

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

The Basis For Confident Faith

By

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Matthew 5:17-20

Dr. Harry Ironside tells the story of an elderly gentleman, who was very nearsighted, who prided himself on his ability as an art critic. While accompanying some friends through a large gallery, he sought to display his real or fancied knowledge of pictures to these friends. He had left his glasses at home and was not able to see things very clearly. Standing before a large frame he began to point out the inartistic features of the picture there revealed. "The frame," he said, "is altogether out of keeping with the subject, and as for the subject itself (it was that of a man), it is altogether too homely, in fact, too ugly ever to make a good picture. It is a great mistake for any artist to choose so homely a subject for a picture if he expects it to be a masterpiece." The old gentleman was going on like this when his wife managed to get near enough to interrupt. She exclaimed, "My dear, you are looking into a mirror." As you might well imagine, he was quite taken aback to realize that he had been criticizing his own face. The Word of God is such a mirror. It does not hide our deformities.

No one has a better chance to learn how the Bible finds men out than the missionaries. And what testimonies they give!

Once when Dr. Chamberlain had read to the native of an East Indian city the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, an intelligent Brahmin said to him, "Sir, that chapter was written by one of you missionaries about us Hindus; it describes us exactly." But nobody disputes that that chapter was written 19 centuries ago by the apostle Paul long before missionaries went to India.

At another time a learned Chinese was employed by some missionaries to translate the New Testament into Chinese. At first the work of translating had no effect upon the scholarly Chinese. But after some time he became quite agitated and said, "What a wonderful book this is!" "Why so?" said the missionary. "Because," said the man, "it knows all that is in me. The One who made this book must have made me!"

The Bible begins with these words: **¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. Gen. 1:1-3.**

The first chapter of Genesis takes you by the hand and shows you how God made the heavens and the earth. And how was that? Genesis tells us that he did it by speaking His Word.

No one can explain to my or your complete satisfaction how God accomplished creation by merely voicing his will.

John begins his gospel, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)**

Paul writes in Colossians 1 about Jesus Christ. **¹⁵And He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Col. 1:15-17.**

Men seem to have great difficulty with these very clear and plain statements of scripture. According to these verses of scripture God made all things by the Word of God. The New Testament clearly identifies the Word of God to be Jesus Christ who came into this world in the flesh on a mission of mercy. God the Creator took human form. The Bible tells us why He came and what He did to save men from their sin and the ruin sin brought upon them.

I. The Basis for Confident Faith Is God's Unfailing Word

Jesus had a high and holy view of scripture. In our scripture today from his sermon on the mount he tells us that until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of information contained in the Word of God would fail to be accomplished. In other words, it is absolutely certain that the written Word of God is true, that it is inevitable that it will be fulfilled and that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than it is for the Word of God to fail of fulfillment.

Many find it hard to believe God's promises in the Bible because they think the Bible is just men speaking. And men make promises they do not keep. Men write fiction. Men concoct fairytales. Men rewrite history the way they think it should be. So it is really not any wonder that men will doubt and even disbelieve what God says in His Word. They disbelieve scripture for the same reason they disbelieve men. But Jesus did not have that low, man-centered view of scripture. He believed the scriptures were God breathed and that every word of God either has had or will have fulfillment. He plainly said that there is no way God's Word can be set aside or be reversed or fail in anything it says. ⁸⁹ **Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Psa. 119:89**

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a cardinal without it."

Jesus Christ says in his sermon on the mount that God will judge men by how they believed his Word. The Word of God is sacred because it comes from the mouth of God. If men think so little of what He says that they ignore it or annul it and teach others to do the same they will not stand in the Judgment. Those who say they believe the Word of God but then in fact do not show reverence for it by the way they handle it and obey it will be exposed as hypocrites.

II. Another Basis for Confident Faith is Because Jesus Christ Literarily Fulfilled The Written Word Of God

When Jesus began his public ministry He did not identify with the Jewish leadership but went about with his own chosen disciples and followers. Yet he begins his ministry by saying, **do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.**

He came to exalt the Word of God and the Law of God, and they are one and the same. When Christ speaks of the Law or the Prophets or the Psalms he is speaking of the scriptures of the whole Bible. He intended to magnify the sacred scriptures by doing all that he did in exact performance of the scriptures. The scriptures originated from His Father and He came to fulfill what was written of Him. Isaiah the prophet wrote that he would be despised and forsaken of men; that he would be a man of sorrow and, acquainted with grief; that he would be smitten of God and afflicted and that this would be for His people's transgressions. He would be pierced and crushed for our iniquities. Our chastening would fall on him. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him. He would be cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of his people to whom the stroke was due.

When he commenced his public ministry He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day **And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,**

¹⁸ **"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,**

¹⁹ **TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."**

²⁰**And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21.**

He told the Sadducees that they erred because they did not know the scriptures and the power of God. His every move was to the end that the scriptures might be fulfilled. He refused to let Peter defend him with a sword when they came to arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane. He said, ⁵³**"do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions**

of angels? ⁵⁴"How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" Matt. 26:53-54

Beloved, you cannot separate God from His Word. His Word is the expression of His divine essence and character. His infinite power is expressed in His word. Whatever God speaks is sure to be fulfilled. His Word can never fall to the ground. His Word is a discerner of hearts; it is sharper than a two-edged sword. There is sovereign and majestic authority in the Word of God. When God speaks it is a done deal, an accomplished fact, it stands true forever. And Jesus Himself is that Word of God. How can He not uphold and fulfill His own Word? Whatever He did while on this earth was according to scripture. He over and over affirmed, "It is written and thus it must be!"

The Bible sets forth the Law of God, and the penalty for breaking the Law is death. Jesus did not come to set aside that Law but to be the holy and worthy Substitute to take our place in death. The stroke would fall on Him. God had let his prophets tell of him. The Law of God under Moses instituted a foreshadowing of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice in our stead. All of those animal sacrifices were temporary to point to the ultimate and final substitutionary sacrifice. John the Baptist announced that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

No, Christ did not come to set aside or annul the Word of God. He came to perfectly fulfill the redemptive plan of God by offering himself a sacrifice for sins. Therefore when he comes into the world He says

"SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED,

BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;

⁶ IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE.

⁷ "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME

(IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME)

TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" Heb. 10:4-7

The will of God was the one sacrifice for sins for all time through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, and by that one offering of himself he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit bears witness to this says the writer of Hebrews. The God who sent His Son to fulfill all that was written in the Old Testament has not abolished the Law of God but has affirmed it and glorified it.

We who belong to Him are not freed from the Law, only from the curse of the Law. God now has written his law in our hearts and minds. We love His law, even as we love the Lawgiver, who himself bore our sins on the tree.

Beloved do you love the Law of God and the Word of God as Jesus did? He obeyed it perfectly even when it called for his self sacrifice of Himself. Do you love it enough to study it, to attend upon Bible teaching and preaching? Do you love it enough to help to disseminate it and proclaim it? You can only love the Law of God if you love the Lawgiver. Men who love Jesus Christ will love the Word of God even as He loved the Word of God. Your view of scripture cannot be higher than the view Jesus had. His view was glorious.

When we in faith believe the Word of God that reveals to us the mission and work of Jesus on our behalf, and we embrace that offer of salvation and forgiveness, then we enter into a covenant relationship with God. We are justified in his sight, and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And he writes the law of God on our hearts and in our minds. Now we love the Law like the psalmist who wrote,

⁹⁷ O how I love Your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

Psa. 119:97

¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste!

Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psa. 119:103 ¹⁰⁵

Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path. Psa. 119:105

Jesus said, If ye love me, keep my commandments.

It is told of Edwin Rushworth, who, having been a skeptic all his life resolved to read for an hour a day the book that he had so long derided. "Wife," he said, as he looked up from his first perusal, "If this book is right, we are all wrong!" He continued his readings for another week. "Wife," he exclaimed at the end of that time, "if this book is right, we are lost!" He went on reading with more avidity than ever. "Wife!" he said earnestly a few nights later, "If this book is right, we may be saved!" And they were. And in entering the Kingdom of Heaven, they left all their "ifs" behind them.

The study of the Bible is the most rewarding study that any person can make in his life. I personally do not believe you can know God except by and through His Word.

My prayer for each of you today is that you will love the Lord Jesus Christ and love His Word, all of His Word. My prayer is that God will give to you a high view of scripture, as did His Son. All of God's Word if good, inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior today! Ask him to save you from your sins. Trust in him and make God's Word your basis for confidence in his salvation promise, Adopt a high view of scripture. Make God's Word the Law and Guide for your life.

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