

7/8/12 (The Reason for God #12) **God's Word Can Be Trusted** (part 3)

Slide:

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, a drop in the bucket, a fly in the ointment, a leopard cannot change its spots, a wolf in sheep's clothing, escaping by the skin of my teeth, killing the fattened calf, going the extra mile, our days are numbered, the writing on the wall, as old as the hills, give up the ghost, pride goes before the fall, no rest for the wicked, the apple of his eye, salt of the earth, feet of clay, sour grapes, and so on...

Folks, what do all those phrases have in common? They are all everyday phrases that are used by all kinds of people, and they all come straight from the Bible – even though many of the people who are using those phrases have no idea of their origin. The Bible is without doubt the most important and influential and best-selling book of all time and it makes the greatest promise of all time, that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will have eternal life. That promise deserves your attention. It deserves your research. It deserves your study. That's why we've taken three weeks of this apologetics series to talk about the fact that God's Word Can Be Trusted. So far we've said that

Slide: 1. God's Word can be Trusted Textually.

We know from the discoveries within the Dead Sea Scrolls and from the science of textual criticism that even after hundreds of years of copying, the texts that we have in the Bible have absolutely been preserved accurately. We also know that

Slide: 2. God's Word can be Trusted Historically.

As Paul Maier says, "archaeology is the Bible's best friend." It has shown that the writers of Scripture were by far the best historians of all time. Again and again, they got **right** what everybody else got **wrong**. In both cases it's because the Bible writers and the Bible copiers, knew what they were dealing with. They knew...

Slide: 3. God's Word can be Trusted to be God's Word.

And they were not going to mess with God's Word. 400 times in the Old Testament the Bible says,

Slide: Prophets – "This is what the Lord says"

Jesus promised – "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13 NIV)

The Apostle Paul said - "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit..." (1 Corinthians 2:13 NIV)

Peter said - "We did not follow cleverly invented stories...,we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." (2 Peter 1:16 NIV)

Folks, there are many writers of the Bible, but there is only one author, as Paul says to Timothy:

Slide: "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV)

It can be trusted to be God's Word. But the only way you're going to know that for sure is to read it for yourself. All the evidence in the world will do you no good until you encounter the Author in the pages of His book.

Then finally last week we warned you that

Slide: 4. God's Word can be Trusted to Challenge you.

Yes, there will be things in God's Word that are difficult to understand. But the most challenging things are the things that we do understand...when our behavior gets

challenged...when we are challenged to live God's way instead of our way. And today I want to continue that thought and say:

Slide: 5. God's Word Can Be Trusted to Change you.

At one point in dealing with His disciples, Jesus got a little frustrated with them and their egos and said:

Slide: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3 NIV)

Folks, those were Jesus' closest followers who had been receiving Rabbinical training with Him for almost three years at that point. And they were in danger of losing their immortal souls because their pride was standing in the way of humbly receiving the Grace of God standing before their eyes in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. If the disciples needed to change, the 12 men who changed the world, don't you think you and I might need to be changed?...

In *The Reason for God*, Timothy Keller passes on a story from Andrew Delbanco, a humanities professor at Columbia University: "Some years ago he was doing research on Alcoholics Anonymous and was attending AA meetings around the country. One Saturday morning in a New York City church basement he was listening to a "crisply dressed young man" who was talking about his problems. In his narrative he was absolutely faultless. All his mistakes were due to the injustice and betrayals of others. He spoke of how he was going to avenge himself on all who had wronged him. "His every gesture gave the impression of grievously wounded pride," Delbanco wrote. It was clear that the young man was trapped in his need to justify himself, and that things could only get worse and worse in his life until he recognized this. While he was speaking, a man in his forties, in dreadlocks and dark shades, leaned over to Delbanco and said, "I used to feel that way too, before I achieved low self-esteem."

Folks, please remember: "God can't change you into who He wants you to be if you are pretending to be that person already." ... If you somehow think you've arrived. We don't need "self-esteem." We need the esteem of God, and the love of God and we have it. When you let the Word of God fill you, when you let it push out the words and opinions of the world, that is the beginning of a truly changed life that God can use to accomplish great things. From your knees you can see much farther. Certainly from that perspective we can see and believe that...

Slide: 6. God's Word can be Trusted to Save you.

When Paul was instructing the young pastor Timothy, he reminded him:

Slide: "...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15 NIV)

I said at the start of this series, we're not just after information with this, and we're not just interested in winning an intellectual battle. We talked about the fish wars with our bumper stickers...

Slide: The Christian fish, the Darwin fish, the Christian fish eating the Darwin fish, the flying spaghetti monster...

Where does it end? I saw a good cartoon on the Answers in Genesis website that warns us about this. Here's the Christian fish turning into a shark:

Slide: "And they'll know we are Christians by our..."

...what? By our intellectual superiority? By our point/counterpoint? No. "By our love."

Folks, please understand that this picture (Christian shark) is not the purpose of this series and the purpose of apologetics... to somehow win the fish wars, to **crush** the opposition. Our job is to **save** the opposition. Again, Paul advised Timothy:

Slide: “25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:25–26 NIV)

Folks, the devil has **“taken captive”** skeptics and atheists, some of your friends, your family, your neighbors, your co-workers. So we’re not trying to **defeat** them, we’re trying to **save** them. We’re on a rescue mission. That’s why we’re taking the time to become equipped, to learn how to give answers to those who ask us to give the reason for the hope that we have. But we are committed to doing that with gentleness and respect. And when we deliver the Word of God in that fashion we can absolutely trust it for salvation. In the Armor of God series I did earlier this year, we talked about the “Helmet of Salvation” that God wants all of us to wear. The helmet is key in battle because it keeps your head on straight. So how do you put on the helmet of salvation? Simple. Read His word! And here’s some verses that might be helpful along those lines.

Slide: “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be **saved**;” (Mark 16:16 NASB)

Slide: “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be **saved**,” (John 10:9 NASB)

Slide: “AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE **SAVED**.” (Acts 2:21 NASB)

Slide: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be **saved**,” (Acts 16:31 NASB)

Slide: “...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be **saved**;” (Romans 10:9 NASB)

You know, words mean things. When you say “may” in a document, it means it **might** happen, or you **can** do something. But when you say “shall”, that means it **“shall”** be. It’s going to happen. There’s no doubt.

Slide: highlight “shall bes”

And God obviously wants you to have the certainty of salvation, because of your faith in Jesus Christ who paid the price for your sin on the cross and died in it so that you can be forgiven and forever freed from it. Folks, feed your faith on God’s Word and your doubts will starve.

We know that

Slide: 7. God’s Word Can Be Trusted to Accomplish God’s Purposes.

And this can be a tough one. As we saw in the reading earlier (Luke 8:4-15), sometimes the seed of God’s Word falls on unproductive soil and it fails to bear fruit. I thought of that this week as I surveyed my dried up lawn. If you go out there right now with bare feet, the bumps are liable to make you wish you hadn’t. And I like a relatively smooth lawn, so how about if I would have hitched up the roller to the tractor and rolled my lawn?

Slide: pic

I could have rolled that thing all day and night and it would have done nothing but bounce around on the rock hard bumps! And sometimes we think it’s that way with God’s Word – that there are just some people that are so hard, that the Word is never going to sink in, that it’s not worth bothering. But I find it interesting that the sower in the parable **bothered**. He didn’t stop sowing when it came to the path or the rocky soil or the thorny soil. He just stayed with it. And

we need to do the same. Sometimes in your witnessing to someone it just doesn't seem worth it. But God tells us very clearly in His Word:

Slide: “10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10–11) NIV)

We have absolutely no idea how God's Word is going to work in each case – or how long it may remain dormant in somebody's life, but we have God's promise that He is going to do something with it and we have to hold Him to that promise. We going to talk more about that in a series I'm going to start when I get back from vacation. We're going to work very hard on learning how to bring that message of salvation to everyone we know and whose life we touch. Finally,

Slide. 8. God's Word Can Be Trusted to Outlast every critic.

I love this clip from the post-apocalyptic movie “The Book of Eli”, a story of one man carrying the last remaining Bible on a journey across the continent.

Slide: Psalm 23 clip

...And it will be around long after every one of us is gone, whether that's a few hours from now or thousands of years, should the Lord tarry. He has promised:

Slide: “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8 NIV)

Again:

Slide: “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken **nor my covenant of peace** be removed,” (Isaiah 54:10 NIV)

Though many have tried and continue to try to remove it...

King Manasseh of Judah led Israel to totally forsake faith in the true God. During his reign, the book of the law of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, totally disappeared from the land. But 20 years after his death, his grandson, Josiah found the lost book of the law in the temple and personally read it to all the people of Israel and led a great revival throughout the land.

Again King Ahab and Queen Jezebel led the Israelites astray and killed the prophets of God to the point where the prophet Elijah claimed: “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” (1 Kings 19:10 NIV) But in just a short time after he said that, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were utterly destroyed along with all the prophets of Baal, and the people returned to the true God.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek emperor Antiochus Epiphanes launched a bloody persecution against the Hebrew people and attempted to completely eradicate the Hebrew Bible. Instead, it resulted in further copying and preserving of God's Word.

In 303 A.D. the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to destroy all Christians and their Bible. The persecution that followed as a result of this edict was one of the most brutal in Roman history. Toward its end, Diocletian ordered a monument to be erected and on it had these triumphant words inscribed, Extincto Nomine Christianorum – “Extinct is the name of Christians.” Twenty-five years later, Diocletian was dead, his successor Constantine had legalized Christianity and had ordered Bibles prepared at government expense.

No one in Europe did as much to destroy faith in the Word of God as the French evolutionist Voltaire. He tied a copy of the Bible to the tail of a donkey, and dragged it through the streets to the city dump, where he publically burned it. Voltaire predicted that within a hundred years of his death (1778) Christianity would be swept from existence. Now two centuries have come and gone, and very few own a copy of Voltaire's writings, but almost every home has a Bible.

The poet Flynn wrote about it this way:

Slide:

They burned Truth in the market place and thought their work complete;
But next day, with a smiling face, they met it on the street.
They threw it in dungeon damp and thought it was no more;
But lo, it walked with lighted lamp Among them as before.
They scorned and ostracized it, And ordered it to depart;
But still it dwelt in all the land And challenged every heart.

Abraham Lincoln wrote about the Bible:

Slide: "All the good from the savior of the world is communicated through this Book; but for this Book we could not know right from wrong. All things desirable to man are contained in it... It is the best gift which God has given to man."

He was absolutely right. So open your mind to receive God's Word, open your mouth to proclaim it, open your wallet to support it – here and throughout the world. And take "the best gift which God has given to man" – take it literally. Take it like this (big bible), take it like this, (little New Testament), take it like this (computer), take it like this (nook), or take it like this (iPod)... but take it, take it with you – and use it...read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it!

God's Word is our great heritage And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way, In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure, We keep its teachings pure Throughout all generations.
Amen.