

Why We Believe the Bible

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Now if you've been around for any length of time, then you've probably noticed that Scripture is featured at almost every turn of our service. We begin the morning with a call to worship from Scripture. We select songs that are saturated with Scripture for singing.

We read Scripture together. We pray out of the Scriptures. We conclude our service with a benediction from Scripture. And of course, we try to be faithful to preach from the Scripture. We anchor our time together in Scripture because, as the author of Hebrews puts it, it is living and active. So our series in Mark has officially ended.

But we never made it to Mark 16, 9 through 20. And maybe you're wondering how we could possibly choose to leave off the last passage of Mark's Gospel.

[1 : 02] Wouldn't that be like watching a thriller movie and then skipping the final scene when all the tensions and things are resolved? Maybe it seemed like an abrupt end at verse 8 with a bunch of fearful disciples.

Well, Walt did a wonderful job last week highlighting the fact that this abrupt close to the Gospel was intended to be a beginning, not an ending for Christ's disciples.

But what are we to make of this last section of Mark in that Gospel? Well, most scholars agree that Mark 16, 9 through 20 is not original to Mark's Gospel.

Now, this is not a matter of heresy or orthodoxy. There are many fine Christians that believe it is original. And just to be clear, this text does not deal with any beliefs that affect whether a person can be a Christian or not.

Like Jesus being the Son of God, for instance. Nothing foundational is challenged whether or not you have these verses. So don't be disturbed. But I want to give you just four brief reasons why we believe this is not authentic to the Gospel of Mark.

[2 : 11] First, we have the issue of what we call manuscript evidence. If you have an English Bible this morning, it's a translation of Hebrew and Aramaic from the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament.

Now, the Greek New Testament did not just fall down from the sky and descend into this book so that we could crack it open. And that's not how it works. No, men who wrote the New Testament used their intellects, used their personalities, their study, their research together with the Holy Spirit. And they wrote in such a way that their words are God's words. When they wrote, people called scribes made copies and distributed them.

Now, remember, this is around the turn of the second century. So there was no print, collate, distribute button. There's no aim, mail center. Okay? So these scribes would hand copy these manuscripts.

And there are many of these manuscripts for the Greek New Testament. And just by way of comparison, if you've ever read Homer's Iliad or the Odyssey, maybe when you're in high school, there are only a handful of copies of these manuscripts.

[3 : 18] But the Greek New Testament has over 5,000 copies. So there's no Greek text with more evidence than the Bible. Now, we do not have the original copies.

But we have thousands of copies dating back to as early as the second and third centuries. So this introduces what we call the science of text criticism.

So what's that all about? Well, let's just imagine for a moment that you sent a letter to Dolly Parton. You're thanking her for Dollywood and all those wonderful trips and all the books that she sent to your little kids and all the help she's given for the fires a few years back.

Well, imagine she actually wrote a personal letter back thanking you for the letter and wishing you all the best. Well, let's say that you're a grammar teacher, so you take that cool letter from Dolly and you have your 25 second grade students practice their handwriting by copying that letter. Well, over the summer, let's say that sadly, you accidentally lose the letter. Wow, tragic. Can you still know what the original said?

[4 : 29] Yes, you've got 25 hand-copied versions from your class of second graders. Now, as you look through them, you'll see Riley struggle with crossing his T's and Kirby wrote his P's kind of upside down and they kind of look like B's and maybe little Gilbert got distracted and he accidentally skipped a line that started with the same word.

In other words, there may be a bunch of variants, but collectively you can discern what the original words were based on comparing the 25 copies to one another. So this is how the science of textual criticism works with the 5,000 plus manuscripts that we have.

So, the big issue that occurs with the longer ending of Mark is that the two oldest Greek manuscripts that go back to the 4th century only have the shorter ending of Mark.

And additionally, the oldest manuscripts that we have in other languages like Syriac, Armenian, and one of the most important Latin manuscripts, they all have the shorter ending. So the next issue is that major church fathers and historians confirm the shorter ending of Mark rather than the longer ending.

Eusebius, a church historian writing in the 4th century, wrote this, Indeed, the accurate copies conclude the story according to Mark in the words, They were afraid, for the end is here in nearly all the copies of Mark.

[5 : 55] So a third problem relates to internal issues. The ESV study note says this, Some manuscripts end the book with 16.8, others include verses 19 to 20 or 9 to 20 immediately after verse 8, And at least one manuscript inserts additional material after verse 14.

Some manuscripts include another section after verse 8. These manuscripts then continue with verses 9 to 20. So in other words, the ending is a jumbled mess in some of these manuscripts. This suggests that there was a bit of uncertainty with this portion. Plus, the style and the vocabulary in this text is different than the rest of the gospel.

And lastly, we just have to ask the simple question, Which makes more sense? That a scribe would cut this or would add this? I mean, it's understandable why they might want to add something. Verse 8 seems to kind of end abruptly with fear. And Jesus doesn't appear to the women here or to the disciples, so it's reasonable that a scribe wanted to kind of round it out and have a sense of closure and encouragement.

[7 : 04] So it seems more reasonable that a scribe added rather than subtracted it from the earliest manuscripts. Y'all tracking? So, you may be wondering how it ended up in the Bible to begin with.

Well, our English Bibles are typically based on one of two different collections of Greek manuscripts. The first collection came from a Dutch Catholic named Erasmus.

Maybe you've heard that name in the 16th century. He had a small number of medieval manuscripts, many of which included that longer ending of Mark. And this is why the KJV translation includes the longer ending of Mark.

However, another collection traces its origins to the late 19th century, so nearly 400 years later, after we've discovered many additional manuscripts.

Two Cambridge scholars added numerically more and far older manuscripts. So the volume and the age of the additional manuscripts help clarify what was in the originals.

[8 : 12] So translations based on this collection of manuscripts, like the ESV, for instance, include the footnote to let us know that this is doubtfully original to Mark's gospel and therefore not to be viewed as scripture.

It would be as if one of our second grade students added, and I will always love you, to their copy of Dolly's letter. Okay? So this is why I will not be preaching the longer ending of Mark this morning. Okay? Over the centuries, only a small portion of the New Testament, including this longer ending of Mark, has been in question. And of these few questionable portions, the differences make little difference to the meaning of any of the passages.

So instead of rattling our faith, this is actually wonderful news, because we can be far more confident about what we have preserved for us in the Bible, which is wonderful.

So this morning, we wanted to take some time and just marvel at what God has given to us in Scripture. We've already been talking about the transmission of Scripture through textual transmission, but we're going to zoom out wider and ponder where did the Bible come from? [9 : 26] Who wrote this book and what does it mean for us? So let's read as Peter introduces us to the glorious riches we have in God's Word. This is 2 Peter 1, 16 through 21.

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to Him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 50] Well, it's my goal this morning to build your faith in the Word of God. I hope you come away freshly amazed that we have access to our Creator's words.

And these words are powerful and effective. They bring life to the dead, boldness to the fearful, hope to the discouraged, endurance to the faint-hearted, grace to the undeserving, and mercy to the condemned.

And I want to call you to what I believe is the main point this morning, to treasure the inspired Word of God. Hikers typically set up base camp, and then they travel out for short day trips to kind of explore a while, and then they'll return back to base camp.

So 2 Peter 1 is going to serve as our base camp this morning. We'll launch out from here. We're going to explore three topics related to the Bible in detail that I trust will help you treasure the inspired Word of God.

Here are the three. We're going to look at revelation, inspiration, and Scripture. So first we'll start with revelation. Take a look again at verse 16.

[11 : 59] It says, We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. And then in verse 18, it says, We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.

So what Peter's doing, he's looking back on an experience when he was standing with his buddies, James and John, as they witnessed one of the most incredible moments in history, the transfiguration of Jesus.

And for a moment, Jesus peeled back the layers to reveal His divine glory. He was radiant. Not only that, he was leading a conversation with Moses and Elijah, who would have been like the big dogs, representing the law and the prophets.

So Peter is reminding us that he was there with them. He was with Jesus in that moment, getting a sneak peek of Jesus' authority and divinity.

Not only did Jesus see, or did Peter see Jesus, he also heard the voice of the Father say, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. So Peter saw, and he heard, because he was with Jesus.

[13 : 11] And all of these details are meant to highlight a dramatic moment in history. This is a form of what theologians call revelation. Revelation. It means exactly what it sounds like.

The act of revealing something. I know that was a tough one. And that's helpful because, in this case, Peter is recounting a divine revelation that God has used to communicate something about who He is.

But this isn't an isolated circumstance of revelation. In fact, we need to actually start with who God is in order to understand how He relates to us and reveals Himself to us.

So the sovereign grace, church statement of faith, which we adhere to, it begins this way. Our eternal, transcendent, all-glorious God, who forever exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is by His very nature a communicative being.

He both creates and governs through His words and has graciously, here it is, revealed Himself to humanity in order to commune with us.

[14:26] This is an amazing truth. What it captures is that God was a God of relationship even before anything even existed. Before there was a universe, God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoyed relationship within the Trinity.

Just listen to Jesus as He's praying to the Father in John 17, 5. It says, and now, Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.

Not only is God relational, but He's a communicative being. To commune means to get very close to someone by exchanging feelings or thoughts.

You know that feeling whenever you're spending the evening getting to know people over a meal. Elizabeth and I have done that with many of you. We share stories, experiences, laughter, tears, and by the end of that time we realize that trust has been forged.

We've moved deeper into relationship. And at the heart of relationship is language. Words. Words give the ability to transmit feelings and thoughts.

[15:42] Words are vital to relationships, so it's no surprise that a relational God would use words to relate to His creation. This is one of the reasons why Jesus is referred to as the Word.

John 1.1 begins by connecting these ideas together when He writes, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

You know, God could have silently just kind of swirled things into being. If He wanted to, He could have done that, but instead, He created by the power of His Word. I mean, the very first act of revelation, you remember this, God created the world, and the very first thing He does is He says, He says this, Let there be light, and there was light.

So the statement of faith goes on to say this, He has revealed Himself through creation and providence in ways plain to all people, leaving no one without a testimony of Himself.

So this relational, communicative God has revealed Himself through creation to all people, and He's done this in broad ways through what we call general revelation, broad revelation.

[16:55] In Romans 1, Paul writes about the revelation of God and the things that have been made. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world.

Where? In the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Psalm 19, a wonderful text, verses 1 and 2 says, The heavens declare the glory of God.

The sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. We got declare, proclaim, pour out speech.

We can see all of these speech-related metaphors in nature revealing who God is. It's what happens when you see an incredible overlook, or you go to Bald River Falls and you're just wowed by it.

You can't help but say, wow! But notice that these revelations of God are general. And even though they're available to all people through the things that were made, they do not point out the problem of sin or how a holy God can save us from sin.

[18:10] We need something more focused to help us understand the problem in the world and God's solution. So our statement of faith goes on to include this line.

He also revealed Himself through specific words that we might come to a fuller knowledge of His character and will, learning what is necessary for salvation and life.

So Psalm 19, which we just quoted a second ago, when thinking about God's revelation in nature, it actually shifts attention to this more concentrated revelation, which we call special revelation.

So general and special. Notice what it says. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true, and the righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

[19:18] So here you go. You got law, testimony, precepts, commandments, rules. These are all word-based revelations from God that affect change.

So Psalm 19 moves from this wonderful general revelation in nature to special revelation through words inspired by God. So these types of revelation are not at odds with each other.

It's kind of like a funnel moving from broad to narrow. The broad revelations are true and they are awesome, but sunsets and rainbows can only go so far in helping us understand who God is. The general revelations because of sin can be misinterpreted. So we have to be more, we have to have more specific revelation and interpretation.

So one of the primary ways God accomplished this was through speaking through people. So let's go back to base camp. 2 Peter 1, back in the text and then we'll explore this idea of inspiration.

[20 : 22] Verse 20, it says, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit.

So what does it mean that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation? What's that all about? Well, this takes us a little bit deeper into one of the ways God more specifically reveals himself.

There's a combination of both revelation and then interpretation. So there's like an event that takes place and then we have to make sense of that event.

We ask, what does that event mean? There's a revelation and then interpretation. The problem is that a single event can be subject to many interpretations. Here's an example of what I mean.

So a few years ago around Christmas, my wife and I were watching a movie when we got a call from Elizabeth's dad. His name's Paul. And he asked if we'd seen Elizabeth's mom. Her name's Barb.

[21 : 28] She was supposed to be back earlier, but she hadn't been seen or heard from. So he went on to explain that he had the Find Your Friends app on his phone and he was trying to get a general idea of where she was, but his phone kept showing that she was still at the school where she worked, which happened to just be like a minute down the road from where Elizabeth and I lived.

So he asked, maybe could we just pop over there and check it out and see if she was still at the school. So we hopped in the car. We drove over to the school parking lot, but we didn't see Barb's car anywhere.

We both pulled out our phones to look at our Find Our Friend app and they both showed a little blue dot near the school, but not in the school. Instead, the dot was kind of hopping around the thick woods on the backside of the school.

So we both looked at each other and as you can imagine, our hearts start thumping a little faster.

Why would her car not be here? Why would her phone be out in the woods?

Why has nobody heard from her? So we gave a call back to Paul to let him know that we didn't see the car, but we did see the blue dot out in the woods behind the school.

[22 : 42] So Paul immediately drove over to the parking lot to meet us. By this time, it's starting to get dark. It's starting to get a little creepy. And we didn't know what else to do but to start walking into the woods to see if we could find the blue dot representing my mother-in-law.

So the three of us slowly walk into the woods with our phones out, trying to close in on the blue dot. But as we got closer to the blue dot, it kept hopping around on our phones.

It wasn't consistent. We called, and we called, but there was no response. There wasn't a trace of a person being out there at all. So, we started to make our way out of the woods.

Paul was getting ready to pull his phone out and to make a call to file a police report when all of a sudden, he got his call from the house. It was Barb. She was calling from the house phone.

And then the story emerges. She had decided to go to the grocery store to shop after work, which, of course, took a couple hours, but she had accidentally left her phone in the mailroom at work.

[23 : 50] The mailroom was in the basement, so it got terrible reception. So, when we were attempting to use the Find Your Friends app, the blue dot was just hopping all around the building outside in the forest.

We were unbelievably relieved, as you can imagine. It's just this moment. We swung from this, like, morbid body search out in the woods to a celebration like no other. So, we canceled our plans for the evening, and instead, we bought a whole bunch of ice cream, we hugged each other, and freshly enjoyed being alive together.

It was wonderful. It was great. So, you see, the same event was happening, but a right interpretation of the event made all of the difference. So, throughout history, God spoke through people in order to give a right interpretation of events.

For example, we can think of Acts 17, a passage I love, when Paul engaged the polytheistic Greek people of Athens. Now, Athens was this philosophical capital at the time.

It says that people would literally just hang out all day doing nothing but chatting about the latest ideas and philosophies. So, here Paul comes, and what does he do?

[25 : 01] He addresses the crowd saying this, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

So, he challenges a number of their interpretations of the world around them. He challenges their views of God saying that there aren't many gods but one sovereign creator.

He challenges their views of serving God saying he doesn't actually need anything. but instead he gives everything. He challenges their views of the flow of history saying it's not random but designed by God in order that people might find him.

So, what Paul has done here is he's given a divine interpretive grid to rightly understand God's revelation. In the Old Testament, God used prophets to communicate.

[26 : 28] Prophets were spokesmen for God. when God was commissioning Moses to be his representative to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt, Moses felt insufficient and unable to speak.

So, God said that he would communicate to Moses who would then work in tandem with Aaron in order to speak to the people. Notice how God says he will do this in Exodus 4.

He says to Moses, you shall speak to Aaron and put the words in his mouth and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.

He shall speak for you to the people and he shall be your mouth and you shall be as God to him.

The words being given to Moses and Aaron are divine words.

The words are so acutely connected to God that for Moses to give them to Aaron is just as if God himself were saying it. So, the prophets were very conscious that they were speaking God's words.

[27 : 26] They were called by God given specific messages to speak. They were obligated to deliver the messages God gave them and many times in the Old Testament you see the words thus says the Lord.

Perhaps you've seen that as you flip through. These words aren't just kind of general messages but specific words from God. They carried the authority of God. This is how Peter can say that no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So, what Peter is capturing is the idea that theologians call inspiration. Now, this is different from how I would typically think of the word inspiration.

This is not the same as like a musician hearing something that inspires him and then goes and produces a bunch of songs and it's all based on that inspiration.

No, inspiration is not limited to a moment that just gives way to personal creativity. That's not what it's talking about. On the flip side, this inspiration is not like a mechanical dictation. I mean, my wife and I, we lived with Muslims in North Africa for a couple of years and this was one of their great claims about the Quran.

[28 : 38] They believed that the words were dictated by the angel Gabriel directly to Muhammad who just wrote stuff down. This is not what the Bible teaches about inspiration.

Peter says that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. Rather, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Inspiration involves both the person and the Holy Spirit.

God did not bypass the personhood of the people he worked through. Instead, he perfectly used their unique personalities, experiences, and giftings to communicate his word without compromising the perfection of his word.

B.B. Warfield puts this in perspective of the particular example of the person of Paul that we just mentioned earlier saying this, If God wished to give his people a series of letters like Paul's, he prepared a Paul to write them.

And the Paul he brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters. This understanding of inspiration is consistent with a really broad way the Spirit has worked through people to bring forth prophecies, both spoken and written.

[29 : 54] This views inspiration extending not just to the ideas of scripture, but to the very words of scripture. So that's how Jesus can say in Matthew 5.18, For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth passes away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

So an iota, it's a particular piece of a particular letter of a very particular word. So the point being that these are God's precisely intended words.

So, what we've seen so far is that God is by nature a relational, communicative God who reveals himself generally through the things that he made.

But he also reveals himself more specifically so that there is a right interpretation of his revelation that leads to relationship with him. He delivers his words through the personalities and experiences of people who are led by the Holy Spirit.

So this brings us back to base camp. In 2 Peter, as we get ready to explore this final point, scripture, scripture. And as we talked about people being carried along by the Spirit, we can't help but get into the topic of scripture.

[31 : 13] Even though we originally began exploring the way God revealed himself to the prophets in the Old Testament so that they could speak to the people, God's words were not just limited to speech.

What's fascinating is that God not only spoke through the prophets, but he also commanded that his words be written. For instance, Exodus 34, 27, And the Lord said to Moses, Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.

So not only were the prophets considered authors, there were authors that were considered to be prophets. Authors of historical books such as Chronicles wrote not just to provide some fun historical trivia, but instead to reveal God's purposes for his people.

So all the books of the Old Testament were viewed as authoritative. They were preserved and were used in the religious life of the nation of Israel. This is the question I want to go to.

This is where my mind goes. What about the New Testament? That's Old Testament. What about the New Testament? All these letters, are they authoritative? Should these be considered on par with the authority of the Old Testament?

[32 : 29] Well, consider this. In Luke 10-7, Jesus is recorded saying the laborer deserves his wages. And then in Paul's first letter to Timothy, this is Paul writing, he says this, for the scripture says, scripture, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, that's Old Testament, and the laborer deserves his wages.

New Testament from the Gospel of Luke. Paul uses the technical word for scripture, the authoritative word of God, and he applies it both to Old Testament passage and Jesus' teaching from the book of Luke.

He puts the words from the New Testament Gospel on the same plane as the Old Testament. in 2 Peter 3, Peter addresses a church trying to understand Paul's letters, just like us, we're all confused, like what's going on here, Paul?

This is what Peter writes to that church, there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do, here it is, the other scriptures.

Here Peter is equating the letters of Paul with other scriptures. Again, this is placing Paul's letter on the same plane as the authoritative word of God.

[33 : 56] So that's only the tip of the iceberg, but the point is that the New Testament and Old Testament are both to be viewed and received as God's authoritative word. So our statement of faith says this, all scripture is breathed out by God, being accurately delivered through various human authors by the inspiration and sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit.

You can probably already spot the language from 2 Peter 1, 21 about the Spirit, but the other key text that this highlights is closely related passage in 2 Timothy 3, 16, which says, all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

So in both of these passages, divine authorship is emphasized and both passages have scripture in view. Even 2 Peter 1, the prophecies being spoken about are clarified in the verse before as the

prophecy preserved in scripture.

So when Paul says that all scripture is God breathed, what is he saying there? What does that even mean? Well, theologian John Murray contends that he is saying nothing less than that all scripture is God's speech, God's voice invested with all the authority and power belonging to his utterance. So scripture itself is composed of God's words and revelatory acts. But if that's the case, then why not just stick with that? What's so unique about the Bible, about scripture?

[35 : 34] scripture? Well, Murray goes on to say this, scripture is unique not because it takes the place of God nor the place of Christ, but because of its relationship to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

It is unique because it is the only way whereby we come into relationship to God in the redemptive revelation of his grace and the only way whereby Christ in the uniqueness that belongs to him as the Son of God incarnate, as the crucified, risen, and ascended Redeemer comes within the orbit of our knowledge, faith, experience, and hope.

We have, listen to this, no encounter with God, with Christ, and with the Holy Spirit in terms of saving and redeeming grace apart from scripture.

So if you look at 2 Peter 1.19, Peter is in total agreement and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, more fully confirmed, to which you do well to pay attention.

Do you see what, do you see what Peter is saying here? He saw Jesus heal lepers. He saw Jesus restore sight to the blind.

[36 : 53] He was there when Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves. He walked, can you believe it? He walked on water while fixing his eyes on Jesus. He saw Jesus transfigured before his very eyes.

He saw Jesus killed and he saw Jesus raised from the dead. Peter is saying right here that even though he saw and experienced all of these things, there is something even better than that.

There is something even more sure than that. There is something even more fully confirmed, what he's talking about is exactly what Murray is describing. We have access to the Bible. Praise God.

So scripture is itself a revelation. Scripture is a revelation of God's words and deeds throughout history, perfectly orchestrated through the power of the Spirit to finally and fully reveal the hope for sinners in Jesus Christ.

This understanding of scripture being the servant of revelation, is that exactly what Jesus is referring to when he starts to call out those religious leaders in John 5, 39 through 40.

[37 : 56] This is what Jesus says. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

And this is what I want to bear witness to this morning. we have a precious gift in the Bible. Not because it saves us, but because it perfectly points us to the Savior.

I echo the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, 3 saying, I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

I don't want you to be uninformed. I don't want you to misread what's happening in the world around you. What Paul said in Athens 2,000 years ago is worth saying again in Athens this morning.

The God who made the world and everything in it, including you and me, is Lord of heaven and of earth. He's not waiting for you to provide for him or impress him.

[39 : 07] What can you give that he didn't create? He himself is the giver. And he gives life to everything you see. And what's more is that he created from one man every person on the whole face of the earth.

And he didn't just create and then abandon us. No, he is the king over all. And he controls the rise and the fall of empires and the movement of people.

In his kindness, he brought us together this morning to the YMCAs so that we should seek God and not just seek him in vain, but that we might feel our way toward him and find him.

He is a God of relationship. Sin has broken us off from him, but Jesus Christ died to take on the judgment of God that we deserved and he offers his righteousness in exchange for our sin.

He does this so that we don't have to wander off into the woods of this world with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. God reveals himself through his word so that we might be restored in relationship with him through faith in Jesus Christ and celebrate the riches of abundant life today and forevermore.

[40 : 21] Oh, what a savior. Oh, what a savior. So as Kevin DeYoung has said, the word of God is more than enough for the people of God to live their lives to the glory of God.

So let's treasure the inspired word of God as we seek to worship him with all that we are for all that he has done.

Let's pray. Oh, Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us. Thank you for working through history. Thank you for working through your people.

Thank you for ultimately bringing our attention to this preserved word that is your word. and we can bank on it. Lord, thank you for your kindness to us. Thank you for the access we have to scripture. And may we see you more clearly day by day as we dig and enjoy the riches of this word. Let us see you more clearly and be captured by your beauty and live for you today and all the days until we're with you forevermore.

[41 : 29] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Thank you for MAC,