

"WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

May 5, 2024, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: II Peter 1:19-21; I Peter 1:23-25

Introduction:

As I announced this morning I am starting a new sermon series this evening on the Bible and the books of the Bible. This will be different from my normal pattern of expositing a text of Scripture a few verses at a time. In some ways this will be harder, out of my comfort zone.

Tonight we will fly over the whole Bible, or the Bible as a whole. Then starting next week we will fly over the 66 books of the Bible one at a time. We will start with the really big picture and then 66 sort of big pictures.

The Bible is an utterly unique book, it really is in a class by itself, there is no other book even remotely close to it. It is unique for several different reasons.

First of all it is a collection of 66 different books of all kinds of genres of literature. It is made up of histories, poetry, law, proverbs, prophecies, Gospels, personal letters, and apocalyptic literature.

It is written by 40 authors of different cultures, backgrounds, education, occupations including kings, peasants, shepherds, doctors, fishermen, tax collectors, scholars, all writing in a vast variety of locations including wilderness, dungeon, palace, prison, wilderness, dungeon, palace, prison, wilderness, dungeon, palace, prison, in exile, at home, in exile on an island.

It is written over a period of 1600 years, from 1500 BC by Moses to 100 AD by John. It is written in three languages Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic; on three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa.

It is written in different times: war, peace, poverty, prosperity, freedom and slavery, reflecting a wide range of moods and emotions from the heights of joy to the depths of despair

What would you expect from a book written by such a diverse group of people in such a diverse set of circumstances over so long a period of time? So if someone claims there is one single theme in the Bible, would you believe it? How could such a thing be possible?

Don't people say the Bible is filled with contradictions? Isn't the God of the OT different from the God of the NT? How can you reconcile all the differences, the terrible wars and atrocities of the OT with the message of Jesus and His love in the NT?

Can there be any hope of finding unity in the whole Bible?

The Bible is one book with one author and one subject: one consistent, unified story. It is God's story.

The Bible is not about us. The Bible is not about what people have done for God. The Bible is not first and foremost about our salvation. ***The Bible is about God***, the eternally pre-existing God, who chose to create all things for His glory. His work of redemption is for the revelation of His glory. The ultimate reason and purpose for the story is the glory of God.

God's ultimate goal is to preserve and display His infinite greatness and worth, in a word, His glory. He loves His glory and He loves to display it. since God is the most supremely great and valuable being, for Him to do anything less would be unrighteous, would be idolatry.

This is why Jesus figures most supremely in Scripture, He is the perfect reflection of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The Bible is the inspired revelation from God about God. God has spoken to us about God. This is divine self-disclosure. The messenger is the message.

Because it is God's book written by God you would expect the Bible to reflect the character of God and so it does. What you can say about God you can say about the Bible.

The Bible is the only book without error. It is authoritative, inerrant, infallible, God breathed, inspired, trustworthy, true, eternal, holy, unchanging, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Inerrancy, The Scriptures do not err. Infallibility, The Scriptures cannot err. It is without error (inerrant) because it is impossible for it to have errors (infallible). Infallibility means trustworthy, reliable, inerrancy goes further that the Scriptures contain no errors whatsoever.

Because it is God's book there are several more things that can be said about the Bible that highlight its uniqueness as a book like no other because its author is like no other.

You can point to its fulfilled prophecy, its archeological collaboration, its miraculous perseverance over three and a half millennium. No ancient book has more manuscript evidence and support (over 5,000).

How do you explain the complete harmonious agreement of all the book on a widely diverse range of subjects and doctrines. The consistency and unity are only possible by God.

And add to the list the clarity, simplicity, beauty and majesty of the prose and poetry.

And of course most staggering of all, the powerful transformation of lives, communities, and nations where the Word has been preached.

There is no other book like it. It is worthy of your love, affection, and attention.

The message of the Bible can be summarized in several different ways, from one word to a hundred.

In one word:	Glory; Grace; Jesus
In two words:	Jesus Christ; glory and grace
In three words:	God saves sinners.
In six words:	Kill the dragon, get the girl. (Kill Satan/sin, save the Bride/Church)

From dust to glory.

We are saved from God, by God, for God.

We are saved from God (the Father), by God (the Son), for God (the Holy Spirit).

“Jesus loves me/This I know/For the Bible tells me so.” The entire Bible is built around Jesus Christ. It is written that we might know, believe, love and follow Him.

GOSPEL:

<https://www.lifein6words.com/the-g-o-s-p-e-l-message-explained/>

The Gospel is the good news that God himself has come to rescue us through Jesus.

G – God created us to be with him. (Genesis 1-2)

O – Our sin separated us from God. (Genesis 3)

S – Sins cannot be removed by good deeds. (Genesis 4 – Malachi 4)

P – Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again. (Matthew – Luke)

E – Everyone who trusts in him alone has eternal life. (John)

L – Life with Jesus starts now and last forever in heaven. (Acts – Revelation)

Scripture is not a random collection of ancient myths and aphorisms. It has a unifying message told in every genre, by every author, in every period of redemptive history.

Outline

The table of contents show us the Bible divides into two sections, two testaments, the OT and the NT. Within those testament there are several subdivisions.

We start with the torah or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament written by Moses in 1500 BC).

Then the 12 historical books Joshua through Esther.

The wisdom literature includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Finally there are the prophets (4 major and 12 minor. This is not the order in the Hebrew Bible.

In the NT there are the four Gospel, then the historical book of Acts, followed by all the letters, 13 by Paul (ordered by length), Hebrews, James, Peter, John and Jude. Finally, the Apocalypse, Revelation.

The outline of the Bible is most simply described as creation, fall, redemption and new creation (glory). The Bible begins and ends with creation, it begins and ends in a garden, from paradise to paradise regained. In between is the problem and the solution, fall and redemption.

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His plan to save fallen, sinful man through His Son Jesus Christ. The Bible is the most profound discussion about the most profound subject, God's plan and purpose for saving sinners.

Genesis 1-3 actually has the first three parts of the outline. Genesis 1-2 is creation. Genesis 3 is the fall and Genesis 3:15 is the beginning of redemption.

Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

God's plan is worked out through a series of covenants.

Covenant is a legal term for a binding agreement. Like a last will and testament in which God freely makes certain promises.

After the covenant of works failed in the garden God introduced the covenant of grace.

Covenant of grace in three parts, redemption, adoption, glorification.

Redeemed from slavery, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-7).

And if children then heirs that we might be glorified with him (Rom 8:17), the hope of glory.

Israel's biblical story is a first telling of our story. The pattern of Israel's salvation, plotted by its exodus, wilderness journey, and entry into the Promised Land depicts God's way of salvation now accomplished by the Son.

The OT is not just an ancient story, something buried in the past. It is the pattern of God's redemptive work. The book of Hebrews paints this picture clearly, drawing from the OT pattern to show its outworking in the ministry and work of Jesus.

“The main message of the Bible is that the one true God is displaying his glory primarily in redeeming and restoring his fallen creation by fulfilling his covenant promises and commands through the glorious person and atoning work of Christ.”

The Bible describes how God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ. The Old Testament provides foundation for this kingdom message, and the New Testament details the fulfillment.

A word about Bibles.

For accurate, literal translation I recommend the English Standard Version, the New American Standard version 1995 edition and the New King James Version. The NIV is called a dynamic equivalent, not sticking as close to the original.

All translations are interpretations. Someone has to make choices. Translations by committees with checks and balances are better than those done by one individual.

About paraphrases, the Word of God is not supposed to be packaged as one man's ruminations on the text. We're supposed to get the text itself from the men who wrote it--not pre-masticated.

The Bible is the most printed book in the world. It has been the number-one bestseller for decades. But tragically, the Bible is said to be the least-read bestseller of all time.

Reading the Bible is more important than reading devotionals. If you only have time to do one or the other, they chose the Bible first.

As Hebrews 4:12 powerfully reminds us, the Word of God is “living and active.” The Word of God can “pierce...soul and spirit.” And the Word of God is “able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

No devotional book can make such a claim.

Doctrine of the necessary inner witness of the Holy Spirit as to the truth of Scripture.

One of the great and most distinctive contributions to Christian theology is Calvin's insight on the *doctrine of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to the truth and authority of the Scripture*. Calvin is a great theologian of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin Institutes I. 7. 4. "...*the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason*." For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded. Isaiah very aptly expresses this connection in these words: 'My Spirit which is in you, and the words that I have put in your mouth, and the mouths of your offspring, shall never fail.' (Isa.59:21)."

Westminster I. 4. 5. "We may be influenced by the testimony of the church to value the Bible highly and reverently, and Scripture itself shows in so many ways that it is God's word; for example, in its spiritual subject matter, in the effectiveness of its teaching, the majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, its unified aim from beginning to end (to give all glory to God), the full revelation it makes of the only way of man's salvation, its many other incomparably outstanding features, and its complete perfection. **However**, we are completely persuaded and assured of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible only by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, Who testifies by and with the word in our hearts."

"The fact that any of us gladly submits to the Bible as God's word is a mighty work of sovereign grace. Seriously. **Divine power is required to turn the human will to love the Scriptures**. That's why the psalmist prays, "Incline my heart to your testimonies" (Psalm 119:36). It's why Paul prays that we would "fulfill every work of faith by his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11). We will not incline to Scripture, and we will not do any work of faith without "his power." (John Piper).

Jonathan Edwards:

"You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and as you receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or as you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold."