



The Power of God's Word – Part 6

Holding Tightly to His Faithful Promises

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, I was called into an important meeting this week. I happened to be out of state, so they made all the flight arrangements for me. And I grabbed my bag and went to our beloved Orange County John Wayne Airport. And looked at my app, and my app said that I was boarding at gate six. So I went to gate six and got there on time. But I waited and people gathered around. You know how they do. They tell you not to gather around. We all gathered around and waited, it was time to board. I looked at my app, it says boarding now. I look up and nothing's happening. All the people are there getting restless. It goes from 5 minutes to 10 minutes to 15, 20 minutes late, nothing's happened. So I went to the back, kind of hung out by McDonald's and waited to see what was going to happen. I kept checking my app and then all of a sudden it says now boarding at gate five. So I saw people as they slowly figured this out, everybody started moving, you know, 40 yards down to the right to gate number five and so I shuffled over there as well. I thought well now it's happening, this will be good and we waited and waited and waited and went another 5, 10, 15, 20 minutes and I thought what was going on here. You couldn't tell what was going on or what like, you know, what plane was there, you looked out through the window, whatever. I don't know. So I look at my phone again It says now boarding at gate six. And I heard everybody groan, and everybody started to shuffle back to gate six. So at that point, I said, well, if they don't even know what's going on here with this gate, I mean, clearly, I just need to take my bag and go home. So I got my bag, got in my car, and went home, like, forget it. I figured, you know, if they don't get the flight right, the meeting's probably not all that important. I thought, you know, if I can't get on the plane seamlessly, surely, I don't even know if there is a plane that's going to take me, I didn't even know if there is a meeting. And I just went home. I forgot all about it.

Is that what I did? No, I didn't do that. No, there was a meeting. I just knew there would be some hassle getting there. And I didn't do that, but I know a lot of Christians who seem to work that way. Just a few frustrating gate changes, so to speak, a few delays here and there, a few things that'll make you groan in the Christian life and all of a sudden now, you're doubting whether or not this is even worth your trouble. You're doubting if this is something... I don't even know if there is a plane. Who knows if it's even going to get me there? And I don't know if there is even a good destination at the end of all this. It's amazing how quickly Christians are dissuaded from the excitement. I know one thing, if you start to doubt that all of this that we call Christianity is true and real, if we have some sense that maybe it's not really guaranteed, I know one thing, you're never going to invite anybody to travel with you on this trip. That's not going to happen. You're going to need to be sure. So much hangs on your confidence in the fact that God has spoken and made a set of promises regarding you and your neighbors and your co-workers and your extended family members. And all of this is true. If you doubt the veracity of the Christian message, so much hangs on that. And in essence, we're basically saying the God who said this is what would happen, you're thinking, I don't even believe it. You better believe that God is a truth teller and that God exists and that he's spoken and that he's telling the truth.



That's really where this discussion about God's Word shifts here at the end of Second Corinthians Chapter 4. Today, we're going to look at the last six verses that remind us that you better believe this. Not just because God says, hey, believe it, but because there's reason to believe it. The powerful Word of God is reasonable. It's rational. It is something that God has told us based on things that have happened that have taken place in time and space and in history. So I want you to look at these six verses at the end of Second Corinthians Chapter 4. I want to study with you this morning to make sure you don't start to doubt, because a lot of us can come to church on Sunday morning as long as it's just a couple hours a week, I mean, I can invest in that and maybe I say I believe it, but I don't really truly believe it down to the core of my being. But if you don't, I assure you that's probably all you're going to put in is about two hours a week and that probably will go away in time.

So we'd better make sure that we believe it. And look at this very simply, he quotes Psalm 116, it's a very simple phrase. And he turns this into a great comparative. Take a look at it starting in verse 13. Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 13, I'll read it from the English Standard Version. It says, "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written." Now that's just a setup for what we're talking about today. Faith, your confidence, your faith. Faith is not crossing your fingers, I hope it's true. This is a confidence you have. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for," things that you know that God has promised. "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written," now he's quoting Psalm 116, just a little phrase from that verse, "I believed, and so I spoke." Brilliant. It's just a brilliant enlistment of just two simple things. If you're ever going to speak the way that Paul's been talking about our speaking, the kind of speaking that's going to be costly. You start talking to your coworkers about Christianity and the truth of the Bible, particularly in our hostile culture, increasingly hostile culture, you're going to pay for it. There's going to be trouble. There's going to be pushback. There's going to be opposition.

So you'd better believe it if you're going to speak. I believe it and so I spoke. But that's what comes out of there, Psalm 116 verse 10. And he says, so also we believe, and so we also speak. That's how it works for us. We wouldn't be saying this if we didn't thoroughly believe it. "Knowing," I love that, some of you think that belief is just crossing your fingers, hoping, as some of the skeptics say, oh, you're a Christian, your faith is simply believing in something that you know isn't true, or something you can't prove, but they're being generous. But look, I loved the next word in verse 14. "Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." We know that. We know it because it's based on the past. And of course, all of this is embedded in Scripture. This is all about the fact that God had promised that Christ would rise from the dead and that he would bring us back to life after this world is finished and would bring our bodies and our spirits, as he'll explain in much more detail in the next chapter, to live with him and this will be in a place that's perfect. And "all this for your sake," verse 15. And we're speaking all this for your sake, we're ministering for your sake, and we're putting up with the hassle for your sake, "so that as grace extends to more and more people," it's not just that it comes to you like a cul-de-sac. You're not the goal of all this. You're a goal and a means to a greater goal. Look at this, "As grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving." More and more people will be excited, "to the glory of God." because they're to reach the destination.



Is it a hassle? Well, yeah, there's a hassle involved. You're going to have a few gate changes and a few delays along the way. "So we do not lose heart. Though the outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." The problems and the hassles and the troubles of the world and the opposition, the pushback, the pressures, all the criticism, whatever we might get for holding firmly to the Word of truth, not compromising it, not taking parts of it and chipping off the edges if the world doesn't like those sharp edges. But being faithful to God's Word, not just about Jesus living and dying, but that he lived to provide righteousness that you don't have and died to absorb the penalty for the sin that you do have. This all is predicated on the fact that we are all sinners and that there's a punishment for sin after this life is over, that there is a real hell out there. Now it seems like half the people meeting today under a cross, you know, in some church with the Christian logo over their shoulder, they don't even believe that anymore. And that's why the congregations continue to shrink, because what's the point? What is the point if there are no teeth in this thing?

But there is, and it goes back to the Garden. It goes back to the problem of sin. But we are going to go all the way, no matter how much hassle, no matter how much, as we saw last time, if Paul's going to be under a pile of rocks in Lystra, it's okay. The outer man is going to be decaying. He had a lot of pains and a lot of bruises and a lot of broken bones for speaking up to the gospel, but our inner self, it's being renewed, I'm getting stronger. Because "this light momentary affliction," and I think if you came in after being almost killed this week, you'd probably say, it's not light and momentary, right? You'd be nursing your wounds and saying, I've got to give my testimony in front of this church, tell them how much I've suffered for Christ. But Paul puts this all in perspective. "This light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." Because the more I'm willing to suffer for the message the more people are going to get saved. The more people are going to get on this plane, they're going to get with Christ, just like the people who didn't get onto the Ark. We're going to see more people getting onto the Ark, and when the judgment comes, they are going to be saved, and that's going to bring great thanksgiving and glory to God. And he says that is just amazing, "as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Now, I know we quote that a lot, but put that in context. Paul's concern with people who are going to be, let's just put it this way, flooded by the judgment of God. But there's a way out of this. There's a way out of this, and what you have to do is to admit your problem as we've said throughout this series. If "the Word of God is," true, it's, "living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword," Hebrews Chapter 4 verse 12, and it's going to pierce down to where the "thoughts and intentions of my heart" are going to be discerned. And the next verse, verse 13, we can't miss that because our lives "are naked and exposed," before God, with "whom we must give an account." See, this is all about what's going to happen when this life is over. And the reason people have no interest in church anymore is because most churches today are tempted to capitulate to the culture and say, really, this is all about the "here and now." Get your best life now. Just get your life better. We won't talk about hell, we won't talk about sin, we won't talk about judgment, we won't talk about repentance. We don't need all that. But let's



just talk about Jesus and put a little coat of Jesus on your life and things will be better. We're really not talking about the "here and now." Has your pastor ever told you that? It's not about the "here and now," it's about the "then and there." And we better be ready for the "then and there."

It's like us building the Ark, which has already been built by Christ, but let just say we're going to go and arrange our place in the Ark. Which seems a lot worse than the house I just left to come sit in the Ark. I'm going to get all the ridicule that Noah got, let's put it this way, that Christ received, just like he is ridiculed, we're going to be ridiculed. We're going to be there because what we're really preparing for is to be saved in the future. Now you say you're saved now, but all that means is you got your place on the Ark. Really you're going to know you're saved when God sits there before humanity and separates humanity into two groups like a shepherd would separate the sheep from the goats. And you're going to say, now I'm saved. Right? We just need to prepare for that day by trusting in Christ, and then the promise says you are saved. How is that? You're only saved by the promise of God, and then one day your salvation will be realized. You've got to know that salvation, though it's based on the past, it's predicated and founded on the past work of Christ, it is now effectuated legally, if you will, as adopted children, knowing that when the judgment comes we're not going to be judged. That's the good news of the gospel. But it's all based on a promise. That's why this passage starts with a great little quote, I mean, literally from the Greek version of the Old Testament in Psalm 116, the Septuagint we call it, and he just quotes it verbatim, and he says, you know, "I believed, and so I spoke." And if you don't believe it, that's the problem.

So let's just start with that. Number one on your outline, let's make sure you believe the Bible. Number one, "Make Sure You Believe the Bible." If you don't believe the Bible, and I mean really believe what it says, then we got a problem. Turn with me once you jot that down to Second Peter Chapter 1, and let's just remember what the Bible claims to be. And it claims to be this for good reason. And this is why it's unique from the "Koran" or the "Pali Canon" or any of the religious writings or the "Book of Mormon" or whatever you got, you know, "Science and Health, Key to the Scriptures," you name it. You can write a book and say this is a God book. But it's not just a series of statements like Confucius says. This is not how this is. The Bible is a set of narratives about a group of people whom God has called out and given a promise to them, and the promise now is punctuated by promises that are in the near field. This is why the Bible wasn't written in 20 years. It was written over 1,400 years, by 40 different authors, all of it consolidating systematic truth about God and ourselves and the future and the past. All these things are given to us over a long period of time so we can see that God is calling the shots before it actually happens. Some of it is hundreds of years, like, you know, the Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem it says in Micah Chapter 5, and he's born in Bethlehem. Well, that's a big gap. But how about Jeremiah saying, well, the Babylonian captivity is going to last for 70 years, and then it lasts 70 years. And we're reading about that in our Daily Bible Reading now with Ezra and Nehemiah, and now into Esther. All of that is the fulfillment of God's promises.

And we've seen that even from Deuteronomy, as Moses writes it, a thousand years later when we see the Babylonian captivity to start with. All of that was prophesied by God through



Moses. We've got to understand how the Bible works. It's something that should get your attention. It's the best-selling book, the Bible. It's the first book ever to roll off the printing presses. It's THE most propagated book in all of history because it is something that claims a unique place and proves it with predictive prophecy. Take a look at this, Second Peter Chapter 1. Let's look at verse 19, and I could get into all the context if I had more time, but he's talking about his ministry. Peter, of course, traveled around with Jesus, he was there at the Mount of Transfiguration. But in essence, you can summarize all of it, not just the prophetic voice that was fulfilled in saying, "This is my beloved Son," but look at verse 19. "We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed." Now the point is that everything about the first coming of Christ fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament. The Messiah himself was just by name the fulfillment of all that God was going to do in bringing a Savior and a King and a spokesperson to the world. Prophet, priest, and king, Messiah, and that means he's anointed, that's what the word means. He's set apart and anointed and branded with the authentication, the imprimatur, if you will, of God. And here is this person, and this person now is the Messiah. It fulfills all the prophetic promises, at least most of them about who he is.

Now, the reigning part is yet to come, and we live between those advents. But in verse 19, "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed," because we've seen it play out. "to which," by the way, "you will do well to pay attention." Not only to pay attention, right? You better buy it. You better believe it because it's proven to be true. "As to a lamp shining in a dark place." Now that's important because right now we have a lamp that is shining. Every church is called a lamp or a lampstand. And we're supposed to be burning brightly in a culture that when they go and say on their podcasts and their newscasts and their commentaries about it, we say, no, here's the truth. We're a lampstand because what we're doing is we're shining forth the prophetic truth of God, not only the past, but what he says now about how to live in the present and everything he's promised about the future. We are supposed to shine brightly. We are like a lamp in a dark place, that's the Word which we're echoing and magnifying and giving a voice to here in our generation, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart." Now that's a bizarre way to put it, it's poetic and all that and I get it. Literarily we could talk about its beauty but what we're trying to say here, what it was being said here's there's one day when no one will need little lampstands all over the United States or around the world to shine the light of the truth, because the light himself, as it's put in the book of Revelation, is Christ. And when Christ comes back, no one's going to deny everything that we said.

Right now, we are saying between the advents, Christ is coming again. That is the basic promise of what's going to happen. And all the time that we have now to figure out whether or not we're going to repent and put our trust in Christ is going to be over. Christ is going to come back. He's going to set up a kingdom. And at that point, there will be no question. As I said last week, "Every knee will bow," "in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord," and the light will be flooding the world. The truth of God will be flooding the world. And no one's going to have a podcast and say it ain't so, because it's going to be so evidently so. So it's going to rise as Christ appears, and day is going to dawn. But right now we have these lampstands. And what are we doing? We're amplifying this message, "knowing this first of all," what we're amplifying, verse 20, "that no



prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation." Most people think, go to Saddleback and take a Bible as literature class or some high school, they're going to talk about how this is man's best thoughts about God. What man is doing is trying to figure out how to interpret God, well, let me just think, as they gaze into the sky and they figure... That's what they think the Bible is. And right here it says, that's not what it is. This is not what the prophetic word is. "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation."

The difference between us musing about the divine, the opposite of that is the biblical word "revelation." God reveals truth, and he reveals the truth to these authors. That's the next verse. "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 we're not interpreting God, but God is revealing himself. That is revelation. And then God is carrying these people along to write these things, to speak to them first. They speak from God, and then they write these words down. And as it says in Second Timothy 3, all of these written Scriptures, ta grafe, all the writings, they're breathed out by God. And this is a special group of 66 books, 40 authors, over 1,400 years, as it's given to us from Moses to John on Patmos. This big span of time as God is carrying these people along to write these things. And we're proclaiming that. And as those lampstands burn, more people are attracted to the light. And, as they come in here, they join us to the glory of God, as we just read in Second Corinthians Chapter 4, and we build on top of what the foundation, it uses the analogy in Ephesians Chapter 2 as we're a building, like bricks in a building. Another person comes in, another brick in the building, and the foundation, verse 20 says in Ephesians Chapter 2, is the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ himself is the chief cornerstone, but the apostles and prophets gave us this prophetic word. Well, God gave us the prophetic word as he carried these authors along. And so the result is the Holy Spirit's work.

Therefore, we know the third person of the Godhead is giving the words of the first person of Godhead as though he were speaking to them himself. This is a great text. Very important that you understand that. Revelation to apostles and prophets. Writings that we often call inspiration, because we look at Second Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16, and the old translation used to say inspiration, but today most people think inspiration is, you were inspired yesterday to clean the garage. That is not what inspiration means. Inspiration means to "breathe out," which comes from "Exspirare." That's the Latin word that the word "Theopenustos" came into the Latin exspirare, and exspirare in Latin means to breathe out. So does theopenustos, just to breathe out. And the compound here of God breathes is why I just love that the New International Version and the English Standard Version have started to translate this that way. Instead of using the word "inspiration," they use "God-breathed." So we've got revelation, then God breathes, as it says here, as God's Spirit carries these authors along to speak and write the truth of God's Word.

And it's not just the Old Testament, it's the New Testament, as Peter says. When it comes to the Scriptures, people "twist to their own destruction," as they do in Paul's writings. And he says, and they do that "twisting to their own destruction as they do other Scriptures," the rest of the Scripture. New Testament writings, Old Testament writings, 66 books, all of this, and don't start talking about my grandma has more books in her Bible, you know, it didn't happen



until the Council of Trent that the Catholics wanted to give a blue ribbon to this set of books called the Apocrypha. And they said, we're going to add these 14 books because you know they say a few things that'll help us justify the sale of indulgences during the 15th, 16th centuries. Don't go there, it's a different sermon, but... Sixty-six books are what we have. And everyone understood that until the 16th century, in the middle of the 16th century, the Council of Trent. And I'm not listening to the Council of Trent. I'm a Protestant. Did you know that? I'm a Protestant. I'm not wearing robes. They're too hot. I would never make it outside. The idea of us looking at the Bible is different than anything else and try to and find something... Read the Koran. Read it from cover to cover. Number one, you'll be going, wow, what was that? This is not like the Bible where we have a linear story of a narrative that is punctuated with predictive prophecies that we see coming true, not only throughout the prophetic writings, but even into New Testament times, that 400-year gap, and then things that he promises in the future, and we think, well, the batting average of God is perfect.

I think when he says we're going to get you on this thing called Christ, we are going to fly you to a destination called the kingdom of God, and here are all the things I'm going to do for you, and it's going to be great. Psalm 16 verse 11, "in the presence of God there's fullness of joy." It's going to be great. All of that, don't doubt it because we're sitting there and the flight is delayed in our minds, right? Or somehow there are all these gate changes. I mean, this is ridiculous for us to abandon our hope. And if you have any doubts, you're never going to speak. You've got to speak because you believe. And I just want to stop and say you better believe. That's why we have this bookstore. It's not there to make money. And trust me, it doesn't make money, you can see the P&L if you want to see the P&L of the bookstore. It doesn't make any money because I've committed to making sure that you don't say, well, I'll get it on Amazon. \$1 less than Amazon on everything there because I want you to thumb through the books and I want to buy books. And many of the books are about us making sure that we understand that the Bible is a unique book. Study, make sure you understand this. It stands head and shoulders above the rest.

Jot these references down, three of them from Acts, and I could give you 30. I mean, there are so many passages like this, but let me just give you a sampling. And I'll quote them for you, just jot them down. I'll go through them really fast. Acts Chapter 1 verse 16. I'm quoting it for you. "The Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David." When they're quoting Scripture, which, by the way, Acts is the only narrative that we have, barring the Gospels, of course, the narrative about Christ, but the only narrative we have about the Church. When the Church handled the Scriptures, they said things like this, the Holy Spirit said this through the mouth of David, so this is really the Holy Spirit's words. Now, we're just reading a psalm, so we've got to credit David with this because it's a Davidic psalm. Or how about this? Acts 3:18, Acts 3:18, "God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets." Now, it was God who foretold these things, right? As he carried the prophets along and he "foretold by the mouths of all the prophets," which is what the word, by the way, navi, the word in Hebrew, "prophet" means. It means "mouthpiece." These were the mouthpiece of God. Or how about this one? Acts Chapter 4 verses 24 and 25. O sovereign Lord, "who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said", the sovereign Lord says through the mouth of David these things. That's how you need to read your Bible. If you go and take a class, Bible as literature, that's not how



you're going to read the Bible. You got to read the Bible as if this is a book punctuated by something that men cannot do. We cannot tell the future with accuracy. And these are the people who did it, not because they were using their own interpretation of God, but because God was revealing the truth to them and they were carried along to speak it and write it. And we have the result of it, the ta graphē, the Scriptures, and the Scriptures speak to us "as to a light shining in a dark place." We hold on to it because right now it's only a promise, but one day the promises will be fulfilled and the day will dawn. And all the things we hope for will dawn like the day star will "shine in our hearts" and we'll be like, yes, it's finally here. You better believe the Bible. You better believe it. And if not, it's just not going to work. You are just a fair-weathered Christian. As it says in the Parable of the Seed and the Sower, as I quoted last week, when "persecution comes because of the Word," the soil that doesn't have any root, it falls away. And you will never be back in church. You will eventually bail out. God, a faithful God, has made promises and he's made them and recorded them in his Word. That's why the Bible is unique among all religious texts.

Believe and speak. Look at our text again, Second Corinthians Chapter 4. I love this. "It is all for your sake." And it's true in a sense. Everything that Paul is doing in giving New Testament truth, which is based on Old Testament truth, it's all for their sake. Corinthians in the first century, in this Greco-Roman society, yes, it's all for them. And all the hassle to go through to bring it to you, that's all for them. And Paul says, even personally, I've filled up in my flesh, as he says to the Colossians, all the sufferings and afflictions that we're lacking in Christ. So I'm going through the hassle to bring you the Word. And right now, people are going through the hassle of bringing you the Word. And a bunch of you went through a hassle to bring our little kids the Word about sin and about God this week. We go through all that hassle because we're giving the Word of God to people, and all that Word is for them. There is a universal applicability. Let's put it this way. Number two, "See the Bible's Universal Relevance." If we see that, we'll understand that God wants to extend grace to more and more people. That's what verse 15 says. It's all for your sake, "so that as grace extends to more and more it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God."

Nothing will be better than picturing this, the Ark floating and a bunch of people being in it and the Ark being full. Full of people saved from the judgment of God. That'll be good. And a lot of people will rejoice. And all of the truth, the reason, just look at it just in terms of the eight people who were saved in the Ark, all of that prophecy that was given, all the revealing of truth to Noah about the future was given for him. And you know it was also given for everybody made in the image of God whom he spoke to. He was a preacher of righteousness. He went out there and I'm sure told them why he was doing this crazy thing because they'd never seen rain on the earth, the Bible clearly says, which makes perfect sense if you study all the things that are said about weather and all the rest in terms of what happens after the flood. That's a whole other sermon, but it makes perfect sense. And here what we have are a bunch of people who should have gotten on the Ark, but they didn't get on the Ark. And that's where you see a passage like this and you say, what do you mean that grace extends to more and more people? Well, you talked about the elect and chosen and all that predestination stuff. That's why... Listen, all of this, the revealed will of God, is that people everywhere should repent. All people everywhere should repent, this is the revealed will of



God that everybody at your office, everybody in your neighborhood, everybody in your family should come to repentance. That is God's revealed will. And we should say that's what we're passionate about doing.

We'll get into more of that in the second half of Second Corinthians Chapter 5. But right now what we are saying is, do you understand that's an interesting, helpful thing? Because when we sit around and talk about Christianity, some of us just come and retreat into the church, say now we're finally in a place where we can talk about this, and it applies to all of us because we're Christians. It's like you finding some new electric charging station for your electric car and you say, oh, this is so great. We didn't have one here, and I can't believe we didn't have one, but now we've got one. It's right here. And you start telling all your friends who have electric cars, because that's what makes sense. Don't come to me and talk about electric charging stations. I don't care, because I don't have an electric car. It doesn't have any applicability to me. And you may think that way about the Bible, but that is not how it works.

Turn with me to Acts Chapter 17. The message we have has a universal relevance. Universal relevance. And it's our job to tell everyone, to make sure that everyone hears. That's the point of biblical Christianity. Acts Chapter 17, go down to verse 26. "God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined the allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God." Read that again. We've got Adam, he's the first man. He gets a wife, Eve. She's the mother of all. That's what she's called in Genesis. And from that family, "every nation of mankind is living on the face of the earth and God determined," when they would be born and where they would be born, their "allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God." So God places everyone on the timeline, puts everyone in geography and all the nations that they might... So does God want to see Canadians seek God? I guess so. Right? Yes! How about people from Orange County, California? Yes. The determined boundaries and people in the 21st century? Yes, they're all given a place on the timeline in a particular region so that they might seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. That's what God wants. Yet, he's not actually far from each of us, he's right here! "In him we live and move and have our being."

They're sitting there rejecting Christ in their brains designed by God with all the chemicals in their brains and synapses firing in their brains, all the electrical impulses, breathing and oxygenating their blood, making sure, hoping it's within the 95 percentile, having all their capillaries working, the proteins and enzymes and all the cells reproducing, all of that. God made all that and they're sitting around saying I don't know if I should believe in God or not. God says I've made you and I'm keeping you alive and I want you to know me. Next verse, "Even as some of your own poets have said, 'For indeed we are his offspring.'" Let's put it that way. Everyone made who you know, every human being is made in the image of God. Do you remember that old story Jesus says when they're asking about paying taxes and he says give me a coin, takes the coin and he says, whose image is this? And they said Caesar's. He said, great. Give to Caesar what's Caesar's and give to God what's God's. You do know, of course, what's happening there, right? Yeah, there's an image on this. Caesar is asking for your



money? Fine, great. But the image really is about the powerful second half of that that he doesn't clearly define but you should clearly understand, right? The imprint of God is on every human heart as Solomon put it in Ecclesiastes, eternity has been set in our hearts. We understand something about the transcendence that God gave us. We think about the future. We think about where we came from. We think about if there is a God, we think about where we might be headed. We have all these experiences that your dog and your snake and your hamster, they don't have that. Your tree doesn't have that, the two-by-fours that hold up your ceiling, they don't have any of that. You have that because the imprint of God is on you. You're made in God's image.

That doesn't mean the shape of who you are, it doesn't mean your height, it doesn't mean your hair, it doesn't mean your fingernails. It means that God has created you to be a lot like him and he wants you to know him, to seek him, that you can find him. That's what he wants. And I'm saying everyone you know is made in the image of God, everyone. The applicability of what we're trying to do, holding out a lamp in a dark place. Here's the light of the truth of the Bible. Everyone you know, this is relevant to everyone. Then he says this, you guys are worshiping in these temples, it's ridiculous. Verse 30, so stop being ridiculous. "The times of ignorance God has overlooked, but now he commands," look at this, "all people everywhere to repent." Now there are two piled-up superlatives here, "all" and "everywhere." "All people everywhere to repent." In your office building? Yes, all people everywhere. See, for us to be right with the living God, we got to start with the problem of sin and we have to repent. How applicable is that? It's applicable to everybody. So if you're sitting there stroking your beard and saying to yourself, well, I believe in predestination and all that, so I'm not interested in all this. Well, then get ready for Chapter 5 of Second Corinthians. Because if you have the views that you have because you find them in Scripture and you see them taught by Paul, well, let's just make sure we act like Paul. And Paul is passionate about making sure that everyone hears the gospel. He's been fueling the mission's passion for 2,000 years now. Why? Because God's commanding all people everywhere to repent.

And if you want to put some teeth to that, and there are certainly teeth in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, we'll get to that. A lot of previews here to what's coming, "because he's fixed today," verse 31, "on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man who is appointed; and of this he's given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." So all these promises about what's coming, to say turn or burn, which I know is very distasteful, but there's some truth to that, pithy, not a great marketing strategy, but we want you to turn. That's called repentance so you don't go to hell. That's burn, right? So it makes perfect sense, and the proof of it is that the predictions of the Old Testament regarding the indomitable life of Christ, it took place in real time. He was buried by professional executioners after they killed him, he was buried then, and he rose from the dead on the third day. All of that in concert with Scripture, as Luke Chapter 24 says, as Acts Chapter 3 says, this is what the Bible teaches, and we now say all the promises about the future that we're going to have to face this man, who's also God, and all judgments given from the Father to the Son, as John's Gospel clearly records, this is relevant to your neighbor. Even if they're lost, it's relevant to the neighbor that you should call them to repentance. That they need the light and the lamp of the truth of



God's prophetic Word coming through your mouth and your life. See the Bible's universal relevance.

And I love the way this ends in the bottom of verse 15, back in Second Corinthians Chapter 4, because it brings glory to God. Not only will you be thankful, remember the baptism services I made you envision last week? When you see someone whom you have invested in and you've given the truth of the gospel and they come to repentance, you're going to be thankful. Just like all of us are going to be thankful. When the baptismal service is filled with baptisms and testimonies, we're all thankful and it glorifies God. They all "confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Expanding success, that's what we want. I give you some psalms, I think, in the discussion questions, do I not? Let me see if I wrote the discussion question down. Psalm 67, I make you start there. What a great text. I won't make you turn there now, but I just did. Wow. It's just, you should optimistically enjoy your role as someone declaring something that one day won't be a little light in the dark place, but it will be the dawning of day. And you're just saying it ahead of time. Talk about being on the right side of history. Psalm 67. And if you're an overachiever, you can jot down these psalms, too. These are great. Psalm 113, Psalm 50, at least the first five verses are so good. See the Bible's universal relevance.

Three verses left, verse 16, "So we do not lose heart. Though the outer self is wasting away," because there's opposition, there's pushback, there is fatigue, we don't like rejection, we don't like ridicule, "our inner self is being renewed day by day." I hope it is. Why? Because we believe the truth of this message. "For this light momentary affliction," which really is a lot of pain, we're given over to "sheep to be slaughtered" in this generation. I get that. That's what it says in Romans Chapter 8. But still in verse 18 of Romans Chapter 8 says the same exact thing. It's going to be so good. It's "preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." Romans 8:18 is one of my favorites, right? The problems that we face being Christians in our generation are nothing compared to the greatness of what God's going to do when we meet him. So, let's just stop complaining so much about gate changes and let's think about where we're going. As we look not to the things that are seen, verse 18, but to the things that are unseen. Because the things that are seen are transient. The things that were unseen, like in my mind where I was going in this week's meeting, I had no idea where I was going. I mean, I knew what city I was getting off in, but I didn't know where I was going. I was going to get picked up at the curb and whisked away to some place. I could have been going who knows where, but I believed the person who told me, I'm going to make all the arrangements and I'm going to get you there. I'll arrange for you to get from the airport to the city and from the city I will get you to where I need you to be and just trust me. And I did and I trusted him and I didn't let any of the hassles at the airport mess this up.

And speaking of the Berners I remember flying with the Berners was one time speaking of bad experiences at the Orange County Airport. We went there to fly to do some work in North Texas and we were delayed. And it wasn't the delay like I had this week where was delayed 45 minutes to an hour. We were delayed for nine hours at John Wayne Airport. Nine hours. I mean, Carlynn and I were smart enough to drive home, right? We live close enough, it's just



like, let us know if you ever get around to flying a plane today and we'll come back. But I'll tell you what, we didn't give up on the trip. Do you understand? You can't give up on the trip, depending on who it is who has called you to it and how important it is. And nothing could be more important than you hearing, "Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Put it this way, number three, "Align Your Priorities with Eternal Realities." Number three, align your priorities with eternal biblical realities. We only learn about those realities because God has revealed them and carried his prophets and apostles along to write them. And I'm quoting Scripture because that's my job to quote to you as a spokesperson of the Bible here's what the Bible says. Here's what the Bible means. Here's how you put the Bible to work in your life. That's my whole job.

And your job, along with my job, is to make sure we appropriate all of that and say that should help prioritize my life. I'm going to make decisions based on the eternal realities. And the eternal realities aren't the things you see. It's not the hassles. It's not the suffering. It's not the problems. It's not the pushback. It's not the criticism. It's not the loss. What really matters is what's eternal. And I've tried to say it enough for you so you never forget it, it is not about the "here and now," it's all about the "then and there." And that's what real Christianity is about. "In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart." Yeah, can I live as though I'm not depressed in this world? I should be able to because I'm taking heart because he's "overcome the world." Well, it doesn't look like it. Ask John the Baptist. John the Baptist has to send two of his disciples to say, hey Jesus, "are you the one ... or shall we look for another?" Did that ever make you think what's wrong with you, John? You of all people should know. Well, why did he send messengers? Because he couldn't go himself. Why? Because he's under arrest. And eventually his head would be decapitated and brought into a party on a platter.

So I get why you're thinking maybe this isn't all that it was cracked up to be. But Jesus continued to impress upon us, it's not about the "here and now," John. It's about the "then and there." "Take heart; I've overcome the world." That means it's all based on God's faithful promises. And you better believe God's faithful promises by number one, just believing the veracity of Scripture itself, studying it enough to know I have the Word of God here. It doesn't matter what I feel. It doesn't matter what the world says. It doesn't matter my disappointments. It doesn't matter how long it's delayed. It doesn't matter how much hassle I'm going to have. I'm going to hang in there and get as many people to join me on this trip as possible. Because I know what's happening. There will come a day after you walk down the jet bridge onto the plane, when the world's going to explode. Read about it in the last book of the Bible. It's not going to be good. And it will just be the foretaste of God's judgment on a sinful world. So let's endure the cost. Let's endure the cost.

I've got to turn you to Romans Chapter 10, can I do that? I think I can, if you'll turn there, then it'll be a success. Romans Chapter 10. What's great, if you combine this with Acts Chapter 17, in Acts Chapter 17 Paul's saying, yeah, you know what? You "live and move and have our being." He's talking to non-Christians here. You're sustained by God himself. You didn't make the veins in your arm. You couldn't, you know, restring the nerve endings in your fingers, right? You are made by God, sustained by God, and now this is the other side of it. You Christians who are supposed to reveal the truth to them, well, you have all that you need too.



I love this. Verse 8. What does it say? Now, he's going to quote the Old Testament because this is how the Old Testament speaks once they had the law given to Moses, right? This is the Deuteronomy affirmation that the Word is just right here. You have it now. And he says, "the word is near you, in your mouth and your heart." You've been taught it. You're Christians in Rome, and I know you're surrounded by darkness, but you're a light in a dark place. You know the truth. You know the Word. "That is the word of faith that we proclaim." You've responded rightly to it. "Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart," verse 9 says, "that God raised him from the dead, you'll be saved." You will have a spot on this plane and we're going to get there, "for with the heart one believes and is justified." God clears your sin and makes you righteous in his legal forensic roll book. "And with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

Now it becomes real to you, you own it, and you're willing to talk about it. And "Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame,'" and never could it be more true when you think about eternal realities. "For there's no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all." That's why this is universally applicable. It has relevance for everyone you know. He is the Lord of all those people and everyone's going to bow. We just want them to bow now. Because then they'll be saved, "bestowing his riches on all who call on him." I want my friends and my relatives and my coworkers to call on him. "'For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How will they call on him in whom they've not believed?" Right? They're never going to get this from belief in their heart to confessing with their mouth unless they have this experience, they got to believe it. "How are they going to believe," middle of verse 14, "in him whom they've never heard? And how are they going to hear without someone preaching?" You may stumble over this truth, but the Church generation that went before us didn't. That's why we still have as limping along as many of them are, evangelical missions still at work with people who we will never meet in this world where we are funding people as our church is here that you'll never meet this side of heaven where we're trying to get the word out to people so that they'll hear the name of Christ, so that they'll hear about the message of the gospel.

And it keeps going. "How are they to hear without," someone telling them, "someone preaching," them, someone proclaiming it? "And how are they to preach unless they're sent?" Praise God we're in the process of doing that here. "As is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.'" These are our heroes. They're going out and they're sharing on foreign mission fields. But you know what? We have our own mission field. John Chapter 4, Matthew Chapter 9, "fields that are white for harvest." And we have millions of people here in Orange County who need to hear the truth. First Peter Chapter 1 says you haven't seen him, but you believe in him, right? You still don't see him, but you love him, and you're willing to proclaim this because you know it's based on God's own revelation. This is the truth that we share. The fatigue, the frustration, it shouldn't get us to be down and out. It just shouldn't.

In the mid-50s, polio was the feared disease. Kids were losing the use of their legs, children were dying. This was the pandemic going on at that time. Dr. Jonas Salk, as you may know, in 1955, came up with an effective, safe, clearly effective vaccine. And once that started to get



out, it was like everyone said we found the answer. This is it, this works. No one had to coerce anyone, you didn't need a big high-dollar marketing campaign. You didn't have to have the president go on TV and threaten people to take it. No, nobody's taking me up on that one. OK. Sorry, I should have kept that out. Everyone just heard that it worked, they saw that it works, and everyone was campaigning for this. This is it. If you want to protect your kids, if you want to make sure polio goes away, let's take this. And by God's grace, the polio rate was a non-issue because of this safe, effective, effectual thing. You've just got to get it. Just like getting on the Ark, we know this. It floats, and it's going to save you. And in our case, Christ is the cross that takes our sin away. He has become sin for us so that we who are in Christ "might become the righteousness of God." This is an amazing transaction. And what we need is the strength to believe it, to fully believe it and have our priorities aligned with it as we see its universal relevance.

Let's pray. God, please help us as Christians in this day to be faithful, to know that the book that we have is not one that we can just drop into and reference a verse here and there, but one we have to believe because it's true. And God, if we haven't done enough research or work just to even get to that place, I pray that you would help us. Give us the strength that Ephesians Chapter 3 verse 18 says, a "strength to comprehend with all the saints" to get the understanding of the truth of your Word. And I pray it would happen so that we might have, even those who sit here week in and week out and say they believe it, may they have such an ardent, resolute faith in the truthfulness of your Word that we speak. We speak no matter what the cost. And even if the outer person of our life has to take a few dents, that we would be growing stronger and more enthusiastic on the inner man. Knowing that the things that we see here in this life for Paul, it was the aches and pains of being opposed and being hated and being run out of town and having rocks thrown at him, they're not eternal. Things that are eternal are the things that you've written and revealed in your Word. And we look forward to the fruition of all that as we look back on the first coming and anticipate the second.

In Jesus' name. Amen.