

WHY I PREACH THE BIBLE IS LITERALLY TRUE

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2 Timothy 4:1-2

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Now in these days, four of them, we are going to talk about four "why's" of my own preaching ministry. The first one will be **Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True**; the second, **Why Prayer in the Name of Jesus Means Living the Crucified Life**; the third one, **Why I Am a Premillennialist** and not an amillennialist; and the fourth one, **Why I Am a Fundamentalist** and not a liberal. Those are the four "why's" of my preaching ministry. The second one has a little different turn to it because all day tomorrow, Wednesday, we are in a prayer meeting from eight o'clock in the morning until 8:15 in the evening. And the turn of the lecture tomorrow will be in the sanctuary, where all of the people who will be there with us praying. So the turn also of the message, **Why Prayer in the Name of Jesus Means Living the Crucified Life**.

Now today, **Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True**; I wrote a book about that when I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and this lecture is a repercussion out of all the things that went into the background of the writing of that volume. In Acts 35, in Acts 8:35, the Book says, "And Philip began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." And in Acts 11:13-14, the angel said to Cornelius, "Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and thy house may be saved." In Psalm 119:89: "Forever, O Lord, Thy word *natsab*," you can translate it "settled" as it is in the King James Version, you can translate it "fixed," *natsab*, "fixed"; or you can translate it established, "Forever, O Lord, Thy word is fixed in heaven."

In my first and beginning pastorate out in the country, one of those farmers had a beautiful, fertile farm in the valley of the Leon River. He brought me a book, and he said, "What kind of a book is this?" Somewhere he had picked up a Spanish Bible. And I held it in my hand, and I said, "Why, this is a Bible in Spanish." He said, "I can't read Spanish. What am I going to do with it?" I thought for a moment, and I said, "Well, on your farm in a tenant house is a Mexican family, a large Mexican family," had a lot of children. I said, "You go down there and give this Book to them; and they can read it." So he went down to the tenant house on his expansive farm, and gave that Book to that Mexican family. After the passing of several weeks, when I went out to my little country church to preach, he said, he said, "You know, this family that lives on my place, those tenants, they have come to me saying, 'We have read this Book, and we have given our hearts to the Lord, and we've been saved. And it says in that Book that we ought to be baptized. And we want to be baptized.'" Now he said to me, "That posits a tremendous problem, because we don't have any Mexicans in our church. And I don't know how this is going to be." Well, the racial problems that many areas in the South experienced with Blacks, the same kind of a racial problem we have had in Texas regarding the Mexicans, same thing except over there it'd be black and over here it'd be brown.

Well, I had my first decision to make concerning that in my life. And I said to the deacon, "Well, the Book says that the Lord died for us all; and that includes them. And if they found the Lord, and they want to follow our Savior in baptism, let's accept them." So the man came with his family, and all of his kids, and I baptized the whole tribe of them.

After the passing of several months, I went out to my little country church and the deacon met me, and said, "I want to take you to visit the Mexican family, because since you've been gone" – I preached there every other Sunday – "since you were here last time their house has burned down, and I have them housed in a temporary place, quarters, on my farm. But they want me to bring you to them." Well, I said, "Fine." So I got in his car, and he drove me to a temporary housing for that Mexican family. And when we drove up, why, the father, who was the patriarch in the home, led his little flock, his wife and behind them all of those children, he led them out in a little parade to greet us as we drove up to the temporary home. And as he came out to greet us, he had a Bible, partly burned, in his hand; and held it so beautifully and so tenderly, that Bible that was partly burned. And when I stepped out of the car, why, he came up to me with that partly burned Bible, and holding it so beautifully in his hand, he said, "Pastor, the house burned down, and I rushed into its flames to

rescue one thing: this Holy Word of God. And I just wanted you to see it. This Book brought us the saving life in Christ Jesus."

Isn't that a remarkable thing? Nobody preached to him, nobody visited him about the Lord: you just didn't do that; they were Mexicans. But just because that good deacon gave the family a Bible, the whole little flock came to know Jesus as Savior. It is a remarkable repercussion in the culture and life, domestic, political, social, individual, in every area, it is a remarkable repercussion that the Bible has in the lives of people. And that's my first discussion: God's quickening Word, its marvelous power to convert.

I was preaching, as you know, both in Oklahoma and here in Dallas during World War II. And I would listen to those men as they would speak of their ship going down, or their plane shot out of the sky, and they were washed up on shores of South Pacific islands. And those men, expecting to be confronted by cannibals and Lord only knows what awaited them, they heard people singing the songs of Zion, and they saw little churches in the islands, and some of those American airmen and sailors were won to Christ by natives who were former and recently cannibals. The marvelous change I have seen in Africa, in India, in the Orient, in South America, just by the proclamation of the Word of God is miraculous in itself.

In that Second World War, I received a letter from a pilot, a captain. And in the letter he was telling me how he found Jesus as his Savior. He said, "I picked up your broadcast in my plane, high up in the sky, in Texarkana. And I listened to it until I lost it over Albuquerque, New Mexico." And he said, "Up there in the sky, listening to you preach the Word of God, I bowed my head over the controls of my bomber, and gave my heart to Jesus. I just wanted you to know." What a beautiful and precious testimony!

The universal appeal of the Bible has no end. It's a strange thing: into whatever language the Bible is translated, it seems to be at home. Whenever you translate Dante into English or some other language, you lose nine-tenths of the beauty of its poetic form. Every other translation is like that in human literature except the Bible. I remember hearing of a Hottentot who was talking to one of our American people, and he was commiserating with them: he was feeling sorry for him because he couldn't read John 3:16 in Hottentot. He said, "That's the most beautiful passage in the world." The whole Bible is just like that: whether it is for the learned or for the unlearned, for the sophisticated or the unsophisticated, for the old or the

young, in whatever language it has a wonderful message, a saving, saving Word from God. And it seems to be at home wherever in the world it is preached and read.

I led the prayer at the Baptist World Alliance in London, before John Soren, who is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Rio de Janeiro for a generation, one of the noblest men of God I've ever met. John Soren preached the convention sermon, the Alliance sermon, in London. And in that message he was describing the years of his chaplaincy in World War II. The Brazilian division to which he was assigned was fighting their way up through the spine, through the Apennines, right in the middle of Italy, going northward. And when the cold of the winter came, they ceased looking for their dead because of the heavy snows that had covered them. But he said on the twenty-third of February, searching for bodies as the snow had abated, he found a Brazilian boy who had grown up in his Sunday school, in his church in Rio. Dramatically he described that boy that grew up in his Sunday school. He had fought courageously and bravely at his post, until his ammunition had run out. And the boy, being a prey for the enemy's guns, the boy was shot and killed. And he said that the blood flowing out of that boy had frozen the pages of his Bible together. And he said as he took the Bible from the frozen hands of that Sunday school boy, he looked at the place where the Bible was open: and the boy had died with his Book open at the twenty-third Psalm. As his life's blood flowed out, he was reading the twenty-third Psalm. That is the Bible. That's God's Book. And its appeal and its word of life is universal. It isn't just an Anglo, or a Brazilian, or an Indonesian; it's a Hottentot, it's an aborigine in Australia; it has an universal appeal and an universal message.

The influence of the Bible upon human life and culture is illimitable, immeasurable. In music, when you sing the glorious oratorio of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, or Handel's *Messiah*, you're singing the text of the Bible. In literature, when you study Dante, and Milton, and Tennyson, and Carlyle, and Longfellow, and Bunyan, you are studying literature that reflects the Word of God. The basis of modern government is the law of Moses [Genesis-Deuteronomy], and the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5:1-7:29]. There is no limit to the vast influence of this precious Word of God.

I have just spoken of the quickening Word. The second part of the lecture concerns the Bible in the infallibility authority: its infallible authority as confirmed by Christ. Or you could say it, the infallible authority of Christ confirms the Bible as the Word of God.

These things are most familiar to us. In His temptation [Matthew 4:1-11], He answered Satan's tempting offers with, "Thus it is written," quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:16, and Deuteronomy 6:13; quoting the Bible. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" [Psalm 119:11]. His defense against the inroads of Satan was the Word of God.

His teaching concerning the Bible was startling. Jesus would sound strange in this modern academic community of liberal, humanistic Christianity. Jesus would say, as in Matthew 5:17-18, "There is not one jot," that's the Hebrew *yod*, "or one tittle," that's the little horn down there on the *teth*, "There is not one jot or one tittle that will fail in the Word of God." His attitude toward it would be strange today in our modern academic community.

Did you ever notice the forensics of our Lord as He defended the faith and the truth of God, how He would do? For example, if you have opportunity, turn to Matthew chapter 22, and look at verse 31 and 32. The Sadducees that didn't believe in the spiritual life, in the resurrection, why, they had an old worn out story about the levirate marriage, when the man dies and doesn't have an issue, and his brother is supposed to raise up seed lest the brother's house fall into ruin [Deuteronomy 25:5-6, 7-10], and the old story of seven, had seven brothers, had that woman, and then last of all she died; and in the resurrection whose wife shall she be, for all had her? [Matthew 22:23-28]. Ha, ha, ha, ha! And they had silenced the Pharisees for generations with that same old story. Now you remember it? All right, Jesus said – now you look at this forensics, you look out how He defends the truth of God – "Ye do err not, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" [Matthew 22:29]. Now 31: "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" [Matthew 22:31-32]. He bases, Christ does, His entire doctrine of the resurrection of the dead upon the tense of a Hebrew verb. Not just the word, not just the verb, but the tense of the verb: "I *am*," present tense, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Can you imagine the attitude of Christ were He to be preaching today? And He takes the Bible, and not only its book, or its chapter, or its verse, or its sentence, or its syllable, but He takes the tense of the verb and bases on it a tremendous doctrine, such as the resurrection of the dead, upon the tense of the verb – the attitude of Christ toward the Word of the Lord.

We could go on and on in the life of our Savior. For preaching: they delivered to Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:14-22; and He turns the scroll to Isaiah 61:1-2, and there He preaches His message of the good news, preaching the Bible. He used the Bible for illustrations. He would talk about the queen of Sheba [Luke 11:31]. He would talk about Elijah and the widow [Luke 4:26]. He would talk about Elisha and the lepers [Luke 4:27]. He would talk about the serpent in the wilderness [John 3:14-15]. He would talk about the manna, angels' food from heaven [John 6: 58]. The preaching of our Lord was the Bible.

In the warnings that the Lord would deliver to the people, He used the background of a Sodom [Matthew 11:24], or a Tyre [Luke 10:13-14], or the life of Noah or of Lot [Luke 17:26-30]. And He would always, confronting His enemies, would say, "What saith the Scripture?" "Have ye not read?" "Is it not written?"

And when you turn to Luke 24 – and this is Luke's account of our Lord's tremendous assignment to His disciples and to us in the earth – in verse 25, Luke 24:25, "Then He said unto them, O *anoetos*, O not understanding ones." When we say "fool," that has an overtone of idiocy in it. "O not knowing ones, not understanding ones, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" [Luke 24:25-27]. Now you look how He will include the whole Bible in that: look at verse 44: "And He said unto them, These are the things which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses," that's the Torah, "and in the Prophets," that's the *nevi'im*, "and in the Psalms," that's the *kethuvim*, that's the *Hagiographa*, the Psalms, the most prominent of that *kethuvim*, the *Hagiographa*, the Writings [Luke 24:44]. Do you see what He does? It isn't that this is inspired, but this isn't. And over here we have possibly the Word of God, but this is the speculation of man. He never entered into any of those caustic, critical, tragic attitudes toward the Word of God; but expressly He spelled it out in the Torah, in the *nevi'im*, in the *kethuvim*, It's this written by the word of God. "Thus it is written, thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day" [Luke 24:46].

Now, according to the Scriptures Christ lived; according to the Scriptures Christ died [1 Corinthians 15:3]; according to the Scriptures Christ was raised from among the dead [1 Corinthians 15:4]; and according to the Scriptures Christ will come again [Acts 1:11]. That's our Lord and His attitude toward the Holy Bible.

Out of so much that we could say, and we could just be here forever looking at these things, I want to point to you one thing: how the apostles reflected that attitude of our Lord toward the Bible. Turn to 2 Peter chapter 1. Now Simon Peter in this first chapter, beginning at verse 16, is going to describe the *parousia*, he calls it; the coming of the Lord: "For we have not followed," beginning at verse 16, 2 Peter 1:16:

We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and *parousia*, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the Excellent Glory –

[2 Peter 1:16-17]

on the Mount of Transfiguration they heard the voice of the Father saying:

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in that holy Mount of Transfiguration.

[2 Peter 1:17-18; Matthew 17:5]

Now, you look at this: Simon Peter is there; he has seen that with his own eyes, he has heard that with his own ears, he has felt that in his own sensory response. It must have been an awesome experience! But after he says, "We were with Him, we saw this, we heard this, we felt this" [2 Peter 1:18], after he delineates that personal experience, now look at verse 19: "But we have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" [2 Peter 1:19]. Then he describes the infallible Word of God [2 Peter 1:20-21].

Now I can hardly get that in my head. I can hardly realize what the apostle is avowing. Having seen it, having heard it, having felt it, having been present, having experienced, he says, "But the real testimony to the deity and the *parousia* and the coming of our Lord is not what we have seen, for eye might mislead us; not what we've heard, our ears might deceive us; not what we have felt, because our own

feelings might lead us astray: but the sure Word of God could never ever fail." I just can't imagine a testimony like that – when he was there, and shared in it himself.

Now, we're going to discuss the confirmation of the Word of God outside of the witness in the Bible. In 2 Timothy 4:1, Paul having said that the Word of God is *theopneustos*, it is God-breathed, it is God-inspired [2 Timothy 3:16], having said that, then on the basis of that – and it's too bad that there's a chapter heading there, because the verses ought to go together – "I charge thee therefore." "Therefore" refers to the avowal Paul has just made that all Scripture, all of it – these critics say that it is inspired in spots and they're inspired to pick out the spots – Paul says all of it is inspired, it's *theopneustos*, from the first syllable to the last benediction. Now, "I charge thee therefore," on the basis of the avowal of the inspiration and the infallibility of the Word of God [2 Timothy 3:16-17], "I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His coming and His kingdom; Preach the word!" [2 Timothy 4:1-2].

Now I want to ask you a question: can I do that, can I stand up there and preach this Book as the the infallible, inerrant Word of God, and be intellectually honest? Can I? Well, let's look at it just for a moment. Preaching the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God in all of its historical statements, in all of its self-disclosure of the character of deity, in the coming of our Lord, in the whole frame and paradigm and model – as I was preaching last Sunday morning, the form of sound words – can I do that and be intellectually honest? Now let me point out to you what I think is a miracle. I think it is. They have been digging there in those tells and mounds over there in those archaeological digs in the Holy Land for centuries. It isn't just something that in the last few years has been characteristic of the interest over there. For centuries they've been digging down in those areas of these past civilizations. Dr. Patterson's boy Armor was over there in one of those digs, and I think Dr. Patterson himself has been over there in some of those digs. And of course, layer after layer after layer, civilization after civilization, they look at all of those artifacts that they dig up; and they find all of those cylinders, and all of those cuneiform inscriptions, and those baked tablets. And if its hermetically sealed by the sands of Egypt, you'll find it in the papyri. Well, it's just thousands and thousands and thousands of things they bring to light regarding the history of that ancient world.

All right, the miracle: to me, this is a miracle: there has never yet been turned one spade of archaeological dirt but that confirmed the Holy Scriptures, not one. Everything they have ever discovered, everything they have ever learned, every little

potsherd and tablet and inscription, hieroglyphic cuneiform, papyri, the whole gamut of it, the whole spectrum of it, for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, everything they've ever discovered confirms the accuracy of the Word of God.

For example, it used to be a common thing in the critical, higher critical world, that it was impossible that Moses could have written. It says Moses wrote these things, and they scoffed at that, "Why, Moses could not have written anything. Writing wasn't invented. There was no such thing as writing back there. So that is a manifest anachronism in the Bible." Then, they began to discover those Tel el-Amarna tablets in Egypt, and all of those inscriptions they began to dig up in the Mesopotamian Valley; and today we know that writing was common thousands of years before Moses.

All right, let's take again, the Hittites. I can remember when the academic world scoffed at the Bible because the Hittites are spoken of all through the Old Testament, the Hittite. And there was no such thing as a Hittite; that was a figment of somebody's vivid imagination, the Hittite. And did you know – though I need my mouth washed out when I say it – I looked at a *Life* magazine, and it had the whole issue dedicated to the Hittite empire. And today, of course, we know it was a tremendous, like the great empires of the ancient past that covered the Asia Minor part of that world and most of the Levant. The Hittites, they were a great people, with a great empire. And yet I can remember when it was scoffed at.

All right, let's take Belshazzar. I don't think there ever has been anything that was a sure fire bound up thing as the critic had concerning Belshazzar. One of the reasons for that – and this is just one of the reasons – one of the reasons for that was they discovered what they called the Cylinder of Cyrus, and Cyrus had put on that cuneiform cylinder the whole dynasty of Babylon that he'd conquered. It was all written there, and all those kings written there from the start, clear down to the bottom. And there's no Belshazzar in it. And as though that were not enough, Herodotus visited Babylon, and wrote intimately of his visit to Babylon, seventy years after Babylon fell; and yet Herodotus, in writing the story of Babylon, didn't know any Belshazzar. Well, the critics had a sure fire thing there. That was just two of the many other things that they said. So they scoffed and they laughed at the idea of any such king as Belshazzar.

That is, until recently. Recently they have been digging down into those cuneiform tablets, clay baked tablets, in the ruins of Babylon, and I don't exaggerate

it when I tell you, my young friends, I could write a biography about Belshazzar. I could literally do it. They have learned so much about Belshazzar: his family, his mother, his wife, his sisters, where he worshiped, what he did; his father Nabonidus had no interest in governmental affairs, and he left Babylon and lived in an oasis in the Syrian desert, and he left the kingship and the kingdom to his son Belshazzar. Man, you could go on and on what they found out about him. Never saw such mouth-stoppers in my life as these archaeological spades. It's just unbelievable – Belshazzar.

Well, let's just take one other out of a jillion of them; we could just go on forever. When I went to school, when I was in the seminary, it was the ordinary and the common thing taught, even by some of these so-called conservative professors who taught me, that John could not have been written by the sainted apostle, the dear close bosom friend of the Lord Jesus, because, they said, it would have taken two hundred fifty years for that theology to develop. While they were teaching that, in the hermetically sealed sands of Egypt, they discovered a papyrus that quotes the eighteenth chapter of John that must have been written about 95 or 98 AD! What consummate liars those people are!

That's archaeology and the Bible. There has never yet been anything discovered that contradicts any statement in the Word of God; but everything we discover affirms it and confirms it.

Now, I want in this next moment, to speak about the certainty of the text. When I open the Bible, how do I know I have in my hand what God wrote? How do I know but that the text has been amended, and changed, and added to, and taken away from until I have no idea what God wrote? Now the Lord knew all about that.

You know, it's a funny thing how an ordinary common laborer will say things that are profound. When I was a boy, I was standing by a carpenter, and his helper over there swallowed a tack. Well, I thought that was going to be terrible; he had a tack. Man alive, that'd puncture his gizzard, and puncture all the way down, and you know, that old carpenter patted me on the back, and he said, "There, there, son, don't worry. God knew we were going to swallow all kinds of tacks; so He made it so that when we swallow tacks, why, it is covered over with all of those smooth and salubrious coatings, so that when we swallow tacks it just goes right on through the elementary canal. God knew all about that," he says. Well, that's the way God is: God

knew all about this thing that would arise in our day concerning the certainty of the text, the truthfulness of the text; and God made provision for that.

Now you look how He did it. One thousand five hundred years after Herodotus lived there was one manuscript of Herodotus, just one. One thousand two hundred years after Plato lived there was one manuscript of Plato. There is only one manuscript of the Annals of Tacitus, that tremendously gifted Latin historian. There's only one manuscript of the Greek Anthology. There are one or two, very few manuscripts of Sophocles, Thucydides, Euripides, Virgil, Cicero, the whole gamut of them. Now against that background you look at this: there are 4,105 ancient Greek texts of the New Testament. There are between 15,000 and 30,000 Latin versions. There are over 1,000 other early versions of the New Testament, such as Coptic, Syriac, and Aramaic. That means that we can take those thousands of manuscripts, thousands of them – I've done some of it myself in my Greek studies, back yonder years ago – take some of those thousands of manuscripts, and look at them, and compare them; and if at any place a copyist has made an emendation or a correction or a change, there it is, just look at it. You can compare it in thousands of manuscripts, to know exactly what the original was.

May I point out to you, therefore, the tremendous significance of those Dead Sea Scrolls? The latest copies we had of the Old Testament were those Masoretic texts, written somewhere around, oh, 950 to 1000 AD. That was the latest we had. So these critics say, "How do you know but that a thousand years and another thousand years and another thousand and another thousand years, in those thousands of years between the text that we have, this Masoretic text, this Bible, this Hebrew Bible that you have in your hand, and back yonder when Moses wrote it and Isaiah wrote it, how do you know but that there were a thousand changes in it?" Well, lo and behold, and amazing, and a miracle of miracles: they discovered those Dead Sea Scrolls. And if you've been to Jerusalem, they've had a shrine there; they call it "The Shrine of the Book." And that scroll of Isaiah is all the way unfolded around a cylinder in the middle of that shrine. And the marvel is this: you can read that text of Isaiah from those caves on the edge of the Dead Sea, you can read them, written about 165 or 100 BC, and compare it with the text that you have in your Hebrew Bible a thousand years later, and it is substantially the same, just the same. God saw to it that all of this was faithfully and marvelously kept and recorded.

Now, may I speak of the unity of the Book, which itself is no less miraculous. Written over a period of sixteen hundred years, by over forty different men, in

different continents, languages, vocations and life, all of it is one marvelous continuing story. It's not a dead stone; it's a living organic whole. It breathes; it speaks to us. It has a great theme: it points to Jesus; it's our redemption in Christ.

I imagine many of you are aware of the fact that some time ago, New Year's Eve came on Sunday night, as it is this present year. So some of these deacons facetiously came up to me, and said, "Pastor, you're always complaining about not having any time to finish your sermon, always fussing about that clock. Sunday night, New Year's Eve, why don't you just start at seven-thirty o'clock," when we began the service in those days, "and instead of having a watch night service, why don't you just preach all the way through? Why don't you preach until past midnight? And then maybe you could finish a sermon. Why don't you do that?" Well, they said that to me in jest; to them it was a big joke, and they just laughed. I got to thinking about that. I thought, "Well, that's a marvelous idea. That's a wonderful idea." So I announced that at seven-thirty o'clock I was going to start preaching, and I was going to preach past midnight.

Were you here then? Were you here? Well, I stood up in that pulpit to start out at seven-thirty o'clock, and the house was jammed, and people were standing around the wall upstairs and downstairs. I thought as I went on hour after hour, that most of them would erode, that the congregation would gradually fade away. I want you to know, when I tried to finish – and I didn't quite make it – when I tried to finish after twelve o'clock, that throng was still there. Were you there, Charles? They were standing around the auditorium downstairs and upstairs, from 7:30 till after twelve o'clock.

"Well, pastor, what did you do for so long a period of time that kept those people listening to the message?" You already know what it was; it's been printed in a book, the summation of it. It was entitled **The Scarlet Thread through the Bible**; just one great unfolding story, page after page, after page.

Now I must close because the time is already gone. I want to conclude with a word about preaching the infallible Word of God. I was in a group last night, and they were kidding me about something that I did here at the church. Dr. Truett was a marvelous preacher. Hal, did you ever hear Dr. Truett? He was our greatest Southern Baptist preacher, an incomparable man. His presence, his voice, his message, oh! he was God's man. If I were in Hollywood and choosing characters to present a story, I'd choose Dr. Truett as God. He just looked the part. Oh, he was impressive!

But Dr. Truett was a topical preacher. Weren't you here, Charles, when he was here? He never preached any other kind of a message but a topical sermon. So, after I was here one year, I made the announcement to the church that I was going to preach through the Bible; I was going to start in Genesis and go clear through to the Revelation. You never heard such lugubrious prognostications in your life! It was painful. They said, "The church will die. Who's coming to church to listen to Habakkuk? Don't even know how to pronounce the name; don't even know where it is in the Bible. Who's coming to church to listen to all of those things that we never heard of before?" But I persevered, and I preached through the Bible for seventeen years and eight months: preaching where I left off Sunday morning, started Sunday night; where I left off Sunday night, I started Sunday morning.

And I would listen to those people. One man would say, "When did you join the church?" He said, "Well, I joined in Isaiah. When did you join the church?" The other one would say, "Well I'm a late-comer, I joined in Philemon," or, "I joined in Jude."

The Y, as you know, is right in front of the church door. So a man came back to the clerk at the Y, and he said, "I thought you told me that was a Baptist church."

"Well, it is a Baptist church."

"No, it isn't," he said, "It's an Episcopalian church."

"Well, what makes you think it's an Episcopalian church?"

"Well," he said, "I saw the people as they came out of the church being dismissed, and each one had a prayer book in his hand." And the clerk said, "Listen, guy, you've got that wrong. They have a Bible in their hands, a Bible in their hands."

We had a real problem in the church, I do admit: and the problem was what in the earth are we going to do with these people that can't get in the house? Immediately the congregation began to grow and continued growing for all of those seventeen years and eight months. That's why we have two services, as you know, each Sunday, trying to preach to the people who wanted to listen.

So, standing on the Rock of the Word of God, our feet may tremble, but the Rock remains immutable and forever. The best way in the world to preach is a, "Thus saith the Lord God." [Amen] Oh! There is power and authority in that. Not, "Thus saith Rabbi Smell-fungus," or, "Thus saith Dr. Sounding-brass," or, "Thus saith Dr. Dry-

as-dust," but, "Thus saith the Word of God." It's the way the apostles preached, Paul, and the author of the Hebrews. It's the way that the preachers of the Reformation preached, "*Sola scriptura*." It's the way the pioneers preached, and I listened to them when I was a little boy: they had a Bible, they had a hymnbook, and that was all; but they delivered the message, and God blessed it. And we follow in their train.

And the Lord bless us as we are faithful to that message.