Scripture, people want to go through the Bible and subdivide the Bible up into inspired, more

inspired, and less inspired. It's a very subjective thing. Who gets to make all those choices? I don't think that's the intent at all of Scripture. It is verbal, plenary. All the parts are equally inspired by God.

This idea of inspiration simply to say is God-breathed. God has breathed it out to us. He tells us specifically it is that which has come to us in former days so he is taking us back to the Old Testament. He's pointing us back to what we know as our 39 books of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament is not a dead book. The Old Testament was written as we said at the beginning for New Testament believers. That doesn't mean every part of the Old Testament is necessarily equally applicable to every situation in life. It's all inspired of God. It is all valuable. It's all profitable. It's all helpful. But if I'm having interpersonal problems, if I'm having problems in my marriage, if I'm having problems at work with somebody or within some other context, I probably am not going to go to the book of Leviticus to try to find some interpersonal relational principle. No, I'm maybe going to Proverbs. Maybe I'll go to Romans 12, 13 and 14. We understand when we say that there are different parts of the Bible that have a greater application to a specific life situation, but every bit of it is equally profitable to us in the sense that it has come to us from God.

Notice thirdly what he says. Our faith is built on doctrine. Our faith is built on doctrine. We have an objective faith. We have a faith that is built on the doctrines, the teaching of the Word of God. That is very important. It was written he says for our instruction. He talks about the idea that is written two times. In that one verse he said it's written. It's written. It's written for our instruction. It was written for our learning in that sense. When we see Paul saying in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 2 to a young pastor in Ephesus. He says Timothy, preach the word in season and out. This is what God has intended for the word to do in our lives. It is to instruct us. It is to teach us. Christianity is a religion of instruction, if we can say it that way.

Everywhere Christianity has gone, one of the first things that missionaries do when they go into an area that is unreached, they begin to teach people to read. Why? They want people to read because they want people to be able to have God's word in their language. Of course, there's all kinds of other benefits societywise to people being literate and able to read and learn. That's what he's saying to us here. Nothing will build

up your faith like the word of God. Nothing. Nothing will build up your faith like the word of God. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:2, "Like new born infants desire the sincere milk of the word, by it you may grow." That is a picture for us of the desires that we're to have for God's word.

The job of the pastor/teacher is not to entertain people on a weekly basis. It isn't just to tell you stories on a weekly basis. It isn't to bring you some cultural issue that has engaged the mind of the world at that moment of time. We have to step into those things. We have to talk about those things. There is nothing wrong with occasionally doing that. But that's not the menu that the church needs week to week. What the church, what the body of Christ needs week to week is just exactly what Paul said to Timothy – preach the word of God to God's people. Nothing is going to equip them like the word of God because it is verbally plenary inspired of God. This is God's revelation to us. This is the mind of God to us and we walk in that truth and we're changed by that truth.

The great problem in the church in America today is that we're biblically illiterate. We're biblically illiterate in large measure because pastors are not teaching the word of God, and frankly people are not reading the word of God. What we have is a biblically illiterate church, and that's a sad state of affairs given the fact that we're the most blessed people in the world. You can go over to the new Mardel's and see a wall of Bible translations. There it is in our own tongue, our own language, in any translation or paraphrase you want. And yet we go to church every Sunday throughout this land and there's a dearth of the knowledge of the word of God because it's not being taught and it is not being invited into lives on a daily basis.

Now look at the last part of verse 4. Why is this so important? He's going to tell us. It's so important. There is a purpose in other words in view when he says for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. There we have what we just looked at. That. Purpose clause. That through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. So that little word "that" alerts us to the fact that now he's going to list off for us some of the purposes that this verbally plenary inspired word of God is to have in our lives. Look at this. This is great truth.

The first thing he says there is to be the impact and the result of endurance. That through endurance. Paul loves this word endurance. He uses it more than any other New Testament writer. It is the idea of perseverance. It's the idea of being steadfast, of being patient. As he says to the Corinthians, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There are just so many places that Paul speaks of this. How do we grow? How do we grow from being weak to being strong? Remember that is the underlying point of these 14th and 15th chapters. This church is divided up over incidental things, over opinions about things. Paul's heart is I want you people to move from being weak in understanding these things to being strong. How is that going to happen? How is it that we're not tossed about by every wind of doctrine as he says in Ephesians 4?

As he looked at the landscape of the churches even at that time, he says I see people who hear something and they're moved towards that, and then they hear something else and they're moved towards that, and then there's another new idea and then they're following after that. How is it that we're grounded enough in our faith to have discernment to say that doesn't seem to line up with Scripture? He's going to tell us. If you just take the word of God and apply that question: How do I grow in my walk with God? How do I grow as a Christian? After all, if you're a new believer in Christ, let's say you're fairly new to understanding the gospel, how is it that you're going to grow to maturity so that you can be wise and understanding these things?

I think as you just survey the Scripture you're going to see that there are three things that are involved. The first one is time. It just takes time. Some people have had a lot of time and so time isn't enough. There are a lot of people who are older in age but they're not mature in Christ so you can't just say time. You've got to add something to that. You have to add to that. Truth. The word of God. you have time and you have truth. And then there's another one. This one we don't like that much but the third one is trials. The third one is tests. This is attested to by the Scriptures.

Listen to what Paul says in Romans chapter 5 verse 3: "Not only that but we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance (steadfastness, perseverance), and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame." Those are the three elements that are involved. James

speaks to that so clearly. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, endurance, perseverance. That's what it does. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Verse 12. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who believe.

Just think for a moment because this is about the value of the Old Testament. that's what Paul's pointing us to in verse 4. He is saying to us that there is ample evidence in Scripture that what God does in people's lives is to grow them in his grace by means of time, by means of truth, and by means of testing. You just walk with me through the Old Testament Scriptures for a moment and you've got a man like Abraham. God just pulls him up out of the land of Ur and he brings him through this amazing set of circumstances and experiences and oh by the way, you've got to wait until you're 100, Abraham, before the promise that I have given to you is fulfilled and realized. How do you get to age 100 holding on to the promise of God? You get there by steadfastness. You get there by endurance. You get there by patience. All of that which is grounded in the truth of the promise that God has given to you.

You go a little bit farther and there's a man named Noah. He's spending about the same amount of time building a boat that nobody even knows what it's for because nobody knows what a flood is. And then you get to a man like Moses. That poor guy spent 40 year stints two different times in the wilderness, the second of those times with a few million of his friends who consistently turned against him. How did he do that? He did that by anchoring himself to the truth of God's word through all of these various trials that God brought him through. Job. My goodness! A man who lost 10 children in one day, and then he lost everything else, and then he lost his health. He could say I know that my Redeemer lives and I know that I've got one thing to hold onto in all of this. It is the truth of God's word. It is going to carry me through this. And then you go on and you've got David. There's David running around from cave to cave with a maniac of a man trying to kill him, and then even his own son wanted to take his life. It just goes on all in the Old Testament. Israel spending 70 years in isolation out of the land in exile holding on as Daniel pointed them and as Jeremiah reminded them of the promises of

God that He who has begun a good work in you will continue it. He will not fail to do what he has said. The Scriptures are just filled with examples like that. The Old Testament Scriptures. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 these things are written for our example and for our learning, he says almost the same thing there as he does here in Romans. There is this matter first of all of persistence and endurance and steadfastness.

Secondly, you notice there is encouragement. There is encouragement. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures." The word means comfort. It is the idea of strength. Now you're going to know this word when I say it but you know the word *paraclete*. The word *paraclete*. This is the word *paraclete*. This idea of encouragement is the word *paraclete*, and you know that word because you know that's what Jesus said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that he is our *paraclete*. He is the one who comes alongside. That's what the word means. Someone who comes alongside of you. the Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would do that for us, be our encourager, be our advocate. Jesus is our advocate. He is our defender. In that sense he too is our *paraclete*. So the encouragement.

You notice it is the encouragement of the Scriptures. Plural. All of the Scriptures are the source of encouragement. The Holy Spirit is our teacher. The Holy Spirit is the one that every time we open the word of God our heart attitude ought to be that every time we open this book – Holy Spirit of God, I'm praying right now that as I read this word, as I invite your truth into my life, that you will cause me to understand and see what it is that I need to see, and see myself and see my circumstance and just reveal yourself to me, just like the mirror that James speaks of that the word of God is.

Then finally he says that we might have hope. That we might have hope. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. I say to you every last one of us needs hope. We've all been to some degree or another in a place in our life at some point in our life, and there is likely somebody here this morning that is feeling rather hopeless. It's a terrible feeling. We all know it. We know it too well. That sense of hopelessness that can come to us as we face what seems like hopeless

circumstances. This is what he is saying to us. He's saying it's the word of God that becomes the source of hope in those times. Every one of us needs that sense of hope to press forward, to go on. There is very little reason as you look around this world to have any hope at all.

I don't know about you. I find myself praying more for this country than I think I've ever prayed in my life. It just feels like this is the hour that God is calling us to do that. If you look around the landscape of this country and the world, it looks incredibly hopeless, but we know that is not true because this book is the source of hope. We are not, as Paul said in Ephesians, when he spoke of the Gentiles and when he talked about the Gentiles he was just talking about people who don't know God. He said they are without God and without hope in this world. That's the world that we live in. That's the world that we're called to. That's the world that we're to be burdened for. That's the world that this season of the year needs to hear a message of hope, maybe more than ever. But that is a description of the world that we live in and people who do not know Christ. They don't even know what they don't know. But they don't know this one who has come to give them hope. We have that hope and we have that hope in the word.

Psalms 119. More than once the psalmist says I have hope in your word. Listen to Psalm 130 and verse 5, "I wait for the Lord; my soul waits and in his word I hope." That is what we need. That is what we need to hear. That's what we need to read. That's what we need to be reminded of. Verse 7. "O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption." Luke 24. Those two walking on the road to Emmaus which I'm going to comment on in a moment, they were moved from despair to hope by one thing. By the word of the risen Lord. The word of the risen Lord. This book is the source of hope, the source of encouragement, the source of endurance. It is not just a part of it. Not just the new part. Not just what we call the New Testament but all of it. The Old Testament and the New Testament fall within that.

Let's take the rest of our time just a few minutes to close out and let's look at an understanding of the importance of the Old Testament. Since the number seven is the number of perfection, I just landed on seven. Here are seven reasons that you and I should value the Old Testament Scriptures. Seven reasons why we should come to an understanding that the Old Testament just like the New is inspired of God. It is profitable

for our instruction and in training and righteousness. The first thing I would say is the Bible is incomplete without the Old Testament. The Bible is incomplete without the Old Testament. Both the old and New Testament make up the word of God. As I said before, the Old Testament is not a dead book. It's written for New Testament believers. The new was not given to replace the old. We don't need to go back to the old but it was made to complete the story that God unfolds through all of Scripture. The storyline of redemption begins in the Old Testament and it runs all through the pages, all the way to the end of Scripture.

Now remember way back, there are five words that we have said in years past that can give you a handle on the entire word of God. If somebody ever says to you I don't understand the Bible. I can't even begin to get a handle on it. You can say to them I've got five words that will help you understand the whole Bible. Are you ready? Are you with me? The first one is really a word that describes and captures all the Old Testament. It starts with an A and it ends with an N and there's a lot of vowels in there and a lot of other letters. It's a long word. It is when you are looking forward to something. You have a sense of anticipation. What is the Old Testament? The Old Testament is just anticipation. It is God all through those 39 books creating this sense of anticipation of the coming one. So that is 39 books covered of the Bible. All of it under the title of anticipation.

When you get to the Gospels – Matthew Mark Luke and John – you've got another word and this one happens to start with an M. It also ends with an N as do all of these. And this one starts with an M and it has to do with the fact that someone is here and has made himself known and it is the word manifestation. So now what was anticipated has been manifest. Jesus is here. He's among us. He's walking among God's people and the people that God had sent him to. You've got this anticipation realized which is the manifestation.

So now you want to tell everybody all about it so the third word starts with a P and ends with an N. you want everybody to know about it. It's the word proclamation. Get it out there. Let everybody know about it.

There's a lot of things in this book that are not easy to understand. the new truth that is being realized and so now we have a whole group of books in the Bible called the

epistles and they're going to help us. The next word starts with an E and ends with an N. explanation. We're going to be explaining all of what this looks like, what it means now that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled by Christ and we are now living as New Covenant believers.

Then we get to the last book of the Bible and wrap up this whole story and it starts with a C and it ends with an N. It's when something is fully realized. Consummation. There is the consummation of all of these things. When you think about the Old Testament, the Old Testament is really what helps bring together the New Testament and complete what God has given to us.

We're not going to take that much time on all these other points, but the second one is that the Old Testament was Jesus's only Bible. It was largely the Bible of the earliest church. That's the reality. Philip Yancy has written a great book, *The Bible Jesus Read*. I love Yancy and it's a great read. What was the Bible Jesus read? The Old Testament. He was reading the Old Testament Scriptures. A well-known pastor said recently we need to unhitch ourselves from the Old Testament. Are you kidding me? We need to unhitch ourselves from the Bible that Jesus spent all of his time reading, memorizing, studying? Is the Bible that the New Testament believers need to unhitch from? That's just flat out wrong. The prayers that Jesus prayed, the thoughts that Jesus thought, the poems that Jesus wrote, the preaching that Jesus did, the miracles that he did, they were all informed and influenced by the Old Testament Scriptures. If Romans was written in 57, maybe Galatians had been written, James had been written, maybe one of the Gospels, but really there wasn't a lot else that had been written. They were being written but they hadn't been circulated. Even the early church was studying the Old Testament Scriptures. This whole sense of the storyline of the Bible, the early church was reading the Old Testament. The more we understand the Old Testament the more we understand Jesus. Martin Luther said the Old Testament is a testimonial letter about Christ.

Thirdly, the Old Testament is the basis of our understanding key biblical doctrines. The first five books of the Old Testament which is called the Torah, the Law, the Pentateuch, God reveals himself in the very first verse as being the creator. You talk about a worldview shaping verse. In the beginning God created the heavens and the

earth. Not all of this other stuff that people have thought up as to how all of this got here. Something just came out of nothing? No, God says in the beginning I created the heavens and the earth. That is a pretty significant doctrine. Genesis tells us how it is that this world got into the condition that it's in. the fall of man and sin. You just go down through all of these major doctrines of our faith, most of them are introduced in the Old Testament.

The fourth one. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. This is the one that causes many people to trip, and there are issues here and I understand that. But the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament is not just the God of wrath and judgment, and the God of the New Testament is a God of love and grace. Listen, my friends. The Old Testament is filled with grace. The Old Testament is filled with mercy. The Old Testament is filled with the long-suffering of God. You get to the New Testament and Jesus said more about the doctrine of hell than anybody else. Ask Ananias and Sapphira if there was such a thing as judgment. There was. Read the book of Revelation. There's a lot that God is going to say to the world that has rejected him in light of his holiness with regard to the judgments that are to come.

Number five. The Old Testament announces the gospel first. The Old Testament announces the gospel first. Genesis 3:15. It's called the *proto evangelium*. The first preaching of the gospel happens in Genesis 3 and verse 15: I will put enmity between you and the woman, in between your seed and her. He shall bruise your head. Jesus is going to bruise your head, Satan. A bruise to the head is mortal. Then you will bruise his heel, which of course speaks of what Christ endured on the cross. Abraham received the promise of God. Abraham, through you I'm going to bring blessing to the entire world. God, how are you going to do that? Abraham, through you there's going to come a lineage, a line that is going to include the Savior of the world. The Old Testament announces that first.

Number six. The Old Testament points us to Jesus. The Old Testament points to Jesus. That's what Jesus said. if we had time we'd go to Luke chapter 24 but just jot it down. Luke 24. It's the two disciples and one of my favorite passages in all the Bible. The two hopeless disciples on the road to Emmaus. They're wiped out in their faith

because they had no understanding of the resurrection and what had happened. They're without hope. Jesus comes and walked alongside of them and about verse 37 it says that he opened to them the Scriptures and beginning with the prophets he went through the Old Testament Scriptures. When you get to verse 44 their whole perspective had changed because he had opened the Scriptures to them, the Old Testament Scriptures. He had shown them who he was as it was unfolding throughout the Old Testament. The Old Testament points us to Jesus. Remember what Jesus said in John 5 to the religious leaders of his day? You read your scriptures. You read your scriptures and in them you're searching for eternal life, but you miss me. Jesus said you missed that I am in there. I'm the one that these Old Testament Scriptures have been pointing to. You missed the fact that I am the one that they bear witness of.

And lastly number 7. The Old Testament is part of the whole counsel of God. It's part of the whole counsel of God. Remember when Paul was leaving the elders at Ephesus for the last time? There was weeping and they were saddened by their departure. Paul said to them now listen guys, I did not shrink back from teaching you the whole counsel of God. That's what we need. We need the whole counsel of God. We need the Old Testament and we need the New Testament. God's purposes in salvation history are revealed in all of Scripture, the Old and the New. If you look at your Bible and you go well let's see here, how much of my Bible is Old Testament and how much is New Testament? That much. 75.5% of my Bible is Old Testament. 75.5% of our Bible is the Old Testament Scriptures. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. All of it is profitable Old Testament and New Testament both. because the Old Testament was written for us. It was written for New Testament believers. All of it is profitable.

What do we take away? To change the way we think, to change the way we live – that's what Paul wants in Romans 15. He wants to change the way these people think. He wants to change the way they live. So he says to read the Bible. Read the Scriptures. It will give you endurance, strength, comfort, and hope. And so read God's word daily.

I want to make this even more practical. Five things that we can do to apply that truth to our life. Begin a regular Bible reading program and stay with it. This is December. January is not that far away. I want to challenge you right now, and some of

you (we don't want to call it cheating about reading the Bible), but you can work ahead. You know January is coming and you can get some momentum going. You can begin to read. Here's what I want to challenge you with. There are all kinds of ways to do this and the least effective way is to fall in to some legalistic trap of thinking you have to read something every day without comprehending any of it, that you just have to finish. I'm not challenging you to that.

What if in 2024 you were to commit to begin reading the Bible from Genesis all the way to Revelation? I don't want to see a show of hands of people who have never read all of the way through the Bible one time. I can't remember which preacher who said he quit asking that question because it was encouraging the devil and discouraging him. The point is when you arrive in glory, you want to have read all of God's word. You really do. I can't think of anything that will be more impactful to your daily walk with God than reading His word every day. And I can't imagine, I don't know what the judgment seat of Christ is going to be like, I can't hardly think that if we haven't read God's word, if there are big chunks of the Bible that we've never ever read, I'd think that would be one of the exam questions. Have you read everything I wrote to you? Let's be able to say yes.

With that, interact with the text. Underline it. Ask questions. Dig in a little bit. Get a good study Bible. Memorize a verse every week. That's not too much to ask. There's a verse listed in the bulletin every week and they're generally not long, hard verses. Get involved in a small group. All of these things point us to the value of the Old Testament, the New Testament, the value of the word of God. And you know what you're going to find?

If you're a follower of Christ you're going to be equipped in the areas of endurance, comfort, and hope. If you've never put your trust in Christ, you're going to see Jesus and you're going to hear this gospel that gives hope to the hopeless. That's what we want more than anything. We want those of you who have never trusted Christ as your Savior to open this book and say God, show me who you are. I want to know. I need to know. And God will do that.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this amazing book. Thank you for your word. Thank you that in this word you reveal yourself to us, you reveal this gospel to us, this

gospel that is good news. The gospel reminds us that everyone of us have fallen short of the glory of God and none of us can fulfill the requirements that you desire, which is to be perfect. But Jesus did, and Jesus can. He's done that for us and if we will believe that and trust that, and believe in that alone and nothing else, you'll forgive us our sins and give us eternal life. We thank you for that. In Jesus's name, amen.