

The Word of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 September 2026

Preacher: Daniel Mackay

[0:00] We're going to read from 2 Peter, chapter 1. I think in the church Bibles, like the one I have up here, it's 1, 2222.

Page 1, 222. We're going to read the whole chapter.

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours, grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these, He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love.

[1:20] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things.

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, this is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

[2:53] Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along.

By the Holy Spirit. That's God's Word. So this series is entitled, Why Bother Coming to Church? And the title I've got tonight is God's Word. We're going to look at two passages. We've looked at 2 Peter there. We'll look at Ephesians a bit later on as well. But first, I was wondering if you have thought about the power of words before.

Words can make or break relationships and friendships. They can build people up or tear them down. In high school, we studied the play Julius Caesar, where the character Mark Antony was able to completely reverse an angry mob's opinion with just a speech, just a few rhetorical tricks.

The Bible itself starts off showing God's power in his speech, in that he was able to say, let there be light, and there was light.

[4:10] It says he created the world simply by speaking it into existence. His speech is so powerful that it can make things happen physically. God still speaks today through the Bible.

And so since this series is on why bother coming to church, I'm hoping to show you that it's worth coming, because through church, we can get the full experience of God's Word.

God wants us to experience the power of His Word as a community, as well as individuals. So firstly, we'll think about the nature of God's Word, looking a bit closely at 2 Peter.

What we mean by God's Word, to be clear, is the Christian Scriptures, the Bible, composed of all the books in the Old and the New Testament. What we affirm as Christians is that these books are fundamentally different in nature to any other book and any other piece of writing.

In this chapter, 2 Peter tells us why. Firstly, the Bible is sufficient for salvation. And secondly, the Bible is spoken by God.

[5:24] So we look at verses 3 and 4. It says, His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.

A slightly different translation, it says, God's divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. When Peter says us there, it's not a sort of general us.

He's talking particularly about the group of people known as the apostles. They were the people that Jesus taught face to face and went around the world to spread His teaching. They received that teaching, that gospel from Jesus, and Jesus told them all that's required for someone to be saved and to live a godly life.

And this knowledge is what's preserved for us in these written scriptures. The New Testament comes from the apostles. It's written by them and it builds on the foundation of the Old Testament. So the Bible contains everything required to have eternal life in the future and also to live a godly life now. As the free church, we adhere to the Westminster Confession, and there's a good part of that that says, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, mankind's salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

[6:55] You might be someone today who wants to know how to live properly. Maybe you've explored some different philosophies or religion, and this is the first time in a church.

I'm telling you today that the Bible contains all things that pertain to life and godliness. All the answers are found in the Bible. On the other hand, perhaps you're already a Christian today, but you're wanting more.

How do I understand God more? How do I know more about what He wants? Well, that part of the Confession says that the whole counsel of God, that's all His commands, all His promises, all His wisdom for our lives, is either set down explicitly in scripture or comes as a logical consequence of what's written.

So there's nothing missing. All the instruction that God has given you in how to live a godly life is expressly set down in scripture or implicit.

We might wonder how this is possible. How can a finite set of words contain all that's required to be saved and to be godly?

[8:10] And you might notice the repetition in this chapter of the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ. It says, He's granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, in verse 3, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to His own glory and excellence, the knowledge of Christ.

Through the scriptures, we come to know Jesus. In fact, the scriptures are the supreme way of knowing Jesus. I've had conversations with people before who might say things like, I experience God most when I'm doing the things I love, or when I'm listening to the music I love, or around the people I love.

Maybe they feel they experience God most when they're on some journey to a different country. But that fails to recognize that scripture is the primary way in which we know God.

And it makes sense in a way, doesn't it? If you have a relationship with someone, a friendship or something romantic, you get to know them by listening to what they say. It's true that God gives us wonderful things like friends and music and a natural world to enjoy.

But saying those things are where you're closest to God is like saying, I'm closest to my wife when I'm playing on the games console she bought me. We come to know God more by listening to His words and speaking back to Him through prayer and taking them to heart.

[9:47] The result of this is that we have eternal life. If you read verse 4, it says, Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

It says that through the scriptures we participate in the divine nature. I think a lot of the time when we talk about the divine nature, we're meaning the way God is God and He's different to us. So we might be confused and think that this means that we're becoming gods or something like that. But the rest of scripture makes it clear that that's not what it means. It doesn't mean we become divine or that we become part of God.

What it means is that ultimately in the end, the believer in God will share in God's immortality and glory. The believer will live forever in a new creation without pain, suffering, illness or death if you hear and do what's written in this book, the Bible.

So the scripture is sufficient to give you a saving knowledge of God and to enable you to live a godly life now. Secondly, the thing that makes it unique is that scripture is spoken by God.

[11:16] If you glance down to verses 19 to 21, it says, We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

What Peter is saying in these verses is that in the final analysis, the Bible comes from God. It is true that there is a great deal of human involvement in writing the scriptures.

They didn't descend from heaven on golden tablets. They were written by people. You can see that when you read it. Each author has a different style.

They have distinct contributions to the message. Sometimes they use different sources and sometimes they borrow words or concepts from their surrounding cultures.

[12:30] But as the authors did their writing, spiritually they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, as it says in verse 21. The Holy Spirit was the Bible's divine editor.

He superintended the gathering, editing and writing of these books in such a way that they can be said to be God's words. Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In the final analysis, every word in scripture is there because God intended it to be there. Scriptures come from God. This is a couple of implications for us, doesn't it?

Firstly, because it comes from God, it has authority. It's like receiving a decree from a king. It comes from the top. It warrants being taken seriously.

If I went to work one day and I received an email from the CEO, the owner of the company, I'd sit up and pay attention. Not that I don't usually sit up and pay attention if anyone from work is watching.

[13:37] The Bible has authority in our individual lives. So we need to take it seriously. Are we sitting under its instruction in our personal lives?

Does it impact you beyond Sunday? Are you making your decisions with reference to what God has said? As well as individually, the Bible has authority over us as a community, as a church.

Here's a part from that same confession I quoted earlier. It says that the Holy Spirit speaking through the Bible is the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined. And all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private teaching are to be examined by them and in whose sentence we are to rest. What that's saying is that Scripture has the final word.

in all matters of church life. How do we know if our church is teaching the right thing? We examine it in light of Scripture.

[14:46] If a certain issue comes up and starts to divide people in the church, how do we settle it with reference to Scripture? Scripture. The Scripture has authority because it comes from God.

Secondly, since the Scripture has its origin in God, it has a particular excellence or a particular glory. Glory. Peter says in verse 19 that it's like a lamp shining in a dark place.

Scripture is a good thing. It's good for our souls. It reveals God to us. God who is perfect without fault, evil, or any darkness.

And God says good things to us through the Scriptures. I compared it before to a decree given by a king, but the Scriptures are also like a love letter.

God says wonderful, loving, sweet things to us through the Scriptures. words to be enjoyed, words to be encouraged by, words to give you comfort in times of distress.

[15:58] What do people do with love letters? They enjoy them, they read them repeatedly, thinking about the person on the other end. The love letter reveals how much affection the writer

has for you.

The writer pours out their heart to you and reveals their goodness and love. So it is with the Bible. They're a sweet thing. The Bible is God's love letter to you.

Through it, God shows His people that He's good, that He's glorious, that He cares for you, that He loves you, that He forgives your sins and can satisfy you with eternal life.

God's love letter to you and He loves you. I sometimes meet people who feel bad for not reading the Bible enough. Maybe I'm like that sometimes and I'm sure you are too.

And we sometimes think the solution is just to try harder, just to have a better schedule, read it more times per day. I think in those times we've understood the authority of the Bible.

[17:04] We take it seriously and we feel bad for not giving it enough time. But in those times perhaps it's helpful to remember its goodness. If you can grasp that the Scriptures are a good thing, a sweet thing, a wonderful thing, a healthy thing, then perhaps our hearts will draw us to them.

God's Word is a treat for the soul, a loving Word from a loving God. So God's Word is sufficient for salvation, sufficient for us to know God and to live Godly lives.

And the Scriptures are spoken by God, meaning they have a particular authority in goodness. We're going to turn now to our second reading in Ephesians. It's Ephesians chapter 4.

Let me find the page. It's page 1175. 1175 in the church Bibles.

Ephesians 4, 11 to 16. Let me just read that. So Christ Himself, after He ascended to heaven, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers to equip His people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

[18:39] Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful schemes.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is Christ. From Him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

This next heading is The Power of God's Word in the Church. This part of Ephesians shows that God's program for how the word works is through community.

I think some folks might see the Christian life as an individual exercise, something that's just between you and God. I've heard a number of times people saying you don't need to go to church to be a Christian.

But the Bible challenges that. What we see in Ephesians is that what God is doing in the world is building a community of united, mature, and stable believers.

[19:52] And He does that through the ministry of His Word. Look at verse 11. Paul is talking about the gifts Jesus gives to the church since He was resurrected and ascended to heaven.

He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. Shepherds is just another word for a pastor. And it's a surprising idea, isn't it?

What gifts does God give to the church? He gives the church people. And these particular people that are talked about in Ephesians have something in common.

They're all scripture people. They're all word people. The apostles and the prophets wrote the scriptures. The evangelists, the shepherds, or pastors, and Bible teachers are people who expound it to people.

James and your other elders at this church are gifts from God to you to build you up. This is something you miss if you try and do the Christian life by yourself.

[20:53] You'll miss the gift of other people. A faithful ministry by pastors and elders is a wonderful gift to a church. There are people who we can ask our questions to about life, faith, and the Bible.

There are people who can help guard us from bad teaching. There are people who can capably use the scriptures to help us when we're struggling with life. All those things are true.

But in this passage the big thing the Bible teachers are doing is they're training and equipping you in the church. If we read verse 12 in a slightly different translation than ESV it says he gave these scripture people to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.

It's striking isn't it that in this passage the work of ministry or service as it's translated in the NIV is done by the saints which refers to everyone in the church.

And this ministry looks like speaking God's word to each other. If you look at verse 15 it says speaking the truth in love we're to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ. [22 : 13] The truth in love that it's referring to is primarily the truth of the gospel given to us in the scriptures. We can tell because it's placed in contrast to verse 14 where it refers to the false doctrines and deceitful schemes of humans.

There's a lot of ideas that go around in our culture on the internet various philosophies that are wrong incomplete and against the gospel. We read from 2 Peter earlier and the big problem that congregation was facing was a group of false teachers that said Jesus isn't really coming back and that you get the most out of life by indulging every sinful desire.

What that church needed back then is the same as what we need today. We need to speak the truth of the gospel in love to each other.

What are we trying to do as a church when we have our small groups or I think you guys have student lunches what are we trying to do with that? What are we trying to do when we meet each other for coffees?

We're trying to speak the truth of the gospel in love to each other. Reminding each other about the truth of the Bible. Encouraging each other with different parts of the gospel maybe challenging each other where required.

[23 : 44] Paul is saying in Ephesians that the church grows when all the members of the church are ministering God's word to each other. together. Now this doesn't mean that you have to have all the answers.

It doesn't mean you have to be a theologian. It doesn't mean you can't be questioning things yourself. All it means is that we're willing to open the Bible with each other. That we're willing to think and speak about the Bible together.

It could be as simple as spending a Saturday morning getting a coffee with someone from the church and reading a chapter of a Bible book together. Coming to church services is an example of that.

The preacher speaks to you from the front but after it when we're all talking together we're all encouraging each other with God's word. And what's the result of this?

God gives the teachers to equip everyone in the church to speak the word to each other and the result is unity, maturity, and stability. Let me just read some of these sections of Ephesians again.

[24 : 59] So from verse 12 it says that he gave those people to equip his people for works of service or ministry of the word so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and we become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people and their deceitful schemes. So the picture there is that God gives Bible teachers to the church and they equip the people in the church to build each other up using God's words.

In verse 13 it says that we build each other up until we attain to the unity of faith. Paul is clear earlier in the letter to the Ephesians that unity in the church is bought by Jesus.

Jesus achieved unity for the church on the cross in that he reconciled us to God and he reconciled us to each other. If you read the rest of the Ephesians you'll be able to see that the big divide in the Ephesian church was between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

But Paul is clear that through Jesus the two peoples became one. Christ himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility is how he describes it in chapter 2.

[26 : 40] Anything that would have divided us before we became Christians is abolished. We all approach God as equals through Jesus Christ. But through speaking the gospel truth to each other in love we build each other up.

I think verse 16 is what he's referring to by the unity of the faith. From him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Each bit of those joints each part of the body refers to one of us. Through Christ we're all part of one body and when we minister God's word to each other speaking God's word praying with each other we build ourselves up and the body grows.

Paul uses the word mature in verse 13 to refer to someone who's been transformed by God's word. God's word transforms us into new people it renews our minds changes our affections and our desires.

It molds us into people who reflect the goodness wisdom and love of Jesus Christ himself. Through the word of God the body of Christ that is each member of the church grows in depth and maturity but also results in the church growing in number.

[28:09] I don't know if you've ever seen The Da Vinci Code it's a movie that came out a decade or two ago but in that movie it's claimed that the church created the Bible for some political agenda that it was a human invention.

But the reality is the other way around. The reality is the Bible created the church. Some have said that God's church is a creation of God's word.

None of us would be here in this building tonight if not for the scriptures. None of us would know God and be saved if we hadn't heard and believed.

The scriptures. I think one application of that is that it should give us great confidence in the scriptures when we're trying to evangelize people. How does God grow a believer to be more mature through the faithful teaching of his word?

How does God grow the numbers of his church and bring new people along through the faithful teaching of his word? We don't need to be super eloquent or smart when we try to tell people about Jesus.

[29:19] We just need to tell them what the Bible says. Perhaps we could even ask them to read the Bible with us if they'd be interested and discuss it together. My point is that you should have confidence that there's power in God's word to save people.

The other fruit that Paul mentions is stability. How does a church where each member builds each other up with the scriptures respond to false teaching and bad doctrines and the storms of culture?

In verse 14 Paul uses a couple of metaphors in the same sentence. Christians built up by God's word are no longer children otherwise they're no longer easily persuaded and duped.

Secondly, they're no longer tossed to and fro by the waves like a ship in the storm. We speak God's word to each other in the church it will make us a stable church.

A church that can endure divisions like the church in Ephesus in this letter. And one that can tackle false teaching like the church in 2 Peter.

[30:35] So why bother coming to church? Hopefully you can see it's through church that you can get the full transformative experience of the word of God.

God gives teachers to the church who are able to equip the people in the church to know God's word. God's word that is able to save you and enable you to live a godly life.

scriptures that come from God and so have his authority and glory shining through them. As you come to church and live as a community rather than individuals we build each other up with the scriptures.

God will do his work through his Holy Spirit to make you united mature and stable. let's pray. Father we thank you very much for your word.

Thank you that it is sufficient to save us and it gives us knowledge of you. Thank you that it enables us to live godly lives. Thank you also for everyone who's in this church Father we thank you that church is a community community where we speak the word to each other and build each other up in love.

[32:01] In Jesus name Amen.