

**Basic Training - What Christians Believe about the Bible  
2 Peter 1:16-21, 2 Timothy 2:15**

Brothers and sisters, you might be surprised to hear that the sermon this morning is focused on an overview of the most controversial piece of literature this world has ever seen!

This piece of literature been praised as divine, it has been vilified as evil, it is responsible for the most radical transformation you can imagine taking place in people lives.

Some fear it as a revolutionary agent; some are inspired by it to question the status quo and bring change. Governments, nations and empires have been shaped by it and its teachings have caused wars and brought peace.

And... it is this controversial piece of literature which defines who are and what we do here... at Valleyview. Pretty Amazing

So by now you've probably guessed that I'm speaking about **the bible** – especially since you may have noticed the sermon title on the screen stating “what Christians believe about the

bible.” But I pray the significance of what we will be looking at this morning will not be lost on us.

Because the bible so easily becomes a mundane part of our Christian experience, something that we take for granted and neglect, right?

I forget that pastors and teachers in other parts of the world risk their lives each time they get up and preach from the bible. We forget believers in other parts of the world risk their lives when they gather together to read and study the bible.

Brother Andrew – a Dutch Christian who founded Open Doors Ministries in Europe constantly risked his life during the Cold War by traveling into Communist countries to bring bibles to the underground church.

Dr. Livingstone, of the “Dr. Livingstone I presume” fame – had taken some 73 books with him when he started out on his famous trip to Africa. After he had gone 300 miles, Livingstone had to throw away some of the books because of

the fatigue of those carrying his baggage. As he continued on his journey his library grew less and less, until he had but one book left--his Bible

In 1969 there was a man in Kansas City USA, who just after becoming a new Christian was badly injured in an explosion, causing his face to be disfigured, the loss of his sight and also the loss of his hands. But in spite of these handicaps this new Christian was intent on being able to read the scriptures for himself and subsequently figured out that he could learn how to read a Braille bible with his tongue!

Brothers and sisters, hearing stories like this makes us wonder what we might do if we didn't have such easy and free access to the bible. It challenges us to make better use of the free and easy access that we enjoy to the bible

And it makes us ask the question why? Why is the bible so important to Christians?

What is it that Christians believe about the bible that would make people risk their lives, throw all other books away, go to such great lengths to be able to read it for oneself.

Well the answer to that comes from what we Christians believe to be true about the bible, and as we are doing our basic training for Christian living we need to know and understand why we believe what we believe about the bible.

So, to help us in our training with that I have a little exercise prepared this morning, an example that will help demonstrate where the things that we believe about the bible come from.

Now you may have noticed that I have put some additional objects up here on the communion table... and you've been wondering what they are up here for? You'll find out in a minute but first I'm going to need some volunteers to come up here for each object.

Ok, take the object assigned to you and look for as many "claims" as you can that are made about the object from its

packaging, or even perhaps in the commercials that you've seen about it, and then you'll tell us what those claims are.

Ok, thank you to our volunteers! So brothers and sisters, now that we have all these statements about these products the next question is "how do we know they are true?" Well, we would have to buy them and use them to see if they do what they claim to do right?

For example, if we have a bottle of Febreze - the label and the commercials say that Febreze gets rid of odors, and we have odors that we want to get rid of. So we try it and if it works then we know its claim is true - and we'll buy it again.

Brothers and sister, every day we are hearing claims that products or people make and we are putting them to the test to see if they are true - but are we doing this with the bible?

Maybe we didn't even know that the bible makes claims about itself? But it does... now I need a couple more volunteers, who has a bible with them, or a bible app on their phone?

Ok, Can you look up the following verses? 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21... and read them for us please.

**2 Timothy 3:16** - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

**2 Peter 1:21** - *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Ok, so from these verses I hope you can see that Claim #1 is that the Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God.

Because these verses claim that scripture is God-breathed, and that prophecy does not originate from humans but from God and is given to humans via the Holy Spirit.

Now we need to be clear that the reference to "scripture" in the 2 Timothy passage means the "Old Testament", because when Paul wrote this letter, the writings which make up the New Testament had not been compiled or completed yet.

But, we can take this reference to “scripture” to include the New Testament writings as well – they are also God-breathed, as we read in 2 Peter 1:16 “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.”

You see brothers and sisters, the New Testament is based on the old Testament. What Jesus Christ did, who Jesus was and all that the apostles preached and wrote about from what they witnessed, this was all predicted in the Old Testament. The New Testament is the story of how it came true in Jesus and what’s changed because of that and what’s stayed the same.

So what does it mean that scripture is inspired by God?

Well this has to do more about the questions of “**Why** it was written” and the “**Where** did it originate from” rather than the question of “**How** exactly does this inspiration happen?”

Brothers and sisters, the amazing truth is that we have the scriptures because God has initiated speaking to us! It was His

revealing of himself to human beings, His intervening and acting in their lives, and His instruction which prompted them to record and write down what God was saying and doing.

God-breathed means God is the source. He started the conversation with us. God has the first word and God wants us to know about Himself as our creator and the world he created. That’s the Why and Where of being God-breathed.

Now there’s quite a bit of mystery as to how this process occurred, and as scientifically minded people we need to be careful that we don’t make “*the mechanics of how*” the inspiration occurs the determining factor as to whether we believe or don’t believe that the source of the bible is God.

If you’ve ever written a poem, or a paper, or a song and it went really well we’ll sometimes say “*I don’t know how I did it...it just came to me, I was inspired...*” but at other times maybe you had a specific formula that you followed to create something, like a worship song v1 /c /v2 / c/ b/ c, but either way you are still the author right? You are still the source!

So, however God communicated and worked with human beings via the Holy Spirit— whether it was supernatural and obvious or whether it was Peter or Paul writing a formal letter to a church – we still believe the source of scripture was and is God, and thus... the bible is God’s word.

Brothers and sisters take a moment to let that sink in – we have the very words of God available to us and he used ordinary human beings to write it down for us! Amazing!

And this is an important claim because it affects, as do all the other claims we’ll be looking at, how you read and study the bible.

If you don’t believe it’s the very Word of God; you won’t find the bible all that important, or necessary to read. You’ll be skeptical, suspicious or hostile to what it says. You might even want to try and disprove what it says and that God inspired it!

But if you do believe it is God’s Word; you’ll want to read it to find out more about God, its source...

You’ll be more inclined to trust what it says and It will be important to you to be able to understand it and you will definitely want to do as 2 Tim 2:15 says *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth!”* Amen? So – what do Christians believe about the bible? First point – it is God’s Word because its source is God himself.

Ok, let’s see what we have for claim number two. Let’s look up the following verses; 2 Samuel 22:31, Proverbs 30:5.

**2 Samuel 22:31** *“As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless.*

**Proverbs 30:5** *“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*

Now a multiple choice pop quiz for you to make sure you’re still paying attention. Brothers and sisters are these verses claiming...

- a) God's has perfect pronunciation and grammar?
- b) If you are in the military, take a bible because it will make a good shield?
- c) We can completely trust what the bible says?

Right, c – we can completely trust what the bible says. So Claim #2 is that The Bible is the *infallible* Word of God.

These verses tell us that God's word is flawless, meaning it is perfect, it is sound, it contains no faults, and so we summarize this all together and say it is infallible.

What this means is that it won't fail you. So, in that sense it is like a shield which protects you from harm, and if your shield fails on you, you're in big trouble.

But the bible claims that it will never let us down. What this means is that the Bible is our completely reliable and trustworthy guide for our faith and our lives.

And in our Reformed tradition we have a saying about this that we like to remind ourselves of from time to time. We say "*Scripture is the only rule for our faith and life.*" So brothers and sisters I'm here to tell you that we can stake our lives – right here and now and forever after - on what the bible says, because it is flawless. That is what Christians believe!

Now, the belief that the bible is infallible needs to be understood with-in the context of the other claims that scripture makes about itself.

For example, the *reason* it is infallible is because God is its source. But the question we should be asking is what it is infallible in regards to, so what is the purpose of the scriptures? And this leads us to the next claim. So, let's look at what the scriptures claim about its purpose.

Please look up the following verses; Hebrews 4:12, 2 Tim 3:15. Ok, let's read those...

**Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

**2 Timothy 3:15** *and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

So, claim #3 is that The Bible's purpose is about salvation through Christ, and this is a very important claim.

You see many people are willing to accept the bible as a historical document, or an ethical treatise, a collection of moral teachings or a source for theology or as inspiration for your spiritual life. But the bible doesn't claim to be any of those things.

In fact, using the bible for those purposes is like using one of these products for something it wasn't intended for. Which is why a lot of products also have indicators as to how they are

to be used. For example, Gorilla glue spray says "for use in home, office, crafting projects... do not swallow, do not get in eyes, skin or clothing. Which also means "do not use for hair!"

In the same way 2 Tim 3:16 says the scriptures "are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work." Not as mere history, or moral inspiration and so on. Again, this is where 2 Tim 2:15 comes in that we need to do our best to ensure that we "handle the word of truth... correctly!"

Now remember, the most important good works that we do are to i) believe in Jesus as the one God sent, and ii) confess our sins to receive Jesus' forgiveness.

So for this purpose the bible as the Word of God functions to equip us by teaching us about it, rebuking and correcting us when we get it wrong, and training us in righteousness so that we see our need for Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, the bible gets into your life and it judges us – not ruthlessly, but thoroughly and impartially.

It strips away the lies; the ways in which we have deceived ourselves; the pretenses we keep so that we appear decent and good, and the defenses we erect to protect this.

The purpose and power of scripture is to show you the truth about yourself, who you really are, so you believe in Jesus and confess your sins to Him. In this task the bible is infallible and completely reliable, the scriptures will not, and cannot, lie to you about yourself or about who Jesus is.

Brothers and sisters, when people reject the bible – it's not because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts us.

People are made wise for salvation when they can see the truth about themselves. They see they are in need of a savior, and they see Jesus Christ revealed in scripture as the one God sent whom we can trust for that salvation.

Brothers and sisters, I think we struggle with this claim more than any other, because in all honesty who wants something like this in their lives?

We can accept that the Bible is from God, we can understand how that would make it infallible, but its role in speaking the unvarnished truth about us and to us and exposing us for who we are, and where we stand in danger of God's wrath due to our sins, and that is not easy to accept.

But, that is our basic need brothers and sisters, if we are to be saved from God's wrath upon our sin. If we are to become sanctified and transformed into who God has planned for us to become - participating in the divine!! We need to read the bible and listen to what it says to us so that we become wise for salvation in Christ.

That's what Christians believe – there is no other source through which we will learn and become wise for salvation in Christ apart from the scriptures.

So brothers and sisters, let's summarize what we've learned so far, the bible is so important to Christians because we believe what it claims about itself...

That it is the divinely **inspired** Word of God, it is the divinely inspired **infallible** Word of God, and its purpose is to make us wise for salvation in Christ, to equip us for every good work.

So, I pray that you are starting to realize the amazing reality of what has been placed in our hands brothers and sisters, the scripture, the word of God – available and accessible for us to be able to read and understand in our own language! What a gift from God!

But now brothers and sisters... we need to do what we do on and daily basis with other claims, and we need to put the scriptures claims to the test.

Like we said before some claims are pretty easy to test out. If you want to test out a bottle of Febreze you spray it, and in a

short while you will see if indeed it does get rid of the odors you are smelling. Those are easy claims to test.

Admittedly the scripture's claims take a little longer to play out so we can see if they are true or not. It takes a bit of time for the Holy Spirit to use scripture to convict us of our sin and point us to Jesus Christ... It takes a bit of time for the scripture to correct us and rebuke us and teach and train us and equip us for every good work.

But the good news brothers and sisters is that there are other people who have taken the time to put the scriptures to the test in their lives, and we have their testimony bearing witness and stating that indeed the claims of scripture are true.

We have this in the scripture itself. Peter says to us in vs. 16 from our passage this morning, *"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..."*

And the Apostle Paul reminds Pastor Timothy in 2 Tim 3:14 *“to continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, **because you know** those from whom you learned it.”*

Brothers and sisters, we the proof that the claims of scripture are true is on display for us the lives of other people, people who we know and trust, believers who have spent time reading and studying and meditating on the scripture. We can see the proof in how they confess Christ as Lord, how they confess their sin, how they are filled with the fruit of the Spirit and work with the gifts of the Spirit...

And that's why it's so important that we are reading it on a regular basis. Otherwise, how will we connect the dots between what we see displayed in their lives with claims and the truths in the scripture and realize it's the proof we need.

That's why the bible isn't a one and done kind of product, it's a daily dose.

And we can't just read a couple verses here and there either, we need to read whole chapters and books, and make notes about questions we have to follow up on, ask your pastor or consult commentaries for answers and explanations... So, brothers and sisters what will you do?

You could leave here this morning and ignore what the Bible's claims like you would ignore a product demonstration at Wal-Mart, or... you can pick up your bible and begin to read!

Read it so you come to know it's source – God, read it so you can find out that it is dependable, faithful and true – infallible in what it reveals about sin and salvation. Read it because it will lead you to faith in Jesus Christ and equip you for good works.

Because that's what Christians believe, and have found to be true, about the bible – believe it. Amen.