

Why Believe The Bible

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Preacher: Mr John Blanchard

[0 : 0 0] Well, as I said, it's my great pleasure, although I didn't personally organize John Blanchard's visit to the island. It was organized by Dr. Ian D. Campbell, but he has a family wedding.

As you know, his son is getting married today, hence I've stood in for him this evening just to chair the meeting briefly. And it's my great pleasure indeed to introduce to you once again, though I know that he needs no introduction, Mr. John Blanchard.

We're delighted that he's able to come to the island, which he knows well, but also delighted that he is speaking here in our own congregation in Stornoway. It's been a delight to have himself and his lovely wife Pam and a friend and chauffeur Howard with us in the man's for the last day or so.

It's been a great pleasure to us to have them. And they depart tomorrow to continue with their tour in Scotland. So we thank him for coming, and I'm really pleased now to ask him to bring this message to us this evening.

Thank you.

[1 : 3 6] Very gracious hospitality during these days. I hope you weren't mistaken by the word that Howard Williams is my chauffeur to think that I employ a chauffeur and probably a private jet to go around the place.

Howard is a very valued member of my team whenever I'm engaged on these tours, but he has work of his own to do, and he graciously gives up time at various weeks during the year to come with me when I do these tours of which this is one.

For the last 15 years, I've been engaged in what I call popular Christian apologetics. Now, that's not an organization. I'm not paid by it or anything like that.

It's just three words that I've pulled together to explain the main thrust of my ministry in these days. So let me take a moment to flesh out all three words.

First of all, popular doesn't mean that having been in the ministries as I had then been about 40 years, I had decided it was time to change tack and to begin to say things that were popular, things that people would like to hear me say would make me popular.

[2 : 4 5] I'm using the word popular in another very proper sense, which is saying things in a way that most people, the man or woman in the pew, the man or woman in the street, would more easily understand.

So that's the sense in which I'm using the word popular. The word apologetics needn't frighten us either. It comes from the Greek word apologia, which means a defense.

So I am seeking to make a defense of the Christian faith, not apologizing for it and wishing it were better or different, but I'm defending it against the many attacks that it faces today.

And there has never been a time in my over half a century now in full-time Christian ministry when I have known the Christian faith to be under such sustained and at times vitriolic attack, encouraged many times by the media.

The middle word of the three popular Christian apologetics really gives the game away because at the center of everything I do is the Christian faith. And whatever subject I'm asked to speak on, it always ends by pointing people to the Lord Jesus Christ and the need to get right with God through repentance toward God and faith in our Savior.

[4 : 05] And I do this in two ways. Firstly, by speaking about it, as I will do in a moment tonight, not in the way of giving a sermon or quoting from a text or expounding a part of Scripture, though as you will see as we go on, Scripture will certainly be referred to in the latter part of what I want to say, but to give a presentation on subjects such as can we be good without God, where is God when things go wrong, why on earth did Jesus come, and tonight, of course, why believe the Bible.

So the first of the two methods I employ when I'm on tour, and this is day seven of a 14-day tour in Scotland, speaking, the giving of the verbal presentation is one way, and the other is by giving people the opportunity to get copies of the many books that I have written under the general umbrella of popular Christian apologetics.

I imagine the last, something like the last 15 or 20 of my titles have come under that. They are part of the effort to defend the Christian faith, to enable Christians to do so in their day-to-day walk.

So these two ways, the verbal presentation and the offering of the literature, we will have both of those tonight. So in a sense there are two gatherings tonight, the first here in the main body of the church, and the second immediately afterwards in this superb hall that you have here at Stornoway.

And in that second gathering, well, I think there are first of all going to be refreshments, and I've had a sneak preview, and I promise you that they're going to be worth going through to have.

[5 : 56] And then also I think your minister is going to interview me a little bit about my own life, and especially my very close connection with this part of the world. And then also I will introduce to you two or three of the particular titles that we have available tonight, and Howard Williams is in charge of that department.

And one of the good things about them all is that they are all at a very substantial discount that we have been able to arrange with the publishers. So all of that later in the hall.

So this is really the first half of the evening, and the second half will be there, and I hope you will all want to join us for that. There are two aims in this kind of evening.

The first is specifically to confront those who are outside of the faith with the truth of the gospel, and to urge and encourage them to get right with God through faith in Christ.

And the second aim is to equip God's people and to help them as they seek to bring the gospel to others. Perhaps within the confines of their own family, perhaps with people they meet at work or socially.

[7 : 07] They get engaged in talking about God and about the Christian faith and about its relevance in today's world. And I want to do everything I possibly can to help them, in this case to help you as you speak to others, and as they raise questions, and tonight we'll be looking at questions they raise about the Bible, to help you to answer the questions they ask, or the criticisms they have, or the problems they face, or the reasons they give for not believing what the Bible says.

And that's a very relevant approach to make for this reason. Imagine that you're speaking to somebody and you're doing your very best to share your faith with them.

Perhaps, and it's not a bad idea, you begin really quite gently, perhaps something in the media, something in the news, into which you can bring the subject of religion in general, or God in particular, or even Christianity.

And then at some point in that discussion, you are likely to quote from the Bible, and you may well be talking to somebody who says, well, why should I believe the Bible?

You may even meet someone, and I've met them, who say, well, it's no good quoting the Bible at me, I don't believe a word of it. Some would say things even stronger than that, and I'll mention one of those in just a moment.

[8 : 35] Now, if a person were to say to you, why should I believe the Bible? You may well say to them, I can imagine you saying it, because it's the word of God, which may sound a very fine answer to give, and there's a sense in which that is a fine answer to give, but if they then say to you, how do you know it's the word of God?

You are, I suggest, quite likely to say, well, I believe it's the word of God because it says it's the word of God. Now, if I were not a Christian, and you gave me that kind of answer, I would take you to the cleaners.

I really would. I would say, well, that's a circular argument. You are telling me to believe the Bible is the word of God just because it says it's the word of God. Why should I believe what it says?

That is the situation that I want to address tonight. So I'm going to try to help you to go beyond that and to answer some of the criticisms that people have, some of the reasons they would give for not believing the Bible.

And the first is, they may well say to you, because science has disproved it. Now, we live in a very scientifically orientated age. We owe an enormous debt to science and its cousin, technology.

[9 : 52] You wouldn't hear me as clearly as you're hearing me now, were it not for science and technology. And there may be something in your ear that is helping to do that.

I mean something mechanical that's been put in your ear and that is helping you to do that. Well, the statement, science has disproved the Bible, is not only not true, but it is impossible.

I spoke a couple of nights ago, and you'd have to forgive me for forgetting which night I spoke on what subject, but I did speak on how science got rid of God.

And in the course of that, I repeated several times this statement as a definition of science. Science is the ongoing process of discovering truth in the natural world.

Now, let me repeat that. Science is an ongoing process of discovering truth in the natural world. Perhaps I should say it a third time, and this time illustrate it.

[10 : 52] Science is an ongoing process of discovering truth in the natural world, but it doesn't touch the supernatural world. So science is limited into what it can do, and it's certainly limited when we come to matters of theology.

Imagine that you were crossing the Atlantic on an ocean-going liner, and you got up in the middle of the night, took a torch in your hand and wandered around the deck, and suddenly thought, I wonder what the bed of the Atlantic Ocean looks like.

So you take a torch, and you switch it on, and you lean over and look down. Can you see the bed of the ocean? No. Does that mean it's not there? No.

Then why can't you see it? It's because the implement you are using, the torch, doesn't have the necessary range. It cannot reach that far. Now, science has that kind of limitation.

It cannot reach that far. It cannot reach into the supernatural matters of which the Bible speaks. In 1861, the French Academy of Science, then the most prestigious scientific body in the world, issued a booklet with 51 scientific, quote, facts, unquote, which showed that the Bible couldn't be trusted.

[12 : 11] Today, and that's not much more than a century later, up-to-date science has discounted every one of those 51 facts and said that none of them is in fact true.

But the Bible remains absolutely unchanged. Sir Isaac Newton, who has rightly been called the father of modern science, called the Bible, and I quote, a rock from which all the hammers of criticism have never chipped a single fragment.

So if someone were to say to you, well, you know, I'm a scientifically minded person, and really science has disproved the Bible, one of the things I would do in response, and I'm trying to help you here, is I would ask them a question.

And I want to spill out from that and to say that one of the most helpful things you can do when people ask you questions about the Christian faith is to ask them questions.

And if someone were to say to me, why should I believe the Bible, science has disproved it, I would immediately ask them a question and say, well, give me five ways in which science has disproved the Bible.

[13 : 22] And I'll guarantee you, they couldn't give you one with evidence to back it up. So there's the first problem that you may face, the first criticism you may encounter.

The second is that people may say, well, the Bible's irrelevant and out of date. After all, it's 2,000 years old. And these days, we go along with cutting edge discoveries in science and technology and medicine and in so many other things.

Why should we put our trust in a book that is 2,000 years old and it is completely, it has to be, simply because it's so old, it has to be completely out of date.

Well, I hear that kind of thing all the time. But is that the case? Let me give you a whole string of reasons why it isn't. The Bible has a great deal to say, directly or indirectly, about marriage, divorce and remarriage, the breakdown of personal relationships, alcoholism, substance abuse, stress, and depression.

Are those things irrelevant and out of date in the 21st century? It speaks about damaging emotions such as anger, guilt, fear, doubt, and anxiety.

[14 : 44] Are those things no longer present in our current society? You know the answer to that question. It condemns dishonesty, immorality, arrogance, greed, selfishness, and obscenity.

Are those issues irrelevant in our modern society? It addresses issues such as violence, murder, racism, war. Are those things irrelevant in today's society?

Are they irrelevant with what's going on in the Middle East? Are they irrelevant in terms of what happened in Orlando a few days ago? It sets out clear principles that relate to subjects such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, human cloning, and other forms of genetic engineering.

Are those absolutely irrelevant in today's society? It has a great deal of teaching on how to establish a stable family life, the proper enjoyment of sex, employers and employees' responsibilities, social justice, business integrity, personal finances.

Those things all irrelevant. It teaches us how to cope with poverty, sickness, rejection, loneliness, bereavement, and other personal traumas. Are those things irrelevant?

[16 : 08] To quote directly, it also points to how to experience love, joy, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Is all of that irrelevant in the world in which we live today? It talks about animal welfare and the care of the environment. It tells us of our duty to help the bereaved, the sick, the disabled, the poor, the homeless, and the dispossessed, especially when those in need are widows or orphans.

Those things on which we don't need any help, don't need any guidance in today's world. In one chapter alone, in Genesis 22, it deals with these subjects in one chapter.

lost property, neighborliness, transvestism, ecology, health and safety, agriculture, horticulture, marriage relationships, adultery, and rape.

Now, of all the arguments that could be levied against the Bible, the idea that it's irrelevant in today's world is one of the most ignorant and absurd. So when people say the Bible is irrelevant, we need to be able to equip ourselves to respond to them and show how can it be irrelevant when it speaks on subjects such as those I've mentioned and when those subjects loom so large in the world in which we live today.

[17 : 34] A third argument you may come across, a third reason people may give you for not believing the Bible is that it's full of mistakes. Now, I have a fail-safe answer to that issue.

When someone says to me, look, the Bible is full of mistakes and they're almost certain to use that kind of language, they wouldn't say, well, the Bible has one or two mistakes. They're likely to say, well, it's full of mistakes.

I hand them a Bible and say, well, show me a dozen. I mean, if it's full of mistakes, you should be able to find at least a dozen very quickly and nobody has ever taken me up on that yet.

For example, in the matter of history, the Bible is not a history book but not one of its historical statements has ever yet been shown to be wrong.

Let me give you one very fine example of this. Sir William Ramsey was one of the world's greatest ever archaeologists. He was trained largely through German influence to believe that the New Testament was largely mythology and quite specifically that the book of Acts was not written by Luke, which clearly it claims to be.

[18 : 47] He was brought up to believe, he was trained theologically to believe that the book of Acts and the New Testament in general was a matter of folklore. But in the course of his training, he went out to the field in the near Middle East and began to make discoveries there that gradually made him change his mind.

And after a very long time of painstaking research, he discovered facts so meticulously accurate that he completely changed his mind about the authorship of the book of Acts and in fact said, and I quote, Luke should be placed along with the very greatest of theologians.

Talking of history, the Bible writes accurately about historical events hundreds of years before those events took place. We call this prophecy about one third of the Bible consists of prophecy and incidentally there is not a single prophecy in the Quran if I can give you a contrast.

Not one of the Bible's prophecies has ever been shown to be wrong. Many of them have been fulfilled to the letter and everyone will, we believe, be fulfilled.

In particular, there are prophecies about Jesus, for example. when he was to be born, where he was to be born. Oh, and there were two Bethlehems, for example, and it has the right one.

[20 : 16] It speaks about his upbringing, about the quality of his life, about the very manner of his death, a type of execution that wasn't used in those days.

The very fact that there would be criminals executed with him on the same day, his resurrection from the dead, the miracles that he performed, there are so many scores of things said about Jesus hundreds of years before he was born and all of them fulfilled to the letter in that amazing light.

So when a person says to you, the Bible is full of mistakes, your first approach should be, well, please show me some. Show me a dozen if it's full of them. It ought to be easy enough to show me a dozen of them.

And I can fairly safely promise you that nobody will be able to answer you. A fourth reason people would give for not believing the Bible is that, well, it's too negative.

It's full of thou shalt not's. Well, I would have two responses to that. Of course, they would be quoting a language that we used commonly hundreds of years ago really to add, as they think, to the making of their point.

[21 : 29] they'd be using old-fashioned language really to help to bolster up their argument that the Bible is not to be trusted. And I would say, well, even if we abandon the thou shalt not and put you shall not, what is wrong with being negative?

I would say to them, I have to admit to you, that eight of the ten commandments are couched in negative language. They tell us not to do certain things. but my argument to them would be, what's wrong with that?

And I would give this very simple illustration. Imagine that you find yourself very unwell and you go to the doctor and he says, well, I have some bad news for you and some good news.

The bad news is that you are indeed very unwell. You are suffering from a disease, from a condition that if untreated, I'm afraid, is terminal and it will kill you.

However, just recently, thanks to the wonders of modern science, a silver bullet has been found. A cure, medicine that can be taken orally, has been found and if you follow these instructions carefully, you will recover completely and in very short order.

[22 : 48] So I'm going to prescribe these tablets for you. Take this along to the chemist, get the prescription filled, follow the instructions and you will be saved. And so you go to the chemist, you get the tablets and the directions are quite clear.

There are 30 tablets here and you are to take one per day. And then in very clear writing, it says, do not exceed the stated dose.

It is dangerous to exceed the stated dose. Now that's very negative. Don't do that. But you go home and you think, oh, of all the times to be sick, this is the very worst time.

Of course, there's never a good time to be sick but you say, well, I've got so much coming on in my life in the next week and I'm so busy at work or at home or something to do with my family or I'm just about to go on holiday.

I can't wait 30 days at one pill per day in order to get better. I'm going to swallow all 30 pills today and I'll be better tomorrow. And so you swallow all 30 pills and the next day you're dead.

[23 : 53] There's nothing wrong in being told, do not do this. If by not doing that you are benefiting yourself. Go back to the Ten Commandments.

You shall not murder. It's very negative. But it preserves human life.

If everybody in the world always obeyed the command do not murder. Our headlines wouldn't be full of the death of a member of parliament today.

You shall not commit adultery. Well, that's very negative in our modern day and age but it preserves the sanctity of marriage. Do not steal.

That's very negative. negative. But it safeguards our personal property. Do not bear false testimony.

[24 : 52] That's very negative, isn't it? But it safeguards our personal reputations. So, to say do not do something, to be negative, to issue a negative edict, there's nothing wrong in that if by following that commandment there is benefit flowing into your life and to the life of others.

The other thing to say is the Bible has many, many do's, many positive words that God gives us. And we need to have this in our mind very clearly. That when God tells us to do something, it is always because by not doing it we will lose and by doing it we will benefit.

when God tells us not to do something it's because if we do them it will harm us and if we don't do them we will benefit from it. So God always has our well-being in mind and when his commandments are negative we should treat them as wholeheartedly in our response as those that are positive.

They're all there to help us lead a fuller and richer and better life. Here's the fifth reason people would give and that is well it doesn't work.

Well what an extraordinary thing to say. The Bible doesn't work. There is no other publication in all of history that has had such a powerful impact in our world and for good.

[26 : 18] In New Testament times the Christian church in Corinth for example included a very mixed bunch of people but Paul writes to them in one particular passage that I always love quoting from.

Let me read it to you. Don't you know says Paul that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God. So incidentally I can insert here that Paul was not what we call a universalist.

He wasn't someone who said well at the end of the day it really doesn't matter if you if you're a religious person or a good person or a church going person or a prayer saying person or a Bible reading person if the quality of your moral life isn't quite up to scratch it really doesn't matter too much.

Paul says no the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God and then he underlines it do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy how interesting that he includes that along with what we would call serious sins the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and that is what some of you were but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God the Bible doesn't work if you had lived in Paul's day and you were in the great city of Corinth you would certainly have not agreed with that when a social revolution swept the western world in the 18th and 19th centuries it was mostly driven by people influenced powerfully by the words of scripture

William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery the Earl of Shaftesbury and the mentally ill Elizabeth Fry and prison reform Thomas Bernardo and the housing of destitute children Jean-Henri Dunant and the founding of the Red Cross all these were men driven by the teaching of scripture and to say that the Bible doesn't work is nonsensical millions of people today would add their testimony that the Bible has made them better husbands better wives better parents better children better employers better employees better friends and better people let me give you one of so many personal stories that I know of some years ago a friend of mine was running a series of youth rallies in the city of Bristol at the Colston Hall on Saturday night once a month and on this particular occasion a youngish man came into the building and was trying to make a nuisance of himself he had a bottle of beer in each pocket and the contents of several others already inside him when the meeting was over and he'd been quietened down anyway and the meeting went on when it was over and my friend was the as he thought the very last to leave the premises he found this man sitting on the steps of the Colston Hall and so he sat down with him and engaged him in conversation and he had literally sobered up a great deal my friend was able to have a very serious conversation with him and as he left he was fairly persuaded in his own heart that this person had indeed turned from sin put his trust in Christ and become a Christian now having been in full time itinerant work for well over 50 years

[30 : 08] I know the dangers and those in the settled ministry know it too of assuming that if a person professes to be converted they truly are saved but my friend certainly had that impression that this man for all that had gone on early in the evening truly had come to real faith in Christ and so my friend went off to his home this man went down to the center the Colston Square there in Bristol put his key into the door of his car to drive home and suddenly thought I can't do this I don't have a tax disc he didn't believe in tax discs and had got away with it for years I know that where I live if I didn't have a tax disc within one day of it being due I'd be in serious trouble and so he took the key out of the door of his car and walked a long way home his wife was already in bed he woke her up and said where is my best suit and his wife stirred and said what in the world are you asking

I want to know where is my suit why do you want your suit don't you know what time it is yes I do but I need it because I'm going to church in the morning and she said you've been drinking he said yes I have been drinking and I am going to church in the morning and so the wife blessed her heart got out of bed found his suit made sure it was clean and pressed and got a good clean shirt for him he said now I need a tie to go with it so they got a tie that I'd better not describe to you and so all of that was set up and in the morning he dressed in a suit and shirt and tie and got outside and waited for a bus to pass and eventually a bus came he got on board the bus and kept looking out of the window until he saw the words evangelical church got out of the bus went in there and worshipped in that congregation when I met him he had been an evangelist for a number of years travelling in that part of the country sharing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ the Bible doesn't work there is no other book in the world that begins to work anything like it there is no government that can bring about that change inside or outside of Europe there is no committee that can bring about that change no religion that can do it no church that can do it but the message contained in the Bible can there's never been a book in all of history that has had such a powerful impact for good in the lives of millions of people all over the world now why is that so or to ask the question in another way what is the Bible's message well as you well know because you're well enough taught here the Bible is a collection of books 66 of them nearly 1200 chapters and about 31,000 verses so what as we look at all of that and all of those what is this message now by sheer coincidence the message of the Bible can be summarized in the central verse in the Bible of those 31,000 odd verses the very middle verse and I'm talking mathematics here the very middle verse is Psalm 118 and verse 8 and this is what it says it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man and one of the ways

I would answer the question if someone said to me well what is the Bible's message if I didn't have long to quote them too large a passage I would say the Bible's message is this it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man now that single sentence tells us two things and these two things brought together give us the message of the Bible that you need to share with other people or indeed that you may need to hear and embrace yourself tonight and to take them in the reverse order the first is that man is a failure it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man now these words were written when the writer and his people were surrounded by enemies they were in great danger and they realized that left to themselves there was no way to escape they were helpless and hopeless and doomed that is why he wrote these particular words that there was no good trusting in their own abilities to get out of the danger they were in that is exactly what the Bible is saying it says that we are in even greater danger that God created man in his own image that is he created him perfect he created him to live in a perfect relationship with his maker in a perfect relationship one with another and in a perfect relationship with their environment and with the whole cosmos and then sin came into the world swept across all of creation and doomed man to separation from God all have sinned the Bible tells us and come short of the glory of God and as I've explained at least once on this particular tour there are two tenses in that statement and almost all of you know that statement you could have recited it when I started it you could have recited the rest of the verse all have sinned and come short of the glory of God now the first part all have sinned is in the past tense all of us have sinned there's not one of us that would even dare to stand up and suggest that we have never ever done anything that is wrong all of us have sinned but the second half is in the present tense and fall short we come short here and now of the glory of God

I spoke at Carol last night was asked to speak on the subject why are we here and as I prepared for that meeting I came to the conclusion that there was one statement in particular that God makes in the Bible that answers the question why are you here I've actually written a book on the subject but of all things we've sold out already on the tour so we don't have it here tonight and that is where God says that he has created us for his glory that's why we are here now bring that alongside the second part of the verse from which I'm quoting all of us fall short of the glory of God so all of us continue in the very best of our days to come short of what God intends us to be as G.K. Chesterton once wrote we're all in the same boat we're not only all in the same boat but all of us are seasick that is where we are and the Bible says that if we remain in that condition throughout our lives and we die then we face the perfect judgment of a God who has zero tolerance of sin and will not allow anything to enter the kingdom of heaven so man is a failure all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags and the first and great commandment says love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength and we fall at the very first hurdle we have not kept the first and great commandment so we are guilty of committing the first and greatest sin so the first thing the second in the order in which it's written is that man is a failure but the first part of the verse says it is better to take refuge in the Lord so the second thing in the order in which we're taking them that the verse says is that not only is man a failure but God is a savior better to take refuge in the Lord a refuge is a shelter and if you're not right with God his holy anger is like a horrendous storm ready to break over your head

I was preaching in the United States just a few years ago when Hurricane Irene hit the eastern seaboard of the United States people were giving warning of it the weather forecasting system over there is excellent they knew they were told exactly to the hour when it would hit the seaboard and they were strongly advised to leave and to move inland most did and some didn't and of those who didn't many lost their lives they were given notice they were told the storm is coming it's better to take refuge now while you have the opportunity and the Bible tells us there's only one place to find shelter to find refuge and that is in God himself that God himself has provided the refuge for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world for the express purpose of saving us from the danger we're in by nature God himself took on our humanity in the person of the Lord Jesus who lived the perfect life that you and I haven't lived and then in our place the righteous in the place of the unrighteous in his body bore in his body and spirit on the cross bore the penalty that God imposed on sin on the third day he rose from the dead is alive today and is willing to provide a refuge to all who will come to him confess their sin call on him to save them and that is what the Bible's message is that man is a failure and God is a savior when my first wife died just a few years ago now or just before she died the very last words she heard from me were these surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and

[40 : 23] I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and if you were to go to Epsom cemetery today and see what of course I would say is the finest grave in the whole place among many thousands you would find her name her date of birth her date of death and these words with Christ which is far better there are only two ways in which to die there are even if the words are not used only two things that could be written on your headstone one of only two things and the first is with Christ which is far better better than anything you could possibly imagine in this life and the alternative is without Christ which is far worse worse than anything you could ever experience or imagine in this life we are all destined to die

I speak as a dying man to dying men and women and one day there will be erected at least metaphorically if not actually over our graves headstones with one or other of these sentences on them with Christ which is far better or without Christ which is far worse and the Bible's exhortation is that we should call on the name of the Lord seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near if you tonight have never come to that point of personal commitment to Christ then let me urge you to do so for all the reasons that I've given and if you are a Christian and you get into conversation with those who are not you seek to share the gospel with them and some of the literature you may have an opportunity to get very shortly will help you to do that this is where you need to get perhaps in an ongoing relationship an ongoing opportunity to talk to them maybe over weeks or months to get to the point where you make it clear to them that it is better to take refuge in the

Lord than to trust in man because man is a failure however big a success he may be in other areas of life in terms of his eternal destiny man is a failure but God is a savior that is the message that is preached in this church and has been so faithfully over so many years and will continue to be so under your present minister that is the message that people need to hear and to which God calls them to respond let me do just two things as I close this part of our evening together first again is to thank you for coming and your minister for kindly agreeing that I should come and then I want to pray and also to give thanks for the refreshments and then when we're in the hall in a few minutes time and you've had your opportunity to get your refreshments I will respond to whatever your minister has to say to me and then I will introduce just two or three of these pieces of literature some of things that you may find very helpful in sharing the gospel with others and others that you may find very helpful as you continue your journey in the Christian faith let us pray together our gracious God and father we thank you for giving us this quiet hour towards the end of this day and we pray that you will help us to understand the truth to live in the good of it and help us as we seek to share the faith with others help us to respond to their problems to answer their questions equip us to be faithful and fruitful ambassadors for Christ and use us to your glory as we give you renewed thanks for this time together this evening and as we return thanks for the refreshments we're now to receive enrich our time of fellowship together in the whole we pray for Jesus sake amen