

HERE WE STAND: Part 2  
WE BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

I want to begin by directing your attention to three well-known verses in the Bible that describe the character and impact of Scripture in our lives.

*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.* (Hebrews 4.12)

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2.15)

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3.16-17)

Last week we began a sermon series focusing on critical truths Christians must embrace and emphasize if we are to provide a meaningful and hopeful alternative to the anarchy and lawlessness overwhelming much of America today. We began by declaring that the Bible is God's Word, the only anchor of *absolute truth* in a world that is adrift on a sea of relativism. But this morning we are going to take that a step further. If our first 'stand' is on the *absolute authority of the Bible as God's Word*, the second conviction upon which we take a stand is this: When the Bible speaks, we don't ignore it, distort it, deny it, or interpret it to mean something other than its plain meaning. To put that another way, we *take*

*God at His Word – and when the Bible speaks, whether to things past, future, or contemporary issues, we follow it. In the words of an old evangelist, God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.* – Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947)

The first thing we need to be clear about is exactly what we are talking about. What do we mean when we say that 'we believe what the Bible says'? One way to express this is to say that we *interpret the Bible literally*. What the Bible says, whether it's creation, history, social issues, or future events – *whatever* the Bible says, we believe. We *take God at His Word*; we take it at 'face value'.

Another way of expressing this is to say we read the Bible *normally*. The Bible contains various kinds of literature: Historical narrative, dialogue, poetry, parables, prophecy, instruction, irony, humor, sarcasm, allegory, and much more. But we follow the same principle with Scripture we would if we were reading a blog today: *We read it the way it was written*. In the case of Scripture, this means that we read prophecy the same way we read history, since God knows the end from the beginning! We Bible history literally, as a record of events that happened in space and time, and we read prophecy in the same way, as events that *will happen* in space and time. When something is clearly figurative or allegorical, we read it that way; when Scripture speaks of things we can understand, we read what it says that way. When a clear passage of Scripture says something, we don't try to find an unclear passage to 'undo' what Scripture says.

A great place to start is with biblical history and prophecy. *Prophetic* teachings in the Bible have been under attack for centuries. While Scripture could not be clearer that Jesus

Christ is coming back to earth; that Christians are going to be ‘caught up’ to meet the Lord in the air, and from that moment will forever be with the Lord; that a time of Great Tribulation is coming, when the ‘man of lawlessness’ will come to power, and God will pour out His judgment on the wickedness of mankind; that Jesus will then return with His saints, defeat the forces of evil, and reign on earth from Jerusalem for a thousand years; that after this God will create a new heavens and a new earth, and all who are His will live with Him forever in heaven, and those who did not believe in Jesus as Savior will be condemned to hell – while all this is clearly taught in Scripture, most theologians today deny many of these coming events. They deny the Rapture, explain away the Great Tribulation, and say Jesus’ kingdom is ‘spiritual,’ not literal. Explicit promises to the nation of Israel are said to figuratively apply to the Church; many theologians say Israel is no longer God’s ‘Chosen People.’ Even though God called His covenant with Abraham “an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17.7, 19), and declared that in the future all Israel would look on the one they had pierced (Jesus) and be saved (Zech. 12.10; Rom. 11.26-29), they say it isn’t going to happen.

Once they denied prophecy, it was only a matter of time before they denied what the Bible says about creation and history. At first, only the most liberal went this far, but soon, scholars at major Bible colleges and seminaries capitulated. Today it is almost universal. Old Testament professors no longer teach that the Genesis account of creation, the fall, and the flood is true. A student at a leading conservative seminary told me a few years ago that no Old Testament professors at that institution believed Genesis 1-11 is true history. One of my old Greek professors now teaches that

the account of Jesus’ life in the Gospels is not really true: The words aren’t the words Jesus said. The times, places, and people may all be wrong. It’s no wonder that graduates of this seminary can no longer be depended on to have a high view of Scripture, or a commitment to teach what it says. Everything is up for grabs.

Of course, this hasn’t only affected prophecy and history – it has undermined biblical teaching on moral and social issues as well. We shouldn’t be surprised. In John 3.12, we have recorded for us these words of Jesus: *If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?* If we don’t believe what God has said about things that happened or are going to happen here on earth, we won’t believe what He says about anything else – especially the way God wants us to live.

Without the Bible, we have no absolute moral foundation. The result of this lack of moral clarity leads to tragic events. 150 years ago, the Supreme Court decreed that black men and women were less ‘human’ than whites: More than half a million people died in the Civil War as a result of that inane decision. In 1973, the Supreme Court decided unborn babies were not human; more than 60 million humans have died as a result of that awful decision. Recently, the Supreme Court arbitrarily changed the definition of marriage, the bedrock of civilization for thousands of years. No longer is marriage the union between a man and a woman; it can be between two people of the same gender. This threw the whole concept of gender into confusion. Some suggest there are more than 60 ‘gender expressions’ today. The ‘transgender’ movement has undermined distinctions between the sexes, and women and girls are the victims. Marriage, foundation of functional

society, a covenant of committed love in which husbands love, lead, and provide for their families, wives are honored, protected, and cherished, and children are nurtured in an environment of security, has become passé to a generation now entering adulthood: Millions today *have no knowledge of what a dad and a mom even are.*

The Somerville, Massachusetts city council recently passed an ordinance recognizing ‘polyamorous’ domestic relationships – in other words, anything goes: Polygamous relationships – or any other combination of what someone says a ‘family’ is, is acceptable. In the last few years, we’ve regressed to primitive lawless society. When a society embraces the idea that there is no meaning, purpose, or ‘right or wrong’ in life, it lurches into anarchy. We are seeing that today.

But here’s the real tragedy: The church, as the conscience of a nation, has not exposed this error. We should be a light of truth, declaring the God of creation, the return of Christ, *and* God’s blueprint for life. Instead, the church has ceded the high ground. When pillars in a society – courts, the media, government, and education falter, the church should stand boldly for absolute truth. Sadly, the church has capitulated to the idea that there are no absolutes. *Professing ourselves to be wise, we became fools.*

It’s time for Christians to affirm not only that the Bible is God’s Word, but to uphold what it teaches, not only when it agrees with the politically correct social norms in the world, but *especially* when it does not. For too long Christians have avoided conflict with a world that is shaking its fist in the face of God. It’s time for us to stop being shy about what the

Bible teaches. It is God’s Word, and what it says is *absolute truth*. This means we accept what it says, and teach it without apology.

The only healing for the mess the world is in is a return to a biblical foundation for Truth. *If the Bible says it, we must not look for an excuse to evade it.* When former megachurch pastor Rob Bell tells Oprah that until churches get rid of the Bible, they will grow more and more irrelevant in the world, what he means is that the church will be less in agreement with what the world is saying. But this world is crumbling, and the Bible will become more and more relevant.

This leads to a number of non-negotiables – and in a world which has lost its way morally, these sound increasingly radical, so ‘fasten your seatbelts’! Let’s lay out a few of these unambiguous truths in God’s Word.

The Bible is not a science textbook, but when it speaks to issues that touch on science, it does so without error. For over a century science has declared the theory of evolution as though it was a fact. The result of this idea is the belief that the universe is a godless, meaningless, purposeless place. Mankind is space-dust blowing through time. The world came into being by accident, life arose by chance, and in an inexplicable process called ‘evolution’ all life forms on earth arose, including humans. This absurd idea requires far more faith than the biblical Creation account. Today, the evidence of science is affirming God’s creative design. We boldly take our stand with the biblical account of creation.

Secondly, the existence of evil demands an explanation. If mankind evolved, why is there incessant evil, crime, wars,

violence, and greed? Why haven't we evolved into peaceful and benevolent beings? The biblical account of the Fall explains what we see on the evening news every night. Satan introduced sin into the world, and with it came fear, misery, and death. *The whole world lies in the power of the evil one* (1 John 5.19). *There is none righteous, not even one* (Rom. 3.10). *...through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned* (Rom. 5.12). *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3.23). It isn't popular to speak of sin in some churches today, but we take our stand with the Bible.

As the subject of sin has become unpopular, specific sins have been increasingly ignored or explained away. At first, we just allowed for some 'exceptions' to what Scripture taught – you know, 'extenuating circumstances.' But soon, biblical teachings on social issues began to be viewed as relics of ancient history. If Christians are going to present a real option to our frazzled and confused world, we must be willing to call sin "sin."

For example, both Old and New Testaments and Jesus in His teachings affirm the union of one man and one woman in marriage. There is no 'Plan B.' Adultery, divorce, and homosexuality are condemned in Scripture, and the only place for sexual relations is marriage. So absolute is this that Jesus declared that if a man looks at a woman with lust, he has committed adultery in his heart. Jesus does not lower the bar to allow for our weakness: He raises it! God instituted marriage before sin was in the world; He brought Adam and Eve together, and declared that *for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Gen. 2.24). After the fall, sexual

perversion appeared, but God never changed His plan. Five Supreme Court justices can say what they want, but we take our stand with what God says.

It all melds together and reflects the reality we see. God created the universe and the earth in a way that the words of Genesis 1 express *literally*. We may not know exactly *how* God did it, but however He did it is reflected in the *words* He used to tell us what He did in Genesis 1. He created man and woman, male and female, not 40 or 60 different gender expressions. He created marriage, a covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. He created us all equal, regardless of our gender, race, or nationality. We all fell under the curse of sin, and the only way back to God's original plan for our lives is through His revealed truth.

That message is not complicated. It is not mystical. A child can grasp it. In a world shrouded in hopelessness and anxiety, it offers forgiveness and hope. It is a message Christians should be ready to share with anyone who is looking for truth. Many have forgotten it. But this morning, we affirm it. **WE BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.**

During my sabbatical this last summer, I spoke with pastors about my age who will probably be retiring in the next few years. They were concerned about the next generation of pastors. It is increasingly difficult to find a pastor who views the Bible as God's Word, believes everything it says, and is committed to teaching Scripture as it is written.

Last week I urged you to make time to read the Bible every day, and to join – or if necessary, create your own group to meet and discuss the Bible regularly. If you're listening to

this and are attending a church in which the Bible is not taught, find one.

This week my exhortation to you is the next logical step: TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD. As you read and study the Bible, don't ignore it. Don't disregard it. Don't argue with it. Don't avoid it. *Submit to it. Follow it. Obey it.* As you do, you will become part of a mighty army of God-followers who are shining the light of His truth into the lives of those who are lost in an increasingly dark world.