



Sermon – March 1, 2020
Dr. Harry Lewis

Verses Covered This Week

Acts 17:10 – 11

2 Timothy 3:15 – 16

2 Peter 1:21

Good morning. It's great time of worship today. I appreciate Brother Steve in all of that. I somewhat, I get more nervous coming here than any place. Because some of you know me. But let me just share with you to start this morning, you may have heard the name Spurgeon. C. H. Spurgeon. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a great preacher back in the 19th century. He was the pastor of the London Metropolitan Tabernacle. In fact, he was such an eloquent preacher that he became known as the "Prince of Preachers". People would literally come from miles away. They would travel great distances. They would fill up the tabernacle just so that they could hear this eloquent man preach. Well, you can imagine there are sometimes he would be absent from the pulpit. And on this one occasion, he was not going to be there. Now the audience did not know that. And so they've come for miles around. They filled the tabernacle to capacity. Go through the opening ceremonies as we've done this morning and then when it came time for the sermon, a man ascended into the pulpit that they did not recognize. And doing that, the story says, there was a man somewhere in that congregation, he stood up, he walked to an aisle, and he began to walk out. To which the guest speaker said, "Sir, if you came here today to hear a word from C. H. Spurgeon, then feel free to leave. But if you came today to hear a word from God, please be seated.

I come today with a word from God. A message that I think is more foundational than anything that I can share with you. Because do you understand, we're in a spiritual battle. Your families are under attack. Church is under attack. Our society is under attack. We are simply in a spiritual battle. What are social norms? What are the norms that we're expected to live by? You see, society comes up with what is the right way to live. And if you are my age, and some of your ages, you'll find that those norms have drastically changed from a few years ago to today. But those norms are what you're expected, how you're expected to live. What's acceptable? But I want to tell you today, we have a Bible and there are biblical norms that tell us how we ought to live. Those social norms, and I say to you young people that are in high school, junior high, you're going to be bombarded to live by the morals and the norms that society says. College students, I know sometimes you sit over in this section and you're going to be

bombarded at the universities to accept the norms of society and academics today. And I'm going to tell you, many of them will not match what is in this book. So, parents, it's your job to know what's in this book so you can help combat the social norms and bring biblical norms to your children. If I were to stand in a public place today because do you understand to take those kinds of stands is going to take courage in the future. If I were to stand in a public place in this town and I began to preach out of John 14:6 and said that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." I would be considered intolerant. Because you would say, "Well, there's many ways to heaven. What about the Muslim? What about the other religions? They say there's another way." So if I stand on God's truth, I'm going to be called intolerant. If I turn to Romans chapter 1 and I began to preach out of chapter 1 and it talks about the relation of men to men and women to women and how that's an abomination to God, I would be accused of hate speech; that I'm intolerant. If I were to go to Hebrews chapter 13, verse 4, where it talks about marriage and the marriage bed being undefiled, it talks about fornication and adultery. I would be said, "I'm out of step. Don't you understand, everybody today is doing that. That's how life is. That's how we live." And so it's going to take courage.

In the 17th chapter of Acts, we find that Paul is on his second missionary journey. And there's a little statement in there just a couple verses, chapter 17, verse 10 and 11. It talks about the Bereans. And I want to challenge you today, would you make a commitment that you're going to follow the example of the Bereans? For if I understand this, Paul, on his second missionary journey, he's come and seen the heavenly vision. He's gone to Macedonia and to Europe. He's gone to the Philippi where he was beaten and imprisoned. Set free. Goes to Thessalonica where he preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue. And then after opposition there, he comes to Berea and this is what it says.

¹⁰Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These, the Bereans, were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

I'm going to tell you something that's not overly profound. Everyone that stood in this pulpit in the past, the one preaching today, and the ones in the future, are not inerrant. They're going to say something that's not correct. I'm hoping that won't be true today, but it could be. But you have the responsibility because you have a word of God that is inerrant. And so you have a responsibility to know what's in this book. I used to tell when I was pastoring, I said to the congregation, "One day when you stand before Christ and He is saying, 'Well, I noticed in life you did such-and-such and you said, "Well, Brother Harry, said that was OK."' That's not the right answer. You're responsible. Now do you understand as a pastor or someone that shares the word of God, Sunday school teachers, this applies to you. James says that we have a greater accountability. We need to be very careful what we share. We need to do the very best we can to make sure it's true. But ultimately, I'm responsible for what I believe. So I understand that there is this idea of truth. What is truth is I look through society, I'll find it through Scripture, you'll find that there are those that reject Scripture. They simply say it's an outdated book. It was a book written by men. It has no value today. There will be those that will revise Scripture. You see, when we go the way of society and we want society to guide our life, we'll make this book say what matches society. And then there's some that will simply ignore it. I want to live

the way I want to live. So I just ignore it. Well that's not what the Bereans did. For I want you to notice something with me this morning as we look at those little verses, and particularly verse 11. I want us to understand, he says, "And these were more fair-minded than the Thessalonians." For who were the Thessalonians? Thessalonians were that town, it was a seaport. It would be in a bustling community; a large community. And there was a synagogue there so Paul, there were a group of Jews. Paul, on three successive Sundays, goes there and what he's going, he's preaching to them that this Jesus whom you crucified, I can prove to you in the Old Testament, He's the Christ. And some of them believed. But he said, because of jealousy and envy, they began to rise up against Paul. They caused a riot and Paul was escorted out of town to Philippi, excuse me, to Berea. We understand that they had the opportunity, the same gospel was preached, but they rejected it. They took a stand against Paul and against what he was preaching because it was contrary to their norm of the day. And the Bereans, Paul says as Luke writes here, he says, these were more noble. If you have the King James, it probably says, more noble. I'm using the New King James this morning. It says, fair-minded. Some will say noble-minded. That word has the idea that it is someone who is of noble birth. But it really addresses character. The Bereans had a more noble character than the Thessalonians. And he tells us why that's true in that they received. You see, this morning, my prayer, I've been praying for you. I don't know all of you. I didn't even know who was going to be here today. But I've been praying for you that the Spirit of God would move upon you in such a way that your heart would be open to receive what God has to say today. God's looking for receptive hearts. The Bereans had that. You can't get anything unless you're willing to receive it. And so Paul says, excuse me, Luke says here that they as many, they received what Paul had to say. They received what? They received the word. Now Paul's preaching, he's teaching out of the Old Testament, he's taking the Old Testament, but when Paul came, they received that word. They had an open heart, an open mind, they wanted to know what Paul was saying. Now, do you understand, they didn't know Paul. He had a reputation. In Thessalonica it says, then those that turned the world upside down have come here also. Paul had a reputation. But they don't know Paul. He's not the local rabbi. He's someone that's coming to town. He's visited the synagogue; he begins to teach them the things out of the Old Testament. And so they receive that. They had an open heart, and open mind, a fair mind. So you see, we need to have an open mind to God's word. So as Paul is preaching this, as he's teaching it, it said that they not only received the word, but he tells us how they did, that they did that with eagerness. Now can I mettle a little bit this morning? How many of you, if the sermon gets to going long, you begin looking at your watch? I've noticed something in Baptist churches. There's a clock on the back for me to see, but there's not one on the front for you to see. But sometimes we box God in and we don't have the time. If it goes too long, we're going to miss lunch. We're going to not be able to do what we want to do. But the Bereans came with a zeal, with an eagerness. They wanted to hear what this man Paul had to say. So they were more noble than the Thessalonians. They received the word. They did so with eagerness. But then I want you to notice this. They did it by searching the word daily to see if those things were true.

When I think about the Thessalonians and the difference in the Bereans, the Thessalonians had biases. Do you have biases? You see, sometime, we take our biases and we lay them over Scripture and we interpret Scripture based on what we think. When I began teaching as an adjunct professor at Southwestern, my first assignment was in Darrington Penitentiary. Now you talk about a captive audience. They have a bachelor degree there. They get a degree in Biblical Studies. It's a four-year program. It's a credited degree. And I taught juniors and seniors. Start

with a class of forty, about a hundred and sixty in the classes. And I had them do something because I'm convinced this morning, you cannot interpret Scripture correctly unless you deal with your biases. So they had an assignment. They were to write a paper being honest about what their biases were. I listed five possibilities. Could be more. Things like race. Things like denomination. Things like politics. And so they write that. It's not right or wrong. It's what you think. Well, I'm minding my own business at home and I get an e-mail from the director of the school there. He said, "When you get a chance, can you call me." I called him and he said, "There seems to be a problem. One of the students, when you asked him to write this paper, he wrote one and such that there is a teaching assistant that's there. He's one of the inmates. He came into the office and said, "We need to kick this gentleman out of the program." I said, "Well tell me what he did." Well in his paper, he said that the Bible was written by white people for white people. Well, see, I know who that person was. He was a Muslim. You couldn't limit them from being in the class because it's in a state institution. I knew who he was and I knew he was an ex-marine, I knew why he was in there, for murder, and I say to the director, "Sounds like he did exactly what I asked him to." Because, you see, if you can't get past your biases, you can't interpret this correctly. So the Thessalonians had biases, the Bereans didn't, they opened their heart, but they weren't prejudging. They weren't prejudicial towards what Paul was saying. They wanted to hear it with an honest heart. And then they took the Scripture and they began to study daily to see if what Paul is saying is true. I would challenge you, check out what I'm saying. This week. Do the study. If I'm wrong, you tell me. I'm not afraid of that.

So what is Scripture? You remember when Pilate stands before Christ, really the first was correct. Pilate standing before Christ. And in that inquisition, he comes with this question. What is truth? And I want to tell you. That's the ultimate question today. What is truth? It's not what you think. It's not what I think. It's not what we collectively get together to decide is truth. It's what God says is truth. Last October, God is good isn't he? Last October I'm going to make a trip to the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Annual Meeting held in Saint Kitts. Meet some leaders that we might do ministry with. I had to fly out of DFW because I was in Fort Worth for a meeting. Through Miami to Saint Kitts and return journey. I'm going to get into Dallas about midnight Saturday morning and drive home. Now if you get to know me a little bit, you're going to find out I fly cheap. I fly those no restrictions; I mean all restrictions. What they do is they say, you can't pick your seats, you can't carry any luggage, a small carry-on, and they put you in the back of the plane in the middle seat. I think that middle seat's smaller than the rest of them. So I fly that way down there and I'm getting to thinking, "You know, Aggies do get a little smart at times." And I'm getting to thinking, "Lord, maybe I ought to pay just a little bit of money on that flight from Miami to Dallas and move to a window seat." I don't sleep on planes but maybe I could do that. So I do that. Now you keep that in mind because now I've changed seats on this plane. As I'm walking down the walkway to the plane, I'm standing outside the door and a few people in front of me, there's an individual. I can't tell if it's a man or woman, boy or girl; has dreadlocks down its shoulders, tattoos all over his knuckles and hands. And so I notice that, an interesting looking individual. Well when I get to my seat, Seat A's open, B and C have two individuals in it. And that individual's in B. It was a man. To make a long story somewhat short, he was a radical hip hop rapper on his way to Seattle. But what you need to know is, he missed his plane. He's not supposed to be on this flight. I've changed my seat. I'm not supposed to sit by him. And so in that conversation, he begins to try to connect in some ways for whatever reason. And he finally, after he'd been buying some beer for the guy next to him, I thought they were travelling together, they weren't. He finally looked over at me and

said, "You know, I should have offered to buy you a beer." I said, "That's OK, I don't drink." "You don't drink?" "No, sir." "Have you ever drank?" "No, sir." He said, "Are you a preacher?" Well, I said, "I'm a retired one." He said, "I thought I sensed something when you came by." So that created an interest in him and here's what he did. He said, "I'm going to give you my number because I'm interested in truth. And I want you to randomly send me verses." Now the first time I sent him something, he wasn't all that thrilled. But I continued to have dialog with him. In fact, for some reason, God has connected us because about a week and a half ago, without me sending a text, he sends me one. He says, "I hope you're doing OK. By the way, I'm dropping an album March 1st." I'm not going to buy it. I'm not even telling you who is name is. But somewhere on Instagram, there's a selfie between him and me because he took it. But God put him in my life to share truth. So what is Scripture? If you would, look with me in 2 Timothy chapter 3. And I want you to notice something this morning. 2 Timothy chapter 3, if I can find it here, verse 15.

¹⁵and that from a childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures (speaking of Timothy), which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

What is Paul saying here? If we understand something, he says that all Scripture is inspired. Now what does that mean? If you look in the Greek, you'll find it's a Greek word, a composite word, *theopneustos*, the word *theos*, God; *pneuma* means Spirit or breath. And so a combined word that means it's God breathed. He doesn't tell us how He breathed it, but He did breathe it in such a way that everything in the original autograph is absolutely true without error and we can depend on it. If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't come up here today and speak it. Be no value. So it's inspired of God. It's God-breathed. In 2 Peter 1:21 it says:

²¹holy men were born along by God

So how did they write? You see, when you read this thing, if you'll stop and say, "God, I don't understand it all, but I know that You took this man, whether it was Paul or Peter or John or somebody in the Old Testament, and the Holy Spirit took him and he bore him along, carried him along so that he wrote exactly what You wanted in this book." If you don't believe that, then you're going to let every social norm sway you. And then he said, it's profitable, it's to our advantage. There's a benefit to it. There's a benefit for you and for me to read the Scripture on a regular basis; to let it fill out life. I started in my mid to late twenties reading the Scripture through every year. And pretty much, I've done that. This year I thought I would do something different. And it was only going to be, read 5 days a week, 260 days. I did it for a month and I said, "Lord, this just doesn't feel right. I'm not reading it all." And so I started again. It's profitable, what? For instruction. How are you going to know when social norms don't fit with Biblical norms? You have to be instructed on what Scripture says. It's profitable for correction. As we read Scripture, and I promise you, if you'll read from Genesis to Revelation, at some point you're going to come to a passage where the Spirit of God is going to take that and apply it to your life and deep conviction's going to come over you that what I'm doing is not right. I promise you. And then it's good for reproof. That word reproof means to stand aright again; put you in a right position. So we're instructed on what's right. We're corrected when we're wrong. And then the word will stand us back up into a right position.

And then it's good for instruction in righteousness. How do we live if we don't know Scripture? We don't know how to live the way God wants us to live. So the Bible says that God has given us a Scripture that's infallible. And I'm going to run out of time and I knew I would. But I want to tell you one last thing. You have someone to guide you through this called the Holy Spirit. Sixteenth chapter of John, Jesus in the 14th chapter was preparing His disciples for when He was going to leave. He said, "When I leave, I'm going to send you another," And that word another means exactly like me; it's the Holy Spirit. And in the sixteenth chapter, He said, "When He's come, He will guide you into all truth." There's that word again. If I were to write a book, and I've got about a half dozen or more in me to write that I just never do, but let's say I wrote a book. And let's say, Steve, you're reading that book. You come across something and said, "Man, I don't understand that. That doesn't make sense to me." So you go over here and you talk with Larry Whitlock and Larry says, "Well, I think this is what it means." Well, you know, Larry could be right, but he could be wrong. The best person to come and ask would be who? Come ask me. Now the Holy Spirit wrote this book. And if He wrote it, who's the best person to ask what He meant when He wrote it? When you were saved, the Holy Spirit came and lived in you and Paul said, "We're to be filled with the Spirit." When you're filled with the Spirit and take the word of God, the Spirit of God will unlock the truths of it. He'll open your eyes to it. And so I want to ask you this morning. Would you make a commitment to the truths of God's word and understand that it's Him? Because to understand Scripture demands a choice.

I'm going to ask you to bow your heads for a moment. And I'm going to ask you to consider some things. As you've noticed when you came in, we're going to observe the Lord's Supper today. And so in a moment, when we have the invitation, I want you to consider that as a believer, if there's something in your life that's not correct, if you've done something that God would call sin and you've not confessed it, before you come and take of this table, you need to confess that. You may want to come to this altar and make these steps and make it an altar and say, "God, today I'm coming. I'm coming to get things right. I don't want to take of this table unworthily." For Paul said that when the Corinthians did that, some of them were sick and some of them even died. You're here today and you may be like that radical hip hop rapper, well you wouldn't be like him, you wouldn't be here, but you could be without Christ just like him. And I want to ask you this morning, when the staff stands down here at the front, would you come and say, "Today I want to give my life to Christ. I want to be like what it said about Paul, the Scripture, that Timothy knew the Holy Scripture from childhood and then made him wise unto salvation." Would you come give your life to Christ? What about being sanctified? What about being holy? Would you make a commitment today, "God, I want to live for You. I want to be holy in my life. I want to live by Biblical norms, not by social norms. I don't want to let culture come in. I want the Bible to push it out." And then maybe you just need a church home. And God puts it on your heart for you to come and join Central, the staff are here to receive you. I'm going to ask you to be in a time of prayer. If someone wants to get up and come past you, would you be aware of that and let them out easily? I'm going to pray and then you come. Staff you come and stand.

Father, I thank You today for the opportunity to take Your word and open it and to share it. Father, there's somebody here today that's never trusted You. I don't know who it is. It may be a boy or a girl; it may be a man or woman, it may be somebody that's already joined this church, but who literally does not know you personally. I pray Your Spirit right now would bring

conviction. They'd be drawn to You. They'd put aside pride and they would come. Father, I pray that You might even flood these steps as an altar this morning as we come to say, "God, today I want to be sanctified and I want to be holy. I want to live a life that's pleasing to You." And help us to put aside pride and we come. Father, if there's somebody that needs to join the church today, You would cause them to come even now. For we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Would you come as God leads you this morning?