

# **Digging Deeper Into Our Statement of Faith**

**Pastor Bill Johnson**

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# Preface

These sermons were preached at Friendship Bible Church in Randolph, Ohio. The order in which they appear in this book is the order in which they were delivered.

The intent with this series was to delve more deeply into the statements contained in the FBC statement of faith.

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# Chapter 1. Digging Deeper - Bibliology

## *(What We Believe About the Bible)*

Read - *Psalm 19*

*Text - The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (Psalm 19:7-9 NKJV)*

Theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

## Introduction:

Article 2 of the FBC Constitution reads as follows:

Article II: Statement of Faith

WE BELIEVE there is one and only one living and true God, and that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

WE BELIEVE in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures, consisting of the sixtysix books of the Old and New Testaments.

WE BELIEVE the Biblical account of the creation of the universe through the direct and immediate creative acts of God.

WE BELIEVE in the unique creation of man in the image and likeness of God and that physical life is His sovereign gift. The deliberate killing of the unborn, the sick, disabled or elderly is wrong and an abomination before Him.

WE BELIEVE that all men are sinners by nature and in conduct, and cannot save themselves.

WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man.

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, evidence of salvation appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life.

WE BELIEVE in the eternal salvation of all who put their faith in Christ; that all who are truly born again are kept secure by God the

Father.

WE BELIEVE in the primacy of the Church as an ordained institution of God with Christ as its Head. We recognize the authority of the local church and subscribe to the ordinances of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper for all those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the Devil or Satan, the enemy of God and man, and that he is destined for eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire.

WE BELIEVE in the bodily resurrection, immortality and rapture of all believers at Christ's imminent coming and that His coming is both pretribulational and premillennial.

WE BELIEVE in the existence of a literal heaven and a literal hell and that all men spend eternity in one of the two places.

WE BELIEVE that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

WE BELIEVE that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes.

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members. All literature used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

Now some of the statements included therein are legal, in nature. Living in a litigious society, it is necessary to ensure our constitution protects the church as much as possible. And some of the statements included therein are needed because of the depravity of our culture. Twenty years ago there would have been no need to define marriage in a church constitution. I doubt any church statements of faith had such a clause back then. But that was then.

For the next few weeks in our "Roots Down Fruit Up" sessions, if the Lord allows, we will be digging deeper into this statement of faith... deeper into what we believe as a church. We're not going to examine each statement individually, but rather lump them together under several headings. Today, for example, I want to Dig Deeper Into Bibliology... or what we believe about the Bible.

In doing so, we should shed some light on statements 2 and 3 of our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures, consisting of the sixtysix books of the Old and New Testaments.

WE BELIEVE the Biblical account of the creation of the universe through the direct and immediate creative acts of God.

Now, five years ago, I preached a series entitled "What I Believe." It was the first series I preached as your pastor. These discussions will draw heavily from that series, and may seem repetitive to the handful who are still with us from those early days. But I make no apology for that, for what we believed then is what we believe now. And hopefully... prayerfully... it will be what we believe until Jesus comes again.

So today, let's dig deeper into what we believe about the Bible. For everything else about our Christian faith hinges on this key truth - The Bible is the Word of God, and is therefore all we need to order and guide our lives. It is sufficient. It is not deficient in any way. We need add nothing to it.

ILLUS - "When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?" asked the good reverend. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank," said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - -Chapter 11."

We may laugh at that, but it is, in a way, illustrative of a truth - EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE IS IN THIS BOOK!

Notice our text - *Psalm 19*, and consider what the Psalmist says about this subject. *Psalm 19* is about God's revelation to man. It describes His "general" revelation - vss. 1-6, as well as His "special" revelation - vss. 7-14.

In the first 6 verses, which are not the subject of our lesson today, we learn that God has revealed all that is needed about Himself in creation.

*Psalms 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."*

The same truth can be found in the New Testament:

*Romans 1:18-20 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"*

ILLUS - A while back, I was involved in a conversation at work. One of my colleagues mentioned she had read about a new planetary discovery - a new planet in a nearby solar system that scientists believe is "life capable." The question naturally arose as to whether there is life on other planets. This woman believed that it is ridiculous and arrogant to think that our planet is the only one with life, and that all that exists out there is just for us. And yet, I maintained as I always have, that the heavens DO have a purpose, but it is not to harbor other life forms as described in Star Trek. It is to DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD. When we look at the stars, God speaks to us.

This thought is the opposite of arrogance. It is extremely humbling to look at the heavens with *Psalm 19:1* in mind.

And so, the first few verses of *Psalm 19* remind us that God declares Himself through all of His creation. Remember that the next time you look up into the millions of stars that He created to point you to Him.

Today, though, we want to concentrate on what this Psalm teaches us about God's "special" revelation, the Word of God.

Notice, especially, *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.* (Psalm 19:7-9 NKJV)

The structure of those verses is interesting.

There are 6 descriptions of the Word of God. It is called law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments.

There are 6 characteristics of the Word of God. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.

There are 6 results of the Word of God in our lives. It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and is righteous altogether.

Finally, there are 6 reminders that the Bible is OF THE LORD! It is called the law OF THE LORD, the testimony OF THE LORD, the statutes OF THE LORD, the commandment OF THE LORD, the fear OF THE LORD, and the judgments OF THE LORD.

Let's break down these 6 statements about God's Word.

## "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."

### Notice the name - "the LAW of the Lord"

This is the Hebrew word "TORAH"<sup>1</sup>, and it means "law, direction, instruction." This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the TEACHING or DIDACTIC nature of the Bible. It emphasizes the fact that God is teaching man through His Word.

### Notice the characteristic - PERFECT

How is God's teaching? How is His instruction? How is His law? IT IS PERFECT; or to expand upon that word with its Hebrew definition: it is "complete, whole, entire, and sound."

### Notice the result - it CONVERTS THE SOUL

IT IS THE WORD OF GOD THAT SAVES!

*Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

*1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

ILLUS - I read a fascinating story once about Menelik II. Have you heard of him? "He was one of the greatest rulers in African history and the creator of modern Ethiopia. Born in 1844, he was captured during an enemy raid and held prisoner for 10 years. Escaping, Menelik II declared himself head of the province of Shewa. He began conquering neighboring kingdoms and developed them into modern Ethiopia with

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<sup>1</sup> Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon

himself as emperor. When Italy tried to take over Ethiopia Menekil's army met and crushed the Italians at the Battle of Aduwa. This victory, as well as his efforts to modernize Ethiopia (schools, telephones, railroads), make Menekil world-famous. The emperor had one little known eccentricity. Whenever he was feeling ill, he would eat a few pages of the Bible, insisting that this always restored his health. One day in December, 1913, recovering from a stroke and feeling extremely ill, he had the entire book of Kings torn from an Egyptian edition of the Bible, ate every page of it--and died." (Source Unknown)

In a warped way, he had the right idea. We cannot know salvation without the Word of God. It is the Word of God that saves, and apart from the Word of God there is no salvation. (Don't EAT it, though, READ IT!)

Matthew Henry said, "The Holy Scripture is of much greater benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe, or the light of the sun. To recover man out of his fallen state, there is need of the word of God."

And C. H. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers said, "It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation."

## "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

### The name - TESTIMONY

This comes from a Hebrew word meaning "testimony, witness".

In contrast to the previous word, "law, which presented the Bible as divine instruction, this word, teaches us that the Bible is a DIVINE WITNESS. It emphasizes the fact that the Bible is God giving testimony to Who He is, and what He requires.

### The characteristic - SURE

You can mark it down and take it to the bank - when God is on the witness stand, His testimony is absolutely SURE.

A few of the meanings of this Hebrew word include "believe, assurance, faithful, sure, established, trust, verified, steadfast, surely be, stand fast, trusty"

THERE IS NO Surer TESTIMONY THAN WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE. Now this is a critical truth to consider in this day and age where people are constantly casting doubt on the validity of the Bible. How many have seen the plethora of TV programs and magazine articles on "other gospels" that have surfaced in recent years. Our adversary, the devil, wants us to believe the Bible is not totally trustworthy. He wants you to doubt what you read therein. This was his first tactic with Eve and he's still using it today. "*Yea, hath God said?*" (Genesis 3:1)

But regardless of those who would cast doubt, the "testimony of the Lord is sure.

Peter said it like this in 2 Peter 1:16-19 "*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 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 the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*"

In other words, the testimony that we have in scripture is as trustworthy as (actually more trustworthy than) the voice of God speaking directly from heaven!

ILLUS - To get an idea of the SURENESS of Scripture, picture God as a witness in a court of law. (We've all seen enough TV to draw an adequate mental picture from.) The prosecuting attorney asks question after question, but God's testimony is SURE - He does not falter, hesitate, or stumble over His words. The prosecutor attempts to trip Him up, make Him make a mistake, reverse His testimony, but He is SURE. After an eternity of attacks and cross-examination, God's testimony will be unchanged, undaunted, unscathed. IT IS SURE.

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted  
'Mid the raging storms of time;  
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,  
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands like a mountain towering  
Far above the works of men;  
Its truth by none ever was refuted,  
And destroy it they never can.

## The result - MAKES WISE THE SIMPLE

When we have more questions than answers...

When we don't know what to do...

When our mind is bombarded by the contradictory claims of this world...

When we are told that our views are unsophisticated and uneducated and old fashioned and foolish...

When we vacillate between belief systems...

When we, like the father in *Mark 9*, cry out in despair, "*Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!*"

THEN we find God's testimony is SURE!

You may depend on it... mark it down... take it to the bank... God's testimony is SURE!

## "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart"

### The name - STATUTES

If we look up the definition of this Hebrew word, we find that it means "precept, commandment, statute". We find a word that includes the meaning of the other 2 words. It has the idea of TEACHING, as in the LAW, and it also has the idea of TESTIMONY. However, the idea here is more on GUIDELINES, than on either witness or law. The Word of God contains divine guidelines to help us order our lives.

The scripture is full of guidelines for living from God. They show the path in which we should walk.

We live in the day of the "HOW TO" book. Some years ago, I performed a search for the words "HOW TO" on Amazon.com, and found that at that time there were over 32,000 books in their collection that have something to do with "HOW TO." Some examples:

How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie  
How to Talk so Kids Will Listen, and Listen so Kids Will Talk,  
by Adele Faber  
How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of  
Comfort Cooking, by Nigella Lawson  
The Pocket Guide to Making Successful Small Talk -  
How to Talk to Anyone Anytime Anywhere About Anything,  
by Bernardo J. Carducci  
How To Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food,  
by Nigella Lawson

The point is, we live in a day when people are looking everywhere for guidelines, and here they are... "The statutes of the LORD are right!"

## The characteristic - RIGHT

God's guidelines for living are ALWAYS RIGHT. His directions are ALWAYS CORRECT. His path is ALWAYS STRAIGHT.

## The result - REJOICING THE HEART

God has given us guidelines for living. We may not always understand them... they certainly don't always agree with the world's way of doing things, but THEY ARE RIGHT and the ONLY SOURCE OF JOY for our lives. Why look anyplace else for help in how to live? You are never going to go wrong with the Bible. It will always lead you in right paths.

I read a quote once that said, "The man who walks with God always knows in what direction he is going."

Have you ever taken a wrong turn on a one-way street? Did it bring about joy in your life? I once was driving in Pontiac, Michigan with my wife who was great with child. As I was peacefully navigating the streets of Pontiac, my lovely wife, in a way that only wives can, reached over and touched me on the arm and said those words that strike insanity into the heart of any man who has ever heard them. She said, "Honey, I think it's time." I looked at her with complete calm, and in total control. I said, "OK, we'll go to the hospital, then," and turned onto Wide Track Drive, which is a bypass around Pontiac... about 4 lanes wide... one-way. I was going the wrong way.

There is no joy when we're going the wrong way on the wrong road. We need God's guidelines. Only in following God's guidelines is there joy.

The Bible is filled with guidelines for raising children...

... for sweetness in marriage...

... for success in business...

... for wisdom in finance...

God's guidelines give us a straight road. We need to follow them.

# "The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

## The name - COMMANDMENT

This comes from MITSVAH, a Hebrew word meaning "commandment, either of men, or of God." When used to describe the Word of God, this emphasizes the fact that God's Word contains the DECREES of God. Not suggestions, but COMMANDMENTS. It reminds us of the AUTHORITATIVE nature of scripture, its NON-OPTIONAL character.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, saying *These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:8-9 NJKV)*

When I read that passage, I cannot help but wonder whether we have a similar attitude today, discounting the COMMANDMENTS of God, in favor of the traditions of men? And I suggest to you, brothers and sisters, that we need to get back to an understanding that the Word of God contains the unalterable, authoritative, and non-optional decrees of God!

ILLUS - In Dicken's "A Christmas Carol" there is a scene where Scrooge is with the ghost of Christmas past. The ghost shows him two small children who look emaciated and ravaged by illness, and says they are the result of Scrooge's avarice and greed. Scrooge is appalled, and looks away. "Cover them," he says. "I do not wish to see them." The ghost complies and hides them from view. "They are hidden," he says. "But they live. Oh they live."

Nobody wants to hear about the decrees of God, today. The quickest way to empty a church seems to be to remind people that they have a God Who has given them COMMANDMENTS for living. "Tell me about GRACE, preacher, but keep the COMMANDMENTS to yourself."

But they're still in there!

John MacArthur said, "The Bible is not full of a lot of suggestions. It is commandments, binding authoritative commandments. This is what God requires and for those who respond, there is blessing. For those who do not, there is judgment."

## The characteristic - PURE

Several possible meanings come from the definition of this Hebrew word (BAR), including "pure, clear, sincere, clean". Most English translations have chosen "PURE" as the translation, but at least one (NRSV) has chosen "CLEAR."

I like that thought - God's commandments are CLEAR. They are not hard to understand. God has made it very plain what He expects. There is no mystery!

READ - *1 John 5:1-3*. John taught us that keeping His commandments is a sign of genuine salvation, but he also taught that God's commands are "not grievous." He has not made it hard to do what He commands.

ILLUS - In the days following September 11, the number 1 search request on internet search engines was Nostradamus. Why? Because some have said that he predicted the events of September 11. The writings of Nostradamus, however, are completely opposite of the commandments of God. Where God's commandments are CLEAR, Nostradamus' writings are ridiculously muddy and mysterious.

As an example, notice this quote from the book Nostradamus, Prophecies You Cannot Ignore, by Bernie Ward: "Nostradamus... tossed in a baffling mix of word games, puns, number codes, allusions and

mysterious anagrams. Then, to muddle things even more, Nostradamus deliberately scrambled the order of the verses to further disguise the chronology." He TRIED to make it difficult to understand, and that is exactly the opposite of God, whose COMMANDMENTS ARE CLEAR - EASY TO UNDERSTAND. By the way, the comments from Nostradamus that are supposed to prophecy September 11 are, for the most part, an internet hoax... a fabrication of words that he never actually wrote, but Nostradamus scholars seem to think that the following 2 verses prophesied the events of September 11:

"The year 1999 seven months  
From the sky will come the great King of Terror.  
To resuscitate the great king of the Mongols.  
Before and after, Mars reigns by good luck."

"At forty-five degrees the sky will burn,  
Fire to approach the great new city:  
In an instant a great scattered flame will leap up,  
When one will want to demand proof of the Normans."

Clear, huh?

## The result - ENLIGHTENING THE EYES

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning - "to be or become light, shine, to become bright, to be illuminated, to light up"

We do not stumble in the dark. Our Bible, and the Commandments of the Lord it contains, LIGHTEN OUR PATH, ILLUMINATE OUR WAY, ENLIGHTEN OUR EYES!

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

## "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever"

### The name - FEAR

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the fact that the Scriptures are intended to draw us into a REVERENCE of God, or a FEAR of God.

It reminds us that God is worthy of our worship.

### The characteristic - CLEAN

There is not a spec of evil or impurity in the Word of God.

### The result - ENDURES FOREVER

ILLUS - This book has stood the test of time. Some portions of it are thousands of years old. (Job is believed to be the oldest book therein, and is several thousand years old). And even the newest book (Revelation, written in the second half of the first century A.D.) is nearly a thousand years old. Yet, in spite of its antiquity, it speaks as clearly today as it did when first penned. And it still far and away outsells all other books. It is AGELESS. It is EVER RELEVANT. It is FOREVER YOUNG.

The B.I.B.L.E.  
Yes that's the book for me!  
I stand alone on the Word of God.  
The B.I.B.L.E!

Jesus said, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.* (Matthew 24:35 NKJV)

## "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

### The name - JUDGEMENTS

The Hebrew word MISHPAT is used here. It refers to judgment, justice, the act of deciding a case, a place or seat of judgment. Earlier, we learned that the Bible is God on the witness stand ("the testimony of the Lord"), and now we see Him behind the bench. The Bible is God's VERDICT. It is His already rendered JUDGEMENT.

### The characteristic - TRUE

Contrast this with earthly judges, who are so often changing, corruptible, and unfaithful.

In America, we have an entire judicial system that has been designed to deal with the variability of opinion between judges and courts, and with the fallibility of earthly judges. Hence the appeals courts, and the appeal process. THERE IS NO APPEAL WITH GOD, FOR HIS JUDGEMENT IS ALREADY PASSED! READ THE WORD TO SEE WHAT THAT JUDGEMENT IS!

### The result - RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER

I am reminded of *Romans 3:10*, "There is none righteous, no not one." None of us are righteous, and therefore none of us is really capable of righteous judgement. Edgar Howe said "The average man's judgement is so poor, he runs a risk everytime he uses it."

In contrast to the judges of this world, who can be bought and sold and make a mockery of the word JUSTICE, God's judgements are RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER: That means that every judgement is righteous - each individual one. And all judgements are righteous - the sum total is completely righteous.

ILLUS - Abraham asked God one time, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And the answer that jumps from the pages of this book is, "YES, ALWAYS and FOREVER. God's judgements are righteous altogether."

## Conclusion:

The psalm goes on to describe the incredible value of the Bible. It points out there is nothing of greater value than the Bible. Nothing brings greater wealth (*vs. 10a*). Nothing brings greater pleasure (*vs. 10b*). Nothing brings greater profit to those who invest in it (*vs. 11*) - profit both in eternity, and in this life on earth.

And the psalmist also points out that the Bible changes us. It illuminates our sin and need before God (*vss. 12-13*), and concludes with a prayer that springs from just such an illumined heart (*vs. 14*).

We have spent considerable time on this subject, but I hope you agree it is important. We as believers need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to delight in them day and night. We need to meditate in them day and night. We need to READ THEM. We need to base our lives upon them, and turn to them for the answers to all of life's questions. We need to base every single thing we do on the Bible, and on nothing else.

Legendary coach Vince Lombardi began the first practice of each season by holding up a football and saying, 'This is a football.' He would then gaze around the room while still holding the football aloft and ask, 'Have we lost anybody?'

Just as there is no game of football without the football, so there is no Christianity without the Bible. It is just as central to our faith and belief system.

Therefore, we boldly proclaim:

WE BELIEVE in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures, consisting of the sixtysix books of the Old and New Testaments.

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# Chapter 2. Digging Deeper - Christology

TEXT - *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9 NKJV)*

THEME - WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man.

## Introduction:

Article 2 of the FBC Constitution reads as follows:

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WE BELIEVE that all men are sinners by nature and in conduct, and cannot save themselves.

WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man.

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, evidence of salvation appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life.

WE BELIEVE in the eternal salvation of all who put their faith in Christ; that all who are truly born again are kept secure by God the Father.

WE BELIEVE in the primacy of the Church as an ordained institution of God with Christ as its Head. We recognize the authority of the local church and subscribe to the ordinances of baptism by immersion and the

Lord's Supper for all those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the Devil or Satan, the enemy of God and man, and that he is destined for eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire.

WE BELIEVE in the bodily resurrection, immortality and rapture of all believers at Christ's imminent coming and that His coming is both pretribulational and premillennial.

WE BELIEVE in the existence of a literal heaven and a literal hell and that all men spend eternity in one of the two places.

WE BELIEVE that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

WE BELIEVE that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes.

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members. All literature used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

As we dig deeper into this statement of faith, last time we looked at what it says about BIBLIOLOGY... what we believe about the Bible. We concentrated then on:

WE BELIEVE in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

Today, let's dig deeper into the most glorious of all topics... and persons... let's dig deeper into what we believe about Jesus. Now there are a couple of things in our statement of faith that describe our beliefs about Christology (Christology simply means the study of Christ.):

WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man.

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

Let's concentrate our attention today on the first of those. And it will take us two weeks, for today we'll concentrate on the first half of the equation - We believe that He is fully God. Next time we'll tackle the second half - We believe that Jesus is fully man.

A good verse to use as our text is found in *Colossians 2:9* - *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Do you remember when the novel "The DaVinci" code hit the bookshelves and the movie screen? Although the book claimed to contain new and sensational evidence about Jesus, it contained nothing of the sort - just the same old recycled heresies that have circulated throughout the history of Christianity. The book's basic premise was that Jesus was never believed to be God by his followers; that was added later by the

church hierarchy. One of Brown's characters says, for example, "Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet - a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal."

Did the followers of Jesus believe He was just a man, or did they understand Him to be the Son of God and God the Son?

Let's consider three sample scenes from our Bibles. Read along in your copy of scripture.

READ - *Matthew 27:50-54; John 20:26-28; Matthew 16:13-16*

These are only 3 examples. There are others. The Bible presents clear evidence that Jesus was and is the Son of God and God the Son. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9)*

Now this is important stuff - a key doctrine of the Bible. (READ J. Oswald Sanders, "The Incomparable Christ", p. 95, para 1-3)

Let's examine some of that evidence this morning.

## Evidence

### He possesses the attributes of God.

As we read our Bibles, we come to see that there are certain things that are true about God... certain attributes which apply to His character. These are things that are unique to Him as God. The Bible is filled with illustrations of Jesus demonstrating those same attributes. If He has the attributes of God, He is God.

#### 1. He is ETERNAL

- He was before John - *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. (John 1:15)*
- He was before Abraham - *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)*
- He was before the world came into being - *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (John 17:5)*
- He is the firstborn of all creation - *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (Colossians 1:15)*
- He was in existence "*in the beginning*" (*John 1:1*)
- He has existed "*from the days of eternity*" (*Micah 5:2*)
- He continues forever (*Isaiah 9:6f; Hebrews 1:11f; 13:8*)

#### 2. He is OMNIPRESENT

- He was in heaven while on earth - *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. (John 3:13 NKJV)*
- He is on earth while in heaven - *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20 NKJV); I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20 NKJV)*

- He is everywhere you are at the same time He is everywhere I am, and everybody else!

ILLUS - Nathaniel - *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. (John 1:48)*

Where Nathaniel was, Jesus was, even when He was somewhere else! And where you are, Jesus is. He is everywhere present at the same time. Only God can do that.

### 3. He is OMNISCIENT

*He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17)*

*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:3)*

He knows EVERYTHING!

ILLUS - He knew all about the woman at the well - READ *John 4:16-19*

ILLUS - He knew (knows) the thoughts of men: *But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. (Luke 6:8) But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. (Luke 11:17)*

### 4. He is OMNIPOTENT

There is one word found throughout the Bible which over and over demonstrates the fact that Christ is ALL-POWERFUL. That word is MIRACLE.

- He demonstrated power over demons - *Mark 5:11-15*
- ... over disease - *Luke 4:38-41*
- ... over death - *John 11:38-44*
- ... over the elements of nature - *John 2:3-11*
- ... over ALL THINGS - *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18)*

### 5. He is IMMUTABLE.

*And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 1:12)*

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

Eternal... everywhere present at once... all powerful... all knowing... unchangeable and unchanging - ONLY GOD is these things. Jesus is these things. JESUS IS GOD. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9 NKJV)*

## He holds the offices of deity.

He does the things that God does, or that God is expected to do.

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1. He creates - Jesus is the creator.

*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)*

*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Colossians 1:16)*

*And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: (Hebrews 1:10)*

2. He upholds - Jesus holds everything together.

*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (or HOLD TOGETHER, per NASB, NIV, ESV). (Colossians 1:17 NKJV)*

ILLUS - I was once reading about the basic building block of all matter - the atom. The question was raised, "What holds it together?" And it's a valid question, for if you remember your physics classes, you'll remember that an atom consists of a nucleus orbited by electrons. The nucleus contains positively charged protons and uncharged neutrons. The electrons are negatively charged. A cluster of protons all positively charged should repel each other, just as magnets do when the like charges are held against each other. What holds it together? Here is a quote from someone more learned in these things than me:

You may have noticed something odd about the picture of the atom described earlier: if like charges repel each other, and opposite charges attract, what keeps the protons in the nucleus--who all have the same charge--from flying apart? This is a real difficulty, and it puzzled scientists for many years. At first, they believed that the nucleus contained a few electrons, whose negative charge helped neutralize the protons' positive charge, making a kind of "cement" that held the nucleus together. Eventually, though, further experiments showed that the nucleus contained neutrons instead; because the neutron carries no electric charge, it cannot hold the nucleus together by electrical forces.

This still leaves the possibility that some other force exists, some force which operates between protons and neutrons and makes them attract each other. Because this force must be strong enough to overcome the protons' electrical repulsion, scientists termed it the strong nuclear force. We now have a fairly good understanding of the way the strong force operates, though why such a force exists in the first place is still an unanswered question.

(Excerpted from "Supernovas: Making Astronomical History" by Blake Stacey)

I submit that Jesus is the force... the STRONG FORCE that holds EVERYTHING together.

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3 ESV)*

## **He exercised the privileges of deity.**

1. He claimed to be able to forgive sins.

*Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:47f*

2. He claimed that He will one day raise the dead in the resurrection.

*John 5:25-29*

3. He claimed that one day He will judge all things.

*John 5:22*

## He is referred to by names that equate to deity.

1. Alpha and Omega - *Revelation 22:13*

2. Resurrection and the Life - *John 11:25*

3. I AM - *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)*

4. Emmanuel - "God with us!" - *Matthew 1:22f; Isaiah 7:14*

Clearly we are justified in saying, "WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man."

## Application

So why does this matter to me here in Randolph, Ohio? How does this help me with my very real problems in life?

May I suggest a few ways in which you might want to apply this to your life.

1. Since Jesus is the Son of God, we should respond to Him as such.

- If you are saved, that response is worship and service.

*Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. (Matthew 14:33)*

Too many Christians are waiting for some thunderbolt to strike before they get serious about worshipping and serving God. But that thunderbolt already struck - in a manger in Bethlehem!

Believe it! And if you believe it, worship Him always! And serve Him faithfully... always!

- If you have not yet decided to trust Christ, that response must be hearing, believing and receiving.

*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)*

*... as many as received Him... (John 1:12)*

What are you waiting for? There is no further evidence that is forthcoming.

I warn you my friend, that if you do not believe on Christ in this life, you will none-the-less acknowledge Him. *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (Romans 14:11)*

2. Since Jesus is the Son of God, what do you have to worry about?

- He is bigger than your problems.
- He is bigger than your struggle with sin.
- He is bigger than your endless failures.

- He is bigger than everything! He is God!

*... greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)*

*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: (Jeremiah 32:17)*

*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? (Jeremiah 32:27)*

SONG -

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,  
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,  
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear,  
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;  
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,  
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,  
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

## Conclusion:

*Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:54b)*

I assure you, my friend, that the centurion and those who stood gazing in amazement at the cross, had it right. Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God, and God the Son.

"WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man."

As a church, we believe that. The question for you this morning must be, do you?

## Invitation

### Note

With heads bowed and eyes closed, will you consider this one last question once again - What difference does it make in your life that Jesus is the Son of God?

- Will you believe in Him... believe His claims... trust Him to save your soul so that you may be with Him forever in heaven? Or will you walk out of here today still uncertain, and still in danger of dying and going to hell?

*1Jo 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12)*

This is IMPORTANT. Do not delay.

- Will you worship Him, and live for Him? Will you let Him be Lord of your life? Perhaps you have trusted Christ and are certain of heaven. But did it stop there with you? Are you living every moment for His glory... the Son of God's glory?

This is IMPORTANT. The world needs Christians who look and act and live in such a way that they see Jesus in them. Will you be one? Randolph needs such Christians. Will you be one?

- Will you rest in Him? When troubles and difficulties come your way, when struggles and trials of life overwhelm you, will you remember that He is the Son of God, and bigger than your problems? Will you give them to Him?

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# Chapter 3. Digging Deeper - Christology (2)

READ - *1 John 1:1-4*

TEXT - *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1)*

THEME - Jesus is the Son of God, and He is also the Son of man. His humanity is as important as His deity.

## Introduction:

Today, Friendship Bible Church observes it's third annual Old Fashioned Sunday.

It is meant to be a fun day... a day of celebration and fellowship and fun. It is also meant to be a day of reflection.

1. It is a day in which we LOOK BACK.
2. It is a day in which we LOOK AROUND.
3. It is a day in which we LOOK AHEAD.

Now here at FBC, we believe in some things. We believe, for example, in the Bible. We believe it is more than a mere book penned by men, but is actually the very inspired Word of God. And from it's pages we learn of a man who lived and died a couple thousand years ago... a man who so changed history that time itself is measured around his life... a man... actually more than a man... named Jesus Christ.

Here at FBC we have what's called a "Statement of Faith." It is simply a document describing our core beliefs, and it is available for all to see and read on our web site. In that statement of faith we read:

WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man.

It's important, to think about Jesus on Old Fashioned Sunday. You see, we can talk about the history of our church all day long, but the fact is without Jesus Christ, there is no real history to this church. Jesus is, you might say, in our very DNA here.

1. We LOOK BACK, and we see Jesus.

With the bulletin, this morning, you should find a little memento of this day... a bookmark to commemorate Old Fashioned Sunday, 2011. That bookmark contains a quotation from the history of this church, a quotation dated July 20, 1828, which reads "On this day came forward the baptized disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord, and acknowledged Him to be their only teacher and lawgiver, and the Holy Scriptures to be their only guide, and agreed to maintain Christian worship according to the aforesaid declaration." From the very earliest days of this church, whether it was called Disciples Church, or Randolph Christian Church, or Friendship Bible Church, JESUS CHRIST has been at it's very center.

2. We LOOK AROUND, and see Jesus working in our midst even now.

3. We LOOK FORWARD to the culmination of all this church stands for when Jesus returns to call us home.

A couple weeks ago we delved a little deeper into that statement of faith, that "WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man." We dug deeper into the fact that this man, Jesus, is the son of God... that he is "fully God"... that He is "just as much God as if He had never been man". As we considered that truth we learned that:

1. Jesus is everything God is.

Everything that is true of God is true of Jesus. All God's attributes are seen and demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus did everything God does.

The Bible says Jesus is the One Who created all, and Jesus is the One Who sustains all.

3. Jesus exercised all the privileges of deity.

He forgave (and forgives) sin... He claimed that He will one day raise the dead in the resurrection, and that He and He alone will judge all things.

4. Jesus is called by names that can only refer to God... to deity.

He is the Alpha and the Omega... the beginning and the end... the resurrection and the life... the I AM... and Emmanuel, which means, "God with us."

It is because the Bible says these things that we proclaim without apology - "WE BELIEVE... Jesus Christ... is fully God."

But wait a minute... our statement of faith said more than that, didn't it? Our statement of faith said that we believe He is fully God, and FULLY MAN... not only is He "just as much God as if He had never been man" but He is "just as much man as if He had never been God."

Let's spend a few minutes thinking about that.

## **The Bible does present compelling evidence that Jesus was a human being... a man.**

### **He was born, just like any other man.**

*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (Galatians 4:4)*

### **He LOOKED LIKE any other man.**

*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8)*

He had all the outward indications He was a man - "fashion" = "appearance".

BTW - This verse also points out that He demonstrated His humanity with that which is most human about us - He died!

## He was made of flesh!

He had a BODY - *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:39)*

He was made of FLESH - *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

He could be HANDLED - cf. our text - *1 John 1:1*

He grew up, just like any other, from childhood to manhood - *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:52)*

## OK... so the Bible teaches He was human... SO WHAT?

We may not understand this all until we get to heaven, but we believe and accept it because it's what the Bible teaches. We believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man. We believe that Jesus is just as much God as if He had never been man, and that He is just as much man as if He had never been God. We believe that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man!

If you're like most people, you're probably confused, trying to sort this out. How could Jesus be both God and man?

Don't feel bad if it confuses you. Paul, the greatest theologian who ever lived, was confused by it, too, calling it a "great mystery."

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)*

And an even more important question than "Does this confuse you" is "Does this MATTER to you?" What does this have to do with Old Fashioned Sunday at FBC? And how does it help me with my very real problems in 2011?

Well, to be honest, I can't think of any other truth of scripture that applies MORE to you and I than this one. For this is what makes Christ truly precious to us. He was and is, as His name Emmanuel reminds us, "God with us." He is God, but He is also one of us. Think about what that means:

## It means we can know what God is like.

*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)*

## It means we have an example of how to live.

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (1 Peter 2:21)*

In a world filled and overflowing with information, how do we know what to do? Conflicting voices shout from all sides about how we should live, and these often conflict with what we read in our Bibles. Is there an example we can follow? YES - Christ is our example.

There are very few issues in life that you cannot ask "What would Christ do in this instance?" and find an example from His life. Live like He did, do what He would do, and you will never go wrong!

By the way, you don't get to make that up. Some, today, would claim to be living like Jesus, but they are ignoring what the Bible teaches about Him. He was love, but He also never excused sin. He demanded repentance and change in our lives. Although He loved and forgave, it was always in the context of "Go and sin no more." So let's be honest when we claim to follow His example.

*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6)*

## **It means He knows what we are going through.**

- He experienced SORROW - *Matthew 26:37*
- He experienced ADOLESCENCE - *Luke 2:40*
- He experienced HUNGER - *Luke 4:2*
- He experienced WEARINESS - *Luke 8:23*
- He experienced POVERTY - *Luke 9:58*
- He experienced TEMPTATION - *Matthew 4; Hebrews 4:15*
- He got ANGRY (righteously so), and SAD, and FRUSTRATED

ILLUS - Gold City quartet song - "The Search is Over" has a verse: "He knows what you're goin' through. He's walked in your shoes. And He's felt the pain, 'til His tears fell like rain and His heart broke in two. He knows how it feels alone, when all of His friends were gone. And He walked up that hill, doing His Father's will, to die for you.

## **MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL - it means we can be forgiven. Our sins are paid for.**

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Romans 8:3)*

JOKE - A Sunday School teacher had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?" There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. "Sin," he said. (Bits and Pieces, May, 1991)

We may giggle, but the sad fact is none of us has any problem with that, do we?

We ALL need forgiveness. The longer I live, and the more I talk with people about these things, the more I learn that this is understood by us all. We may deny it outwardly, but inwardly we all realize it. We are sinners. We are imperfect, and fall short of the standard of our perfect God.

That is, after all, what the Bible teaches - *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23 KJV)*

ILLUS - I once listened to a sermon where the speaker was talking about how to tell others about Jesus. He was discussing the fact that the gospel, the story of Jesus, is "good news." I remember one thing in particular which he said. He spoke of how we are all sinners, and in need of forgiveness. When he got to

that point - we are all sinners, he said, "That is not good news... that is not even news." And it's not news, is it? We all know it. We need forgiveness for we fall so short.

The good news is that forgiveness is there for you, and it's there because of what Jesus, a MAN, did in the flesh!

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. (Ephesians 1:7 NIV)*

*When you were dead in your sins... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. (Colossians 2:13 NIV)*

*I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. (1 John 2:12 KJV)*

ILLUS - The parable of the prodigal son (cf. *Luke 15:11f*) is a great picture of the forgiveness you have available in Christ. The prodigal sinned in every conceivable way. He is a picture of misery and ruin. Yet the father RAN to forgive him when he but turned to Him and asked.

The same is available to you, if you will just ask.

*For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive; and abundant in mercy to all that call upon you. (Psalm 86:5 NKJV)*

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

## Conclusion:

Wonderful truth! Jesus is not only God, He is also man - one of us!

He is, as John described *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1)*

Therefore, we can have fellowship with Him (vs. 3), and we can have joy that comes no other way (vs. 4).

All because of the man, Christ Jesus... Whom the Bible describes as *the same yesterday, today, and forever*. We look back, and see Him in our past... we look around, and see that He is still here, saving the lost and loving the saved, and we look ahead and see all eternity spent with Him.

We, the members of FBC see that... I see that... the question is, do YOU see it? Do you know this man, Jesus? Do you KNOW HIM?

*Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? 23 And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Matthew 7:21-23 NKJV)*

This man, Jesus is in the past, the present, and the future. We look back, around, and ahead, and see Him. But none of that matters to you if you don't look into your own heart and see Him there. DO YOU KNOW HIM?

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# Chapter 4. Digging Deeper - Soteriology

READ - *Ephesians 2:1-10*

TEXT - *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV)*

THEME - Salvation is only by grace through faith. There is nothing we do to earn or obtain it.

## Introduction:

We continue digging deeper into our statement of faith this morning. That statement of faith, is available for your reading pleasure online as Article 2 of our church constitution. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it by going there and reading it. If you do not have access to it online, it is also available in printed form in the little membership guide booklet, copies of which are provided in the foyer.

Now, some weeks ago we dug deeper into the subject of Bibliology, based on the statement "WE BELIEVE in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments." Then, for the last couple of studies we looked at Christology, considering the statement: "WE BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and that He is both fully God and fully man."

Today, I'd like to dig a little deeper into what we believe concerning soteriology, or more plainly, what we believe about the doctrine of salvation. In doing so, we'll touch on a few lines from our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, evidence of salvation appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life.

WE BELIEVE in the eternal salvation of all who put their faith in Christ; that all who are truly born again are kept secure by God the Father.

Although we read *Ephesians 2:1-10* this morning, let's concentrate on vs. 8 as our text, and to guide our thoughts, let's break it down into three distinct phrases - "You have been saved," "by grace," "through faith."

## "You have been saved"

(There is a need for salvation, and a provision for salvation.)

There are many divisions between people. Some are Republicans and some are Democrats. Some like Facebook and some prefer Google+ or Twitter. Some say poTAYto and some, poTAHto. In our community, there are those who root for the Waterloo Vikings, while others root for the Rootstown Rovers (who are 5-0 BTW!). I am a Cleveland Browns fan, while some of you misinformed ones root for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Yes, there are many areas of life on this planet where we are divided.

ILLUS - It is no different today than at any other time in history. Paul found himself dragged before the council. We learned of it in our recent studies in *Acts*. (cf. *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees... (Acts 23:6 KJV)*) Basically, he pitted the one group against the other.

*For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:11-12 NKJV)* (NOTE - The Message makes that particularly clear - *You're all picking sides, going around saying, "I'm on Paul's side," or "I'm for Apollos," or "Peter is my man," or "I'm in the Messiah group." (1 Corinthians 1:11-12, The Message)*

Well, allow me to make a comment that may, at first blush, sound arrogant and uncaring - allow me to tell you of a division that the Bible speaks quite clearly about - there are only two kinds of people in this world:

1. The saved
2. The lost

If those were simply my opinions and thoughts, then they WOULD be arrogant and uncaring. If some man-made religion taught that, it WOULD be arrogant and uncaring. But that is the clear and unchanging teaching we see in the pages of the Bible - the 66 books which we already learned to be the inspired, inerrant, holy, unchanging, and perfect revelation of the mind of God.

It is the BIBLE that declares to us that there are not many WAYS to get to heaven - ONLY ONE - *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6 NKJV)*

It is the BIBLE that declares to us that there are not many PATHS - ONLY ONE - *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV)*

It is the BIBLE that declares to us that there are not many SAVIORS - ONLY ONE - *there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12 ESV)*

*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:12 NKJV)*

And so, the first thing we are reminded from the phrase "YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED" is that there is a need for salvation. (We'll discuss this more in a minute.)

First, some other things we learn from this phrase:

1. God has provided the means of salvation.

In addition to what we're already discussing, there is another line from our statement of faith that helps the MEANS of salvation:

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH - that's the MEANS of salvation. Faith in the FINISHED REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST alone - that's the MEANS of salvation.

We remember it often in the observance of the Lord's Table here at FBC. We remember his DEATH, which paid the price for our sins.

*For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. (1 Peter 1:18–19 NLT)*

*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7 NKJV)*

2. Salvation is a "present possession" of the believer.

Note that it doesn't say "will be saved" but "you HAVE BEEN saved." Present possession!

Now, you don't need to know any Greek to understand your Bible. The English translations we have available to us today are wonderfully accurate, if we'll just take the time to read them! But sometimes, just sometimes, the Greek adds a clarity that thrills the soul. For example:

"Saved" is, in Greek, the "perfect passive participle". This is important because it points to a completed action with a continuing result. So, there is a component of our salvation which is "point in time." There was a "point in time" when you became SAVED.

Do you remember a point in time? What is the "point in time" when you were saved?

3. Once obtained, that salvation is a continuing possession of the believer.

Remember we said the perfect passive participle describes a completed action WITH A CONTINUING RESULT? So salvation is something that starts at a point in time, and CONTINUES! GLORY!

QUOTE - (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary) "Translate as in *Ephesians 2:5*, 'Ye are in a saved state.'"

This is a GLORIOUS TRUTH! Think what it means to you! It means that once obtained, salvation cannot be lost. That once in a saved state, you cannot be in an unsaved state.

BTW - there are many other verses that support this:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24 NKJV)*

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:27-29 NKJV)*

Our text is: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV)*

And in considering just a portion of that passage, the phrase "you have been saved," we see that there is a NEED for salvation, the PROVISION of salvation, and the PRESENT and CONTINUING POSSESSION of salvation, once attained.

## "By grace"

(It is wholly and entirely a gift of God.)

Definition - Usually we hear "grace" defined as the unmerited favor of God.

Consider the religions of the world. What do they consider necessary in order for one to have a relationship with God (if they even make allowances for such a thing)? We could spend time talking about various religions, but we would find that they all fall into two categories:

1. Those that teach salvation by works (all except true Christianity).
2. Christianity, which teaches salvation by grace.

The WORKS take many forms in differing religions:

- Some religions use the "scale of righteousness" - if at the end of your life, your good works outweigh your bad, you are in.
- Some add certain requirements in addition faith. (e.g. the requirement for baptism - foreign to scripture)
- Some teach that if you DO a particular thing you are GUARANTEED paradise - e.g. Islam and martyrdom.

But our text is clear - salvation is by grace alone. Other verses support this as well:

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5)*

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)*

We mentioned in our 1st point that there is a NEED for salvation. Let's make that more personal now:

**YOU NEED SALVATION BECAUSE YOU ARE A SINNER.**

Do you deny that?

The Bible makes it clear that you are a sinner, and therefore unable to please God.

1. You are a sinner by nature.

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12)*

2. You are a sinner by practice.

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)*

3. As a sinner, you cannot reach the mark of God's righteousness, **NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY!**

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)*

ILLUS - "A man was traveling on his donkey when he came upon a small fuzzy object lying in the road. He dismounted to look more closely and found a sparrow lying on its back with its scrawny legs thrust upward. At first he thought the bird was dead, but closer investigation proved it to be very much alive. The man asked the sparrow if he was all right. The sparrow replied, 'Yes.' The man said, 'What are you doing lying on your back with your legs pointed towards the sky?' The sparrow responded that he had heard a rumor that the sky was falling, and so he was holding his legs up in support. The man replied, 'You surely don't think that you're going to hold it up with those two scrawny legs, do you?' The sparrow, with a very solemn look, retorted, 'One does the best he can.'"

We are much like that sparrow. No matter how hard we try - even if it is our best effort - it is not good enough. The best effort we can put forth is inadequate to provide what we really need. When the sky is falling, our reaction might be to lift our hands to stop it, but it will do us no good.

WE BELIEVE that all men are sinners by nature and in conduct, and cannot save themselves.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that NO WORKS OF MAN, HOWEVER GOOD, NEED TO BE OR CAN BE ADDED for salvation,

This is SUCH and important point! It is ALL OF GRACE. There is nothing you can do to earn it.

## "Through faith"

Our part is simply to believe in Jesus and trust in His finished work.

QUOTE - (Robertson's NT Word Pictures) "Grace" is God's part, "faith" is ours.

*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (Acts 16:31)*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

*He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)*

*He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)*

## Conclusion:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV)*

Let's sum this wonderful verse up: You need to be saved and you can be saved by trusting in Jesus. There is no other way.

- There are not may WAYS to get to heaven - ONLY ONE
- There are not may PATHS - ONLY ONE
- There are not many SAVIORS - ONLY ONE

And so I encourage you to examine yourself, whether ye be in the faith. Are you trusting in Jesus alone? Or are you trusting in your own good works?

ARE YOU IN A SAVED STATE?

You can be today. The transaction can happen today. John W. Peterson said it so well in "Heaven Came Down":

Born of the Spirit with life from above  
Into God's family divine,  
Justified fully thru Calvary's love,  
O what a standing is mine!  
And the transaction so quickly was made  
When as a sinner I came,

Took of the offer of grace He did proffer -  
He saved me, O praise His dear name!

## Invitation

"You have been saved." I ask it now, with heads bowed and eyes closed, as a question - "HAVE YOU BEEN SAVED?" Are you in a saved state? Do you know you are going to heaven?

If not, let today be day that you take of the offer of grace He does proffer. He'll save you - today.

Baptism, membership, prayer - if the Holy Spirit has spoken to you today, respond as He leads...

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# Chapter 5. Digging Deeper - Soteriology (2)

READ - *(selected scriptures - see below)*

THEME - A person can LOOK saved and not actually BE saved. We believe in eternal security, but also in a changed life that accompanies salvation, and that demonstrates the reality of the profession.

## Introduction:

Let's start with a little Bible study this morning.

READ - *Matthew 13:1-23*

While you think about that passage, let's read a little further - READ - *Matthew 13:24-30*

Is there a similar message? What similar thought comes through from both passages? Let's read another passage - READ - *Matthew 26:17-25*

Is there a similar message between these passages? What similar thought do you see arising? Two more passages, which I'll just quote for you -

*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19 NKJV)*

*If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. (Hebrews 12:7-8 NKJV)*

Do you see any similarities between these passages? Is there a common thread that runs throughout?

I would suggest that there is, and that that common thread is this - a person can LOOK saved, and not BE saved.

In the parable of the sowers and the soils, at one point, ALL FOUR looked saved, but in the end, only one was. In the parable of the tares amongst the wheat, the entire point of the parable is that there will be those who only look like believers, but are not true believers, living amongst the true believers, until Jesus comes again. In the narrative regarding Judas we have perhaps the greatest example in the Bible of a man who fooled everyone but God. None of the disciples, at least as far as the Bible reveals, questioned for a moment that it might be Judas. Only Jesus knew. And the passages in *1 John and Hebrews* plainly teach that there are both true and false professions of faith, with corresponding evidence either way.

So, the common thread? A person can LOOK saved, and not actually BE saved.

Last Lord's Day we considered some thoughts from our statement of faith related to salvation.

We spoke from *Ephesians 2:8-9* and learned that salvation is a gift, freely given by our gracious God to all who trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and that once received it can never be lost.

We learned the basis therefore of these thoughts from our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the substitutionary death of Christ and in His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, evidence of salvation appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life.

WE BELIEVE in the eternal salvation of all who put their faith in Christ; that all who are truly born again are kept secure by God the Father.

We learned, therefore, about salvation, and the parallel doctrine - eternal security. We learned that once a person is saved, they can never be lost. That is our firm belief here at FBC, because that is what the Word of God teaches.

But anytime we talk about eternal security, questions begin to arise. And this week was no exception. Several issues converged this week to convince me that we were not done with our discussion of soteriology - that we needed to tie up a couple of loose ends. In our Men's Bible study this past week, the question came up - "Are we to consider a person saved who does not change in the slightest after coming to Christ? Same habits... same sins... same lifestyle... NO CHANGE AT ALL. Is such a person saved or not?" Another came to me and directly asked me this week regarding eternal security. And on top of it all, the Holy Spirit convicted me that I completely neglected one particular part of our statement of faith.

So... even though we were to have been in Nehemiah this morning, I never want our method to get in the way of the Holy Spirit's leading, and I believe we have to confront this unfinished business.

What did I neglect from our statement of faith?

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, EVIDENCE OF SALVATION APPEARS IN THE HOLY FRUITS OF REPENTANCE, FAITH AND NEWNESS OF LIFE.

That last part - EVIDENCE OF SALVATION APPEARS... is vital to understanding this issue.

## What We Learned About Salvation and Eternal Security

The Bible says we can KNOW we are saved. (*1 John 5:11-13*)

Salvation results from the FINISHED work of Jesus on the cross. (*Ephesians 2:13, 1 John 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-21, John 19:30*)

Salvation is a gift, entirely by grace, and cannot be earned. (*Ephesians 2:4-10, Titus 3:4-8, Romans 11:6*)

Salvation is a PRESENT POSSESSION of the believer:

*John 5:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

Jesus not only SAVES, He also KEEPS

*2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

Now I've given you a lot of Bible this morning, and I hope your eyes aren't glazing over. I want us to be clear on what the Bible teaches. We are saved by trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Salvation is a gift given entirely and only because of God's love and grace, and it cannot be earned by anything we think we might do to earn it. It is a GIFT! It is FREE! And once God gives the gift He will never take it away. To be SAVED is to be ETERNALLY SAVED... ETERNALLY SECURE

## What I Neglected To Tell You About Eternal Security

There are objections that surface to this teaching, though. Common objections. The same objections over and over. I know, because I used to have the very same objections. Let's see if I can articulate them:

### 1. What if I sin?

I've had people say it this way - "But what if I sin? I can understand that the blood of Christ cleansed me of my past sin ( I.e. Before I believed ) but what about sin that occurs AFTER salvation... Won't I be judged for that? What if I sin just a few seconds before I die? Won't I go to hell?"

If you struggle with this objection, you need to memorize *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

Once you've got that verse firmly in your head, flip back a chapter and meditate on *Romans 7*, where Paul vividly confesses his continual struggle with sin. If sinning after salvation sends you to hell, nobody, including Paul, will be in heaven.

You need to remember that when Christ died for your sins, they were ALL future. None of your sins that He died for had been committed yet, and yet He said "IT IS FINISHED" "TETELESTHAI - PAID IN FULL"

You need to understand the timing of salvation - it is a PRESENT POSSESSION, not merely a FUTURE one. Trust Christ and receive eternal life NOW, not later. (cf. *John 5:24 - MEMORIZE THIS VERSE!* I first heard this verse used to support the doctrine of eternal security by Dr. Curtis Hutson, and it was like a bell went off in my head. It's MINE. I ALREADY HAVE IT! Hallelujah. Read that verse over and over and over until that bell goes off for you.

### 2. What about the guy who claims to be saved and then turns away completely, or the gal who claims to be saved and shows no change in her life at all?

Some might put it like this:

"So, preacher, what you're saying then is that a person can trust Christ at a certain time in his / her life, and then subsequently abandon that belief, and still go to heaven?"

or...

"What you're saying, then, is that a person can be a Christian and live entirely like the lost world... no evidence of salvation being present in their life until the day they die, and still go to heaven?"

"Are you saying, preacher, that such a person is eternally secure?"

Answer - NO, that's NOT what I'm saying at all. And it's not what the Bible teaches. I believe there are two primary answers to this objection in the Bible. Two explanations for this person who "believes" and then later "turns away" or who "believes" and then "lives like the devil" the rest of his / her life:

- a. He was not genuinely saved in the first place.

This would be the explanation seen in *Matthew 13*

ILLUS - Judas demonstrated that it is possible to give every outward appearance of salvation, but be lost.

*2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

*1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*

- b. He is saved, but rebelling against God.

Some people like to use the term "backslidden" to describe this condition.

ILLUS - My experience - Gary Price

Now here is the important thing to understand from the Bible. NO CHRISTIAN can be in such a state without consequences. If you are truly SAVED, you WILL experience the consequences of being in this state. If you do NOT, then it is evidence that you are NOT REALLY SAVED.

In such cases, for example, the Bible says God will chasten. If there is no chastening, i.e. If a person can sin with impunity, he is almost certainly not a believer.

*Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

*Hebrews 12:7-8 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

## Conclusion:

Consider that portion of our statement of faith which I neglected to touch on last week:

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, EVIDENCE OF SALVATION APPEARS IN THE HOLY FRUITS OF REPENTANCE, FAITH AND NEWNESS OF LIFE.

Consider that the Bible clearly teaches that a person who is truly saved can never be lost, but once truly saved, there will be evidence of that in their life!

Consider that the Bible clearly teaches a person can LOOK saved, but not BE saved!

I hope that one of two things will happen as you consider these things:

1. Either you will rejoice in understanding that your salvation - that unspeakable gift God gave you in Christ - can NEVER be taken from you!
2. Or, you will take a good hard look at your Christian experience with a view toward ensuring you were ever really saved in the first place.

The first result is desired for all who are truly saved.

The second, for those who show no signs of salvation in their lives.

Some, today, might need to kneel before God in renewed appreciation for the amazing gift of salvation - eternal - unchanging - YOURS!

Some, today, might need to kneel before God and repent of your false profession, your unchanged and unchanging life, and trust Him for real.

WE BELIEVE in salvation by grace alone, through faith in the finished, redemptive work of Christ alone, and that no works of man, however good, need to be or can be added for salvation, EVIDENCE OF SALVATION APPEARS IN THE HOLY FRUITS OF REPENTANCE, FAITH AND NEWNESS OF LIFE.

EVIDENCE OF SALVATION APPEARS! That's what we believe. That's what the Bible teaches. Does it APPEAR in your life?

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# Chapter 6. Digging Deeper - Pneumatology

READ - *John 14:16-26*

TEXT - *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)*

THEME - The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Godhead, who indwells every believer, and gives guidance and power when we walk in step with Him.

## Introduction:

We have been taking a look at the FBC Statement of Faith... not necessarily in order, but with the hope of obtaining greater understanding and clarity on what we believe here at FBC. We've looked at our beliefs regarding the Bible, Christ, and Salvation. Today, I wanted to start looking into what our statement of faith has to say about the Holy Spirit, and what we believe about Him.

And the first thing I noticed was how very little our statement of faith has to say on the subject. When we pulled this statement of faith together a few years back, we did our best at a first cut. However, I'm learning throughout this series that it is not quite perfect. And the paucity of clarity on pneumatology (how's that for word use?) is an example of where it's lacking.

The only reference to the Holy Spirit in our statement of faith is in the very first line:

WE BELIEVE there is one and only one living and true God, and that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

"AND THE HOLY SPIRIT!!" That's all our statement of faith has to say about the subject! Obviously, that is insufficient, and sometime in the future we need to address that deficiency in our statement of faith, but for now, let's pretend that it says more. For there is SO much more that we need to discuss about the pneumatology, or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

There is so much, in fact, that I don't believe we can come close to tackling the topic in a single message, and won't even try. We'll start this morning, though with two simple truths about the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit Exists
2. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer.

## The Holy Spirit exists.

To make such a statement is to remind ourselves that we believe in a thing called the trinity, a truth which IS included in our statement of faith.

The word trinity does not appear in our Bibles. Yet the truth of the trinity is clearly taught.

DEFINITION - "We teach that there is but one living and true God (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4*), an infinite, all knowing Spirit (*John 4:24*), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence,

eternally existing in three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14*) - each equally deserving worship and obedience." (MacArthur Study Bible, pg. 2192)

The Holy Spirit exists as the third person of the trinity. He is not some "force" like in Star Wars, but a real person - a member of the Godhead - just as much God as the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is seen in creation - *Genesis 1:1-2* (as is God the Father, and God the Son *John 1:1-3*)

From the beginning of our Bibles, we learn about this Person, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost. He exists. He is called by many names:

Holy Spirit  
Holy Ghost  
Spirit of God  
Spirit of Christ  
Comforter  
Spirit of Truth  
Spirit of the Lord

The Holy Spirit exists. There is much more we could say about Him, but for today's purposes, understand that He exists.

## The Holy Spirit Indwells Every Believer.

When it comes to describing the Holy Spirit's relationship with you and I, there are basically three terms used in our Bibles:

1. There is the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit.
2. And there is the "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit.
3. And the "filling" of the Holy Spirit.

Much confusion exists about the Holy Spirit, and it is often caused by confusion over these 3 terms. For example:

Some believe that after you get saved, you need to pray for the Holy Ghost to come - you need to pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Do you?

Some think that receiving the Holy Ghost into your life is a second blessing - something that happens only to some Christians after they are saved. Is that correct?

Some teach that the "sign gifts" which were given to the apostles in the New Testament (things like tongues, healing, etc.) are given to Christians today to indicate they have received that extra bit of the Holy Spirit. Is this correct?

Let's see if we can make sense of what the Bible says about this by looking at those three words - baptism, indwelling, and filling:

1. What is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost?

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a HISTORICAL EVENT that took place at Pentecost.

QUOTE (notes taken from lecture by Dr. Harry Carr - instructor at Midwestern Baptist College) "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an altogether different thing than the filling of the Spirit, in that the Baptism is historic. It refers to the constitution of the Church at Pentecost. There are 7 (possibly 8) verses in the Bible referring to this event. Five are prophetic, one is historic, and two are didactic, or teaching

passages. All point to *Acts 2:1-3*, which is the historic account of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost, ushering in the Church age, he baptized all believers into the body of Christ."

- John the Baptist mentioned it as being future:

*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: (Matthew 3:11) cf. (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33)*

- Jesus mentioned it as being in the very near future:

*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:5)*

- It occurred on Pentecost:

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (Acts 2:1-3)*

- The only other verses refer to it as being in the past, and an event which each individual Christian takes part in through salvation:

*For by one Spirit are (were) we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)*

Here is the important point - NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE ARE WE COMMANDED TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT because it's automatic for the Christian.

SO, you don't need to seek it. SEEK CHRIST AND YOU'LL HAVE IT! It's part of the package when you become a Christian!

## 2. What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

It is important to note that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost marked a change in how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. In the Old Testament (before *Acts 2:1-3*), the Holy Spirit CAME UPON people. In other words, He equipped and empowered them for particular things as needed. However, our text points out that this changed after Pentecost. His ministry now is one of INDWELLING. He WAS with us (pre-Pentecost), but He is NOW IN US (post-Pentecost).

The Bible teaches this great truth two ways - as a positive, and as a negative.

- POSITIVE - It is something EVERY CHRISTIAN already has. ("I believe the Holy Spirit indwells EVERY BELIEVER...")

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)*

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)*

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

*That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. (2 Timothy 1:14)*

- NEGATIVE - If you DON'T have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, then YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN!

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)*

The point is this - if you are saved, then you were BAPTIZED into the body of Christ when you were saved, and you were immediately and forever INDWELT by the Spirit of God at that moment.

So, we DO NOT PRAY be be baptised by the Holy Spirit or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. There is no more of the Holy Spirit for you to get! He is a PERSON, not a LIQUID. You have ALL OF HIM from the moment of your salvation.

### 3. What, then, is the FILLING of the Holy Spirit?

We are nowhere taught to seek the baptism of, or the indwelling of, the Holy Spirit. BUT, the Bible DOES command that we be filled with Spirit - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (Ephesians 5:18)*

We ARE commanded to do this, so what does it mean? Is it possible to be only partially filled? Like a glass can be half-filled with water? Is it possible, then, to be empty - like my gas tank so often seems to be?

The answer is YES... but not quite the way you might think. We have all the Spirit we're going to get, so if we're running on empty it's not because we need more of Him. What we need is more of His influence, or more of His control in our lives. We need to SURRENDER more to Him.

The word "filled" in our Bibles simply means "controlled by" or "influenced by" or "under the sway of." Some examples:

*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (Luke 4:28)*

Does that mean that they had wrath spilling out of their ears? NO - it means they were under the control of that emotion - wrath had taken control of them.

ILLUS - I remember reading of an incident of road rage that occurred in Akron some years ago. A man was cut off by another driver, and so enraged that he chased the driver to the next intersection. While they sat at the light, the angry and offended party got out of his car, yanked open the door of the other party, dragged him from his car and through him into the path of oncoming traffic where he was killed. This man was filled with wrath - he was completely under its control.

The same Greek word is used of Zacharias in *Luke 1:67, And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost...*

*But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. (John 16:6)*

Was sorrow leaking out of their hearts like a liquid? Were their heart valves leaking sorrow? NO - this means that they were under the control of that emotion - sorrow had taken control of them and was influencing them.

The same Greek word is used in *Ephesians 5:18, And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*

There is a third Greek word translated "filled" or "full" in our Bibles, and it is seen in *Acts 13:10, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

That same word is used of Barnabus in *Acts 11:24, For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*

AND SO, all of these examples teach us that being FILLED with the Spirit simply means "BE CONTROLLED BY" or "BE INFLUENCED BY" the Spirit of God. Another example (one of my favorites):

*And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. (Acts 19:29)*

Clearly, this means the city was "UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF" or "CONTROLLED BY" confusion.

ILLUS - Some of you may remember my brother, who is now a Lieutenant in the State Highway Patrol. One of the things he has had to do many times is to pull people over and give them a sobriety test. Perhaps they were weaving around on the road. Or perhaps they wrecked their vehicle and as he talked with them he noticed evidence of inebriation. When he comes across such people he makes them do three things. He takes his pen from his pocket and holds it in front of them. He then moves it to each side and asks them to follow it with their eyes. After that he makes them stand on one leg, holding the other leg about six inches off the ground in front of them for 30 seconds. Finally, he makes them walk a straight line, heel to toe, for nine steps, and then turn around and walk back the same way, heel to toe, on the line. What is he testing them for? He is trying to determine if they are "UNDER THE INFLUENCE."

And isn't it interesting how the Bible contrasts being "filled with the Spirit" with drunkenness in *Ephesians 5:18*? It does so because being drunk and being filled both convey the idea of INFLUENCE and CONTROL.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be CONTROLLED BY and UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF the Spirit of God.

And so, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are automatic for the Christian, coming in the salvation package. Get Christ, and you have the Holy Spirit as well.

The FILLING of the Spirit, on the other hand is to be sought continually. Weekly, daily, hourly, every minute we need to surrender to Christ and seek to be under the Spirit's control.

## Conclusion:

There are several other wonderful truths about the Holy Spirit that I want to cover in the next couple sermons in this series - there is the fruit of the Spirit (or, what we might describe as the evidence that we are indwelt by Him), and there are the gifts of the Spirit. Both topics are fascinating and will hopefully be helpful to all of us.

But let's wrap things up this morning with some application. What does this have to do with you and me? Why should we care about this? Well, allow me to suggest a couple of applications:

- If the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are both descriptive of phenomena that occur to ALL CHRISTIANS, then you and I who are saved, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. And so I ask you this morning... are you indwelt by the Spirit of God? Because if you're not, then you're not a child of God, and you are in real danger.

Do you want to experience the baptism of the Spirit of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God? THEN TRUST CHRIST - COME TO CHRIST - BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND BE SAVED, for it is a package deal.

- If the fullness of the Holy Spirit is something we need to surrender to daily, then I ask you... are you daily and continuously surrendering to Christ, and allowing the Holy Spirit to control you?

Imagine what your life could be like if you allowed the Holy Spirit to totally control you. Imagine what you could accomplish for God.

ILLUS - The Apostle Paul was probably such a person. And he reached the known world with the gospel in his lifetime.

ILLUS - Moody was to have a campaign in England. An elderly pastor protested, "Why do we need this 'Mr. Moody'? He's uneducated, inexperienced, etc. Who does he think he is anyway? Does he think he has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?" A younger, wiser pastor rose and responded, "No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Mr. Moody." (Source unknown)

QUOTE (J.S. Baxter) - What God chooses, He cleanses. What God cleanses, He molds. What God molds, He fills. What God fills, He uses.

Imagine the influence our church could have in our community and our world, if we had a membership completely surrendered to and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. Nothing would be impossible!

ILLUS - I was listening to a wonderful sermon by Dr. Stanley Toussaint of Dallas Theological Seminary. He told a tale that took place during the gas crisis of the seventies. Remember the gas lines? Remember how everybody tried to unload their big powerful cars and buy little tin cans that got better mileage? Dr. Toussaint told of a friend who wanted to sell his big Mercury Marquis, which had a 460 cubic inch engine, and nobody wanted it. Dr. Toussaint loved that big car though, and so he bought it. He couldn't afford to drive it because of the gas crisis, so he just parked it in his driveway, and went out periodically to sit in it and listen to it run. He would sit there and rev that engine until all the neighbors thought he was nuts. There he would be sitting in the driveway, with all that power available to him, and going nowhere. Dr. Toussaint pointed out how that is like so many of us. All that power available to us via the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we are not going anywhere.

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)*

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# Chapter 7. Digging Deeper - Pneumatology (2)

READ - *Galatians 5:16-25*

TEXT - *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)*

THEME - If we have the Holy Spirit within, He will show up without! We will bear the fruit of the Spirit.

## Introduction:

Continuing in our series on Digging Deeper into our Statement of Faith, you'll remember that we left off with a discussion about what our statement of faith has to say about the Holy Spirit.

Last time we learned two key truths about the Holy Spirit - He exists, and He indwells every believer. We spent a fair amount of time deciphering the differences between 3 terms that are tossed around about the Holy Spirit, oftenly incorrectly, and therefore bring confusion - the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the filling of the Holy Spirit. If you missed that study, I encourage you to get it and listen to it, for that foundation is necessary if you're going to understand what we teach today and next time.

By way of a very quick review, though, remember that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an historical event that took place at Pentecost when God poured out His Spirit on the church. Individual Christians today take part in that baptism into the Spirit when they become part of the church, or when they are born again. It is not a separate thing a Christian should pray for, for if you are a Christian, you have already participated in it. The indwelling of the Spirit refers to the amazing, wonderful, mind-bending truth that the Holy Spirit actually lives within the heart of individual Christians. Our text in the previous study was *John 14:17 - Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* The indwelling of the Spirit is not something a believer should pray for, either, as it is part of the deal when you trust Christ. You've already got the Spirit within if you're a believer! Finally, we learned about the filling of the Holy Spirit, which IS something we need to seek and pray for daily, for the filling of the Spirit refers to our level of surrender to the Spirit's control in our lives.

Now there are two more important truths about the Holy Spirit which I'd like to think through before we stop digging (neither of which is adequately covered in our statement of faith, but probably should be). Next time, we'll learn some of the ramifications of the Holy Spirit's presence and work in the church, as we consider the GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. But today, let's learn some of the ramifications of the Holy Spirit's presence and work in our individual lives. Toward that end we're going to learn about the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT from our text in *Galatians*.

## The works of the flesh

Paul begins this section with bad news.

1. In our natural state, we are a mess!

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5:17 NKJV)*

The natural man is inherently evil and prone to sin. Now I know this flies in the face of what the world teaches. The philosophy of the world is that all are good, and it is only because of our environment

that bad things become part of our lives. According to the world's view, if a person is simply given a utopian environment, they will be good, and won't have any evil tendencies.

Of course, that's bunk. ILLUS - Toddlers don't need to be taught to be selfish. Don't believe me? Put two toddlers in a playpen and throw in just one toy. What happens? Who taught them that?

2. Our natural state leads to certain things, referred to by Paul as *the works of the flesh*. (vs. 19)

Briefly, let's consider these things. I don't want to be tedious, but I do want us all to see what these things are. Most if not all of them are laughed off, and glorified in our world today, but our text sternly warns us away from them, and so it behooves us to understand them.

For sake of order, we'll combine the first four which are SEXUAL SINS:

- *Adultery* (vs. 19)

Married people engaging in sexual relationships outside of their own marriage.

- *fornication* (vs. 19)

DEFINITION - Greek PORNEIA, from which comes our word PORNOGRAPHY. This word describes any and all illicit sexual activity. It is a broad word, encompassing things like sex before marriage, homosexuality, pornography... basically any sexual activity outside of God's design for sex, which is a man and a woman within the relationship of marriage.

- *uncleanness* (vs. 19)

Impurity, either physically or morally. This seems to be even a more broad word than fornication.

- *lewdness (lasciviousness - KJV)* (vs. 19)

A word that means unrestrained living, licentiousness. This is the abandonment of one's self to immorality.

The next grouping describes WORSHIP SINS:

- *idolatry* (vs. 20)

Basically "image worship" but in a broader sense refers to putting anything ahead of God in our lives.

- *sorcery* (vs. 20)

DEFINITION - Greek PHARMAKEIA, from which we get our word pharmacy. This word implies drug use / abuse. Drugs were a part of many false worship rituals, and so that is probably the primary meaning here, but general drug abuse also falls into this.

Then there are the SINS OF DIVISION, or SOCIAL SINS:

## Note

Notice how these characterize us so much of the time. So many problems in churches have their roots in these sins!

I've been thinking lately about our next series of study here at FBC. We've finished our study of *Nehemiah*, and are soon to finish our Digging Deeper series. I'm prayerfully thinking about two possibilities for where we go next - "Revelation - a Study of Last Things," or 1 Corinthians. I was reading 1 Corinthians just this morning in my devotions and noticed one

of the problems that existed in that troubled church. Paul said, *It has been reported to me that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. (1 Corinthians 1:11 NKJV)* DOESN'T THAT SOUND LIKE A LOT OF CHURCHES TODAY?

How much better to remember the words of the Psalmist - *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)*

- *contentions (vs. 20)*

Strife, quarrels, contention, debates.

ILLUS - My grandmother used to say, "I don't want you around if you don't want to argue with me." There are a lot of people who think arguing... debating... pugnacious demeanor, is a good thing. But it's not. It's a work of the flesh!

- *jealousies (vs. 20)*

Rivalries; self-seeking ambition; intrigue.

- *dissensions (seditions - KJV) (vs. 20)*

Dissension, disunion, division.

- *heresies (vs. 20)*

factions

Some aren't so easily categorized:

- *hatred (vs. 20), outbursts of wrath (vs. 20)* (Temper, a flare up of temper), *envy (vs. 21), murders (vs.21)* (which Jesus pointed out is an extension of hatred).
- *drunkenness (vs.21), revelries (vs. 21)* (i.e. carousing; partying)
- *AND THE LIKE (vs. 21)*

The list is by no means exhaustive! Rather it is representative.

What a horrible list! These *works of the flesh* are what characterize all men and women before they are saved. This list describes my "natural" tendencies... YOUR "natural tendencies."

Thankfully, the text doesn't stop here... it goes on to better things:

## The Fruit of the Spirit.

The word FRUIT is interesting. It describes something which naturally occurs. For example:

- Apple trees bear the fruit of APPLES. It is a natural expectation. If an apple tree does not bear fruit, what good is it?
- Tomatoe plants bear the fruit of TOMATOES.
- Orange trees bear the fruit of ORANGES.
- And Spirit filled Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit! It is a natural expectation!

The word FRUIT also indicates something that takes time. Fruit doesn't pop out immediately, but rather grows and ripens over time.

And so, because we are indwelt by the Spirit of God, those things described here as "the fruit of the Spirit" should be in us, in ever increasing amounts, ripening over time.

FIRST - The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our relationship with God.

1. *The fruit of the Spirit is love...* (vs. 22)

DEFINITION - Greek AGAPE - godly love (as opposed to romantic love (EROS) or friendship; brotherly love (PHILEOS)). This is unconditional love. This is the love of choice.

It describes God's love to us, our love for God, and our love for each other.

ILLUS - The world knows we are Christians by our love - *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)*

ILLUS - And one of the evidences we have, personally, is our love - *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (1 John 3:14)*

What is it that brings us together every Lord's Day? Why do we like being around other Christians? What is the attraction that binds the hearts of believers everywhere? Why is it that when we come into contact with other believers, anywhere, and we feel an immediate kinship? It's because *the fruit of the Spirit is love.*

You don't have that? You don't like being around other believers? You need to examine your life, for *the fruit of the Spirit is love.*

2. *joy* (vs. 22)

Not based on circumstances, which may make us unhappy sometimes. Joy is based on our walk with God, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

ILLUS - Erma Bacon - loss of leg, loss of son, never loss of joy.

*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (1 Peter 1:8)*

*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:17-18)*

3. *peace* (vs. 22)

How glorious to have peace with God. To know that everything between Him and me is alright.

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1)*

ILLUS - E.V. Hill's illustration of how he had to be guarded by his deacons from the KKK, and from the Black Panthers, and yet when he went to bed at night he slept soundly. He was awakened by those yelling that a cross was burning on his lawn, and he "turned over and snored." Peace with God.

The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our relationship with God. Do you love God, can you say that you have the joy of God within, and do you have peace? Can you rest in the midst of the storms of life, because you know without doubt that everything is alright between you and the God of this universe?

SECOND - The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our relationship with others.

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Uh oh... now it starts getting a little more personal! We like the first three, but these three we struggle with, don't we?

1. *longsuffering* (vs. 22)

DEFINITION - Greek MAKROTHUMIA - patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others.

*Love SUFFERS LONG... (1 Corinthians 13:4)*

*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2)*

ILLUS - My struggle over "gray areas." My friend who, no matter what I said, would respond with "Well that might be true and it might not!" Hard to be longsuffering.

2. *kindness* (vs. 22)

Compare this to Paul's list of works of the flesh - notice how many this one counters - wrath, strife, variance, etc.

Christians are to be KIND people, GENTLE people.

QUOTE (Rev. Arnold) - "Always be kind."

As the world grows increasingly less kind (and it does as evidenced by the woman who pepper sprayed a rival shopper on Black Friday last week), the kindness of Christians becomes more and more of a witness.

3. *goodness* (vs. 22)

This is an ACTIVE goodness; an ENERGETIC principle.

The spirit filled Christian does not just think good thoughts and sing good songs and listen to good truths. He / she DOES GOOD WORKS.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)*

QUOTE (Twitter) - "The truth is that, though we were justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is never alone...it always produces good works."

THIRD - The fruit of the Spirit will be INCREASINGLY evident in our personal holiness.

1. *faithfulness* (vs. 23)

The Bible says that *God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13)* but it also says ... *a faithful man, who can find? (Proverbs 20:6)*

2. *gentleness (meekness, KJV)* (vs. 23)

strength under control.

ILLUS - When I see this word I always think of a friend from college who was a nationally known and accomplished organist, and who provided the organ music for our church services. He told of a time when he had performed a piece during the worship service - the piece was considered one of the most difficult organ pieces ever written, and one that only a handful of organists in the world could play well - a little old lady approached him after that service and said, "You have RUINED the music in this

church." I can still see the rage in his face as he recalled the event and told of how his first reaction was to smash her to the ground. He didn't tell her off, though, he put his arm around her and talked to her about it as a Spirit filled Christian should. They parted smiling. That's meekness - strength (he could have demolished her) under control (he did not).

3. *self-control (temperance, KJV) (vs. 23)*

the holding in of passions and appetites.

ILLUS - I have a preacher friend who had a weight problem. He tried all kinds of diets. One day he just started eating differently, and began losing weight. When asked how he was doing it, he indicated he had finally gotten hold of this verse - the fruit of the Spirit is self control!

If the Spirit indwells each of us as believers, then the implication of these verses is clear - these nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit should also be in us, in ever-increasing measure. The nine descriptions of the *fruit of the Spirit* are descriptions of Christ-likeness, and we should see them in ourselves, more and more with each passing day.

## Conclusion:

Two applications arise in my mind. I'll mention them and we'll be done:

1. First is a warning.

Our lives as Christians should not look like the picture Paul painted here of the NATURAL, UNSPIRITUAL, UNSAVED person!

People don't like warnings, but the Bible is filled with them. And I wouldn't be much of a preacher if I didn't warn you when you are in danger.

And so, the Bible warns us here that if our life looks like the picture painted here, we need to examine our salvation. Notice what Paul says in *vs. 21, they who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!*

That word PRACTICE is important:

- I like the way Timothy Keller put it when he said, "There is no sin that is a match for His grace." You cannot lose salvation once obtained.

The occasional fall is normal, Christian. That's why it's important to know Paul used the word "PRACTICE" here. We are sinners, even when saved, and are working out our salvation daily.

- But when this list CHARACTERIZES YOUR LIFE, it should warn you to EXAMINE YOUR LIFE.

2. The second is an encouragement.

Because the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, these *works of the flesh* should be diminishing in our lives, and the *fruit of the Spirit* should be increasing!

As you examine your life, do you see the fruit ripening? If so, praise the Lord! It's evidence of salvation. It's a reminder of His working in your life!

Making a rotten sinner into the image of Christ is not an overnight thing though - it takes a lifetime. And progress may seem slow sometimes. That's why Paul says in *vs. 25 - If (i.e. SINCE) we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* We don't start bearing ripe fruit the minute we trust Christ. We arrive at that destination by WALKING... and walking is a slow process.

QUOTE (J.R.R. Tolkien) - "Little by little, one travels far."

And little by little... day by day... the indwelling Holy Spirit of God works in your life, pushing out the works of the flesh, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

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# Chapter 8. Digging Deeper - Pneumatology (3)

READ - *Ephesians 4:1-16*

TEXT - *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16 NKJV)*

THEME - You have a gift, and the body of Christ needs you to use it!

## Introduction:

For some weeks now, we've been digging deeper into our statement of faith. I won't read that statement for you again this morning, but I encourage you to know it and be familiar with it. It, like most other important information pertaining to Friendship Bible Church can be found by visiting our church web sites.

Well, we've been talking about where we stand on the Holy Spirit... we're digging deeper into pneumatology, or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and this will be our third message dealing with that topic.

In the first message, we learned that Christians are all baptized in the Holy Spirit, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as a result of salvation. We also learned that we are to daily... constantly... seek the filling of the Holy Spirit, which is a term describing our surrender to His control in our lives... our "being under His influence" in our daily lives.

Last week, in the second message, we learned what it means to us as individual Christians, that we are indwelt by the Spirit of God - we are no longer enslaved to the works of our flesh, but now see the Holy Spirit working in us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, in ever increasing measure, making us more like Christ day by day.

Today, in this third message, let's consider what it means to us as a church that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And where last week we learned that the benefit to us as individual believers is that we now have the FRUIT of the Spirit in our lives, today we'll see that the benefit to us as a church is that we now have the GIFTS of the Spirit in our midst.

I want you to use your imagination for a minute this morning:

Imagine, if you would, a symphony orchestra (paint picture of how each part of required. No instrument is unimportant and no instrument, no matter how flashy, is more important. TOGETHER, they make the music.

Imagine, if you would, a building. Paul uses such an image to describe the church. There are certain parts in a house that are less glamorous than others, but I submit that there are not parts that are less important than others. (ILLUS - I recall one time I was trenching in my back yard so I could run a power line to my barn. I hit the sewer line running from my house to the septic system. Ordinarily, this particular aspect of my house would seem unimportant and rightly remain unseen, but suddenly it's importance was clear!)

Imagine, if you would, the human body - a marvel of creation (note I didn't say evolution). Some parts of the body are definitely less glamorous than others - but none are less important.

A symphony only works when each instrument plays its part. A building only stands strong when each part is in its place. And the human body only remains healthy and fit when each member of that body is healthy and fit and functioning.

All of these illustrate what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given to every Christian to equip the body of Christ, and to help that body grow into maturity in Christ. And that only happens when each part does its work.

Now, we won't be able to deal with all aspects of our subject this morning. We'll have to pick and choose. But I'd like to mention a few general truths about spiritual gifts, and then focus in on one vitally important, key truth.

## Some general truths

1. There are several passages (four main ones) that discuss spiritual gifts: *Romans 12:3-8*; *1 Corinthians 12*; *Ephesians 4:1-16*; *1 Peter 4:10-11*.

In *Romans 12* and *1 Peter 4*, the emphasis seems to be on USING the gift(s) you have been given. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, LET US USE THEM: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8 NKJV) EACH OF YOU SHOULD USE WHATEVER GIFT YOU HAVE RECEIVED to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11 NIV)*

In *1 Corinthians 12*, the emphasis seems to be on REGULATING the gift(s) you have been given.

### Note

(The Corinthian church believed in spiritual gifts, and was commended by Paul for their use of and emphasis on giftedness, cf. *1 Corinthians 1:7*) HOWEVER, they were truly messed up in their understanding, and the majority of teaching in the book related to the subject of gifts is CORRECTIVE in nature. They were going off the deep end in their understanding of the topic, and Paul had to yank their chain. We need to be careful with developing too much of our understanding about spiritual gifts from this passage, without comparing it diligently to the other passages which speak to the subject.)

In *Ephesians 4*, the emphasis seems to be on EXPLAINING THE REASON for the gift(s) you have been given.

There is overlap in these passages - each dealing with most of the aspects of spiritual gifts, but each seeming to emphasize a major point, as described.

2. In addition to understanding where in our Bible we find the topic of spiritual gifts, it would be helpful to have a working definition of spiritual gifts, would it not?

What are spiritual gifts?

Was Mozart's amazing musical ability a spiritual gift? Is Donald Trump's ability to make money a spiritual gift?

ILLUS - I know a man who is a great musician. Somebody once commented to him about how thankful he must be to have such a spiritual gift. He pointed out that it was not a spiritual gift, but rather something he had learned from childhood and honed with countless hours and days and weeks and years of practice and labor. This man is a believer, and believes in spiritual gifts, but he also understood that not everything a person can do fits the definition of a spiritual gift.

There is a difference between natural abilities or talents, learned behaviors, and spiritual gifts. All of course, ultimately, have their source in God, but there is a distinct difference about spiritual gifts which needs to be defined. I like this definition:

DEFINITION - A spiritual gift is an ability that is spiritual in character, given by the Holy Ghost to a believer (but only to believers), for the purpose of building up other believers in the local church.

The passages we are studying list several examples (not exhaustive). I'll mention them and move on, allowing you to study the individual gifts on your own. (You should familiarize yourselves with these lists, though, as they are helpful in determining your own gift(s).

In *Romans* we find prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy.

In *1 Corinthians* we find wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues.

In *Ephesians* (where the emphasis is on gifted men rather than the gifts themselves), we have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

In *1 Peter* we have speaking and ministering.

3. Now, with that definition in mind, and based on what we learn from these four main passages (i.e. *Romans 12*, *1 Corinthians 12*, *Ephesians 4*, and *1 Peter 4*), we come to some of those general truths, I mentioned. Here they are:

- a. Spiritual gifts are given to EVERY CHRISTIAN.

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given TO EACH ONE for the profit of all: (1 Corinthians 12:7 NKJV) (Or, as the NLT puts it - A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. )*

*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing TO EACH ONE individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11 NKJV)*

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:7 NKJV) (And again, the NLT clarifies it for us - However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.)*

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another... (1 Peter 4:10 NKJV)*

It's interesting that this key fact - spiritual gifts are given to EVERY CHRISTIAN - seems to be mentioned in all four of the primary texts that discuss spiritual gifts. *1 Corinthians 12*, *Ephesians 4*, and *1 Peter 4* all mention it. So, too, does *Romans 4* - *God has dealt TO EACH ONE a measure of faith. (NKJV)*

Now I hope, brothers and sisters, that you are getting the import of this. ALL believers have a spiritual gift or gifts. ALL. If I'm not making that personal enough for you, let me state it like this. YOU have a spiritual gift or gifts! YOU! You might not have figured it all out yet, and you might not be able to say with any certainty how you are gifted, but if you are a child of God, then YOU have been gifted. No exceptions.

- b. Spiritual gifts are to benefit OTHERS, not just you.

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all (or, "for the common good" (ESV) (1 Corinthians 12:7 NKJV)*

This is the major emphasis in *1 Corinthians 12*, where the Christians were seeking only the flashy gifts, and seemed to want to show off their superior giftedness! Exactly the wrong understanding of gifts. As with everything else in Christianity, it's not about YOU, it's about OTHERS. Any time self enters the equation, you can bet you're on the wrong track.

c. Spiritual gifts are to be USED.

(Christ is displeased when we are bad stewards of what He has entrusted to us.)

True of money, talents, time, the gospel... we are stewards of all these things. And we are stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us.

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10 NKJV)*

ILLUS - Parables of the talents / pounds.

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22 NKJV)*

QUOTE (George Whitefield, from his journals) "Nothing has done more harm to the Christian Church than thinking the examples recorded in Holy Scripture were written only to be read and not imitated by us."

So... you HAVE BEEN GIFTED, it is FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE CHURCH, and it is has been ENTRUSTED TO YOU so that you would USE IT.

Let's move now from the general to the specific:

## A key truth

Let's consider the *Ephesians 4* passage. I believe there is a key truth here that helps us understand why we have spiritual gifts, why we need spiritual gifts, and why the 21st century church is sometimes so messed up. Consider:

1. UNITY is a major goal of the church. (*vss. 1-6, esp. vs. 3*)

Not just human consensus, by the way, but all of us agreeing with God - having the mind of Christ, consensus with Christ. (And that means agreement with His Word.)

Most Christians would agree this is a desirable goal.

Most Christians would also admit we don't often reach this goal.

2. GIFTS are a means of reaching the goal. (*vss. 7-13, esp. vs. 13*)

We learned earlier that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer. (*cf. 1 Corinthians 12*)

Here we see a slightly different emphasis, for we see that Christ gives GIFTED BELIEVERS to the church (*vs. 11*)

The gifts, and gifted believers, are given SO THAT:

a. God's people will be prepared for service. (*vs. 12*)

b. The body of Christ (church) will be built up. (*vs. 12*)

c. We will reach unity in faith and knowledge. (vs. 13)

d. We will reach maturity and Christlikeness. (vss. 13-14)

3. But all this good stuff doesn't happen on it's own - EACH PART MUST DO ITS WORK. cf. vs. 16

*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:16 NIV)*

(A couple of other translations clarify this even further:

*from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:16 ESV)*

*From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love. (Ephesians 4:16 NET)*

Now don't get me wrong - there are other ways to run churches, and there are other ways to try and do a work for God... but why in the world would we ever want to do it any way but God's way?

ILLUS - Uzzah (2 Samuel 6) - Putting the ark on a cart and dragging it behind oxen seems like a perfectly workable solution. But it was not God's way, and He didn't bless it. Uzzah reaching up to steady the ark when it shook on the cart seemed perfectly logical, but it was not God's way, and it was therefore not successful! Any time we choose a method other than God's way, we will see less success and less of God's blessing than if we'd just followed His instructions.

If we're going to grow as a church, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

If we're going to have unity as a church, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

If you and I are going to grow in knowledge and Christlikeness, it will be because Christians use their spiritual gifts, AS EACH PART DOES ITS WORK.

## Conclusion:

I've been preaching to Christians, this morning. If you have never trusted Christ, then nothing I've said this morning applies to you... yet.

There is a gift, though, that you may receive today, a gift that is greater than any I've yet discussed - the gift of salvation.

*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15)*

*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Ephesians 2:8)*

Have you received that gift?

ILLUS - It's like Christmas morning when you were a kid. You ran downstairs and saw this HUGE gift under the tree with your name on it. There were other gifts there, too... maybe some smaller ones stuffed in stockings hung from the mantle. But you KNEW that BIG GIFT was the most important one, and you couldn't wait to open it. The gift of salvation is the BIG GIFT. Open it first, and then you can move on to the others - the gifts of the Spirit which are poured out on Christians.

Have you received that gift... the BIG GIFT of salvation?

If you've never trusted Christ, may I entreat you to accept the gift of salvation He so freely offers you this morning. It is not yours until you accept it.

But again, I've been preaching to Christians, those who have received the gift of salvation, and who possess the gift(s) of the Spirit, whether they use them or not.

Christians, will you use the gift(s) the Spirit has entrusted to you? The church needs you. If the Lord's work is to be all that it can be here, your gifts are needed. If any one of your gifts, no matter how small, is missing, our church will be damaged.

ILLUS - I opened the message this morning by suggesting you picture a symphony orchestra. One of my favorite movies has just such music as its theme - Amadeus - the story of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. There is a line in that movie, where Antonio Salieri, a rival of Mozart's, was describing the absolute perfection of Mozart's music. Salieri said, "Displace a single note, and there would be diminishment. Displace a single phrase, and the structure would fall."

Just as it is true of music, it is true of our church... or any church... of the body of Christ. Displace a single gift... a single gifted person, and there is diminishment.

*From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love. (Ephesians 4:16 NET)*

## Invitation

Two questions for you to consider this morning, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed:

1. Have you received the gift of salvation?

It's there for you, and all you need to do is ask for it. Pray, and ask for it like this: "Lord Jesus, I believe I am a sinner, and that you died on the cross to pay for my sins. I want the gift of salvation you offer, and ask for it. Save me, Lord, today.

Did anybody pray that prayer?

2. Christian, are you using the gift or gifts you received when you got saved?

Do you even know what they are?

Some, today, might need to say "Lord, I'm not using the gift you gave me. Forgive me. I'm not even sure what it is. Help me to know it, and to use it."

Did anybody pray that prayer?

In both cases, you ought to make the decision public. You ought to let your brothers and sisters here know of it. As we sing our final song this morning, will you step out? You are among friends here. We love you and want nothing but good things for you.

Let us rejoice with you if you received the gift of salvation this morning.

Let us pray with you as you seek to understand more about the spiritual gift(s) God has entrusted to you.

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# Chapter 9. Digging Deeper - Eschatology

READ - Mark 13:32-37

TEXT - *Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. (Mark 13:36 NKJV)*

THEME - Jesus' return is IMMINEENT, and we must be ready for it.

## Introduction:

We are in the 3rd week of Advent - a season of looking forward to the coming of the Lord. There is no doubt that Advent concerns itself with the first coming of Christ - as a baby in a manger. Certainly that is the main thought at this season, and we rejoice in thanksgiving and praise that Jesus came... that first time... in that manger... for you and for me. But that first Advent is not the end of the story. There is a second Advent. And oh, the ramifications to our lives that Jesus is coming again!

Also, we have for several weeks been working through a study where we attempt to "dig deeper" into our Friendship Bible Church statement of faith (A copy of which you can always find, along with other information related to FBC on the church website). And it has just worked out, as we have progressed in this study, that we talk this morning about eschatology - the doctrine of future things - the second Advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so, let us consider this thought from our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the bodily resurrection, immortality and rapture of all believers at Christ's imminent coming and that His coming is both pretribulational and premillennial.

## FACT - Jesus is coming again!

If you are going to believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in manger, then you are going to do so because you heard it from the pages of the Bible. If you are going to believe that Jesus lived a sinless life during which he healed, and loved, and taught, and led, "went about doing good", then you are going to do so because you heard it from the pages of the Bible. If you are going to believe that Jesus laid down His life on the cross as a voluntary atoning sacrifice to pay for your sins and mine... to pay our sin debt so that we might have access to a relationship with God in heaven forever, then you are going to do so because you heard it from the pages of the Bible.

And if you believe those things, then you can't escape the fact that the same Bible which says He came, was born, lived, died for you and me, and rose again, says that He is coming again!

And the simple and plain-spoken truth is, it doesn't matter whether you believe it or not - it is a FACT - Jesus is coming again. The first Advent - FACT. The second Advent - just as much FACT.

SONG - Jessie E. Strout, in the hymn "Jesus Is Coming Again" wrote these words in 1872, and they are still true today:

Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring:

Jesus is coming again!  
Cheer up, ye pilgrims, be joyful and sing:  
Jesus is coming again!

Echo it, hilltops; proclaim it, ye plains:  
Jesus is coming again!  
Coming in glory, the Lamb that was slain;  
Jesus is coming again!

Heavings of earth, tell the vast, wondering throng:  
Jesus is coming again!  
Tempests and whirlwinds, the anthem prolong;  
Jesus is coming again!

Nations are angry - by this we do know  
Jesus is coming again!  
Knowledge increases; men run to and fro;  
Jesus is coming again!

SONG - John W. Peterson said the same thing in his more modern hymn with the same title:

Marvelous message we bring;  
Glorious carol we sing!  
Wonderful word of the King:  
Jesus is coming again!

Coming again, coming again!  
Maybe morning, maybe noon,  
Maybe evening and maybe soon!  
Coming again, coming again!  
O what a wonderful day that will be -  
Jesus is coming again!

It is a FACT - One day Jesus will return. Physically... actually... to this very earth.

*This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11 ESV)*

It is a FACT - One day Jesus will return. Physically... actually... to this very earth.

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:3 NKJV)*

It is a FACT - One day Jesus will return. Physically... actually... to this very earth.

And the Bible doesn't stop with just telling us He's coming. It gives a lot of detail on the topic. We are not in the dark about it. We don't know everything, but we do know some things.

1. We DO KNOW that it is promised.

READ - *Mark 13:26*

*and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11 ESV)*

*so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Hebrews 9:28 NKJV)*

2. We DO NOT KNOW when.

ILLUS - Harold Camping, Christian radio broadcaster with Family Life Radio, has made a name for himself from his failed attempts to predict the date of Christ's return. "His 2011 end times prediction was that on May 21, 2011 Jesus Christ would return to Earth, the righteous would fly up to heaven, and that there would follow five months of fire, brimstone and plagues on Earth, with millions of people dying each day, culminating on October 21, 2011 with the end of the world. He had previously predicted judgment days on May 21, 1988, and September 6, 1994." (Wikipedia)

READ - *Mark 13:32,35*

*"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luke 12:40 NKJV)*

*Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. (Revelation 3:3 NKJV)*

Now, Bro. Camping may have been messed up on this idea of predicting WHEN, but let's give him props for believing in the second coming. We DO KNOW IT IS A FACT, even if we DON'T KNOW WHEN it will occur.

3. We DO KNOW that it is SOON... IMMINENT, even.

In other words, it could happen at any time. Perhaps TODAY. Oh how we need to get hold of that truth. There is no prophecy of scripture yet needing fulfilment that holds back His return. It is the VERY NEXT THING in the timeline of prophecy. (Some of you are probably praying, "Now, Lord? So I don't have to endure the rest of this sermon?" It could happen!)

READ - *Mark 13:36 - "suddenly"*

*You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (i.e. NEAR). (James 5:8 NKJV)*

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. (Philippians 4:5 NKJV) (the NLT renders that last phrase as "Remember, the Lord is coming soon.")*

Several times in Revelation, Jesus said "I COME QUICKLY." e.g. *Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7 NKJV)*

Some might ask, "Why is it taking so long, then? What's the hold up?" Perhaps because He is waiting for you! *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV) OR, NLT - The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*

And so, the Bible is clear - Jesus is coming again, and it could be at any moment. Here is the timetable:

1. Rapture - second coming in the air

READ - *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

2. Tribulation - great judgement on earth

Seven years of judgement on this earth, described in *Daniel 9, Revelation 11-18*.

Of this period Jesus said, *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:21 NKJV, cf. Mark 13:19)*

3. Second coming in glory.

READ - *Revelation 19:11-16*

4. Millenium - 1000 years of peace.

Described in *Revelation 20*

It is during this period when the world will FINALLY... for the first time since Adam plunged all humanity into conflict by eating the forbidden fruit... FINALLY, we will know peace on earth, and goodwill toward men."

Then winging, singing on its way,  
The world revolves from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

This is when we'll begin to experience what both Isaiah and Micah described - *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.. (Isaiah 11:6-9 NKJV) He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4 NKJV; cf. Micah 4:3)*

This will be a time of PEACE - REAL PEACE, when the Prince of Peace will be in control.

5. New heavens and new earth - eternity with Christ.

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1 NKJV)*

*They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:4-5 NKJV)*

So, based on these truths we can say:

WE BELIEVE in the bodily resurrection, immortality and rapture of all believers at Christ's imminent coming and that His coming is both pretribulational and premillennial.

## Application

I hear some of you this morning. "So what?" you are asking. "It's Christmas time, preacher, and there are things to do. Presents to wrap. Family to attend to. If Jesus is coming, He's coming, and there's nothing I can do about it. I don't see the connection to all the things I have to do today."

Some of you are a little more astute, and you already see the application. You've already heard and accepted what our text has so clearly warned us of - the SUDDEN and UNEXPECTED nature of His return. And so, we have to ask ourselves, don't we - "What will I be doing when He comes?"

- Will He find you watching and ready for His return? (cf. *Mark 13:33*)

*Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. (Luke 12:37 NKJV)*

- Will He find you working at the tasks He has appointed to you? (cf. *Mark 13:34*)

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58 NKJV)*

ILLUS - One day in 1789, the sky over Hartford darkened ominously. Some of the members of the Connecticut House of Representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quieting a clamor for immediate adjournment, Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the House, rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either coming or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought."

- Or will He find you busy about other things less important?

The older I get the more convicted I am of how much time I waste. I spend so much time on trivia... things that have no value in light of eternity... "wood, hay, and stubble." I don't need to make a list of those useless pursuits, do I? You are intelligent people and have the same Holy Spirit convicting you. You know just as I know when something is foolish and worthless and a waste of time that should be better used for God.

A good question to ask ourselves, often, is, "Do I want Jesus to return and catch me doing this?"

Now, I'm not saying that we should never take a break, or rest, or engage in harmless entertainments. Rather it means, when Christ returns, what will He find CHARACTERIZES YOUR LIFE?

ILLUS - Parable of the rich fool - READ - *Luke 12:16f*

- Or will He find you sleeping? (cf. *Mark 13:36*)

This refers not to physical sleep, but rather to a state of unpreparedness.

ILLUS - Boy Scout motto - BE PREPARED.

This is the key thought to our lesson today - ARE YOU PREPARED, or are you sleeping? Jesus' return is IMMINENT, and we must be ready for it.

## Conclusion:

To the Christian, this is the blessed hope - nothing brings more joy than the thought that Jesus is coming again. May you be encouraged Christian by the truth that when Jesus comes, there will be:

NO MORE sickness

NO MORE pain  
NO MORE sorrow  
NO MORE death  
NO MORE poverty  
NO MORE trials and problems and struggles  
NO MORE weakness  
NO MORE weariness  
NO MORE old age  
NO MORE politics  
NO MORE triumph of the wicked  
NO MORE persecution of the righteous

The wrong SHALL FAIL,  
The right PREVAIL

ONLY peace  
ONLY good  
ONLY righteousness  
ONLY joy  
ONLY health  
ONLY wealth  
ONLY JESUS  
FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER

To the lost, this is cause for fear and concern. Those without Christ might be caught out! Too late!

ILLUS - I'm often reminded of an incident that occurred in college - my intro to ed class. Toward the end of the class, the instructor noticed one student, seated just about in the middle of the class, slumped over asleep at his desk. She encouraged us to let him sleep - not wake him. She spoke softly through the rest of the class, dismissed us sotto voce (quietly), and we all snuck out without waking him. I have often wondered what he thought when he woke up, for he had missed everything, and we had all left him behind.

Don't sleep through it, my friend.

Tw'as the night before Jesus came and all through the house  
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.  
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care  
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,  
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.  
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap  
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

And what was that sound that my ears seemed to hear?  
A trumpet - proclaiming that Jesus was here.  
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray

I knew in a moment this must be The Day!

The one's who'd believed in this Savior's love  
He gathered to take to His Father above.  
With those who were ready He rose without sound  
While all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;  
I had waited too long and this sealed my fate.  
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight;  
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;  
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.  
There's only one life and when comes the last call  
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

(This is a modified version of a poem that is copyright (c)1993  
Bethany Farms, Carrollton, IL)

Jesus' return is IMMINENT, and we must be ready for it. Just as there was a first advent, there will be a second... any day now. Are you ready?

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# Chapter 10. Digging Deeper - Beginnings

READ - *Genesis 1:1-31*

TEXT - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 NKJV)*

Theme - God made all, made us, and now offers to remake us in Christ.

## Introduction:

Christopher Hitchens, a noted author and a leader to atheists everywhere, died this week.

A couple months ago the news was abuzz with the fact that Steve Jobs, computer geek and one of the founders of Apple Computer had died.

Some years back my favorite secular author, Alf White, died. Most people would know him by his pen name, James Herriot.

Now for some reason, I must confess that the deaths of these men all profoundly saddened me. James Herriot and Steve Jobs were men who had great influence on my life while they were alive. I admired them... both of them... for what they accomplished. I nursed a private hope that someday I might meet them. I guess the closest I'll come now to meeting Steve Jobs is in using the devices he designed. And when I was in England, I visited the home of James Herriot, which is now a museum, and even sat in his old car which he had written about so many times in his books.

I had no such interest in Hitchens. He was an atheist and the author of the best selling book "God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything" and I didn't think I'd have much to discuss with him. However, some of the men I greatly admire have written words of great sadness at his passing. He was apparently, although an avowed unbeliever, somebody who was willing to talk about faith and Christ, openly. Many had an opportunity to witness to him and believed him far from a lost cause.

Pastor Rick Warren, founder of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., tweeted, "My friend Christopher Hitchens has died. I loved and prayed for him constantly and grieve his loss. He knows the Truth now."

President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Albert Mohler, also tweeted multiple posts in response to Hitchens' passing. He said Hitchens' death "is an excruciating reminder of the consequences of unbelief. We can only pray others will believe." Immediately after his first post, Mohler added, "Few things are so valued in this life as brilliance and eloquence. Neither will matter in the world to come." "The point about Christopher Hitchens is not that he died of unbelief," he concluded, "but that his unbelief is all that matters now. Unspeakably sad."

Indeed... here are three men - James Herriot who died several years back, Steve Jobs who died several months back, and Christopher Hitchens who died several days back. And I find all three deaths to be unspeakably sad. Because even though I always wanted to meet two of them... and now that I read some of the comments about Hitchens I find I would have liked to have met him, too... yet based on the available evidence, I never will.

You see, all three of these men apparently had something in common. None of them, apparently, believed the first four words of the Bible... none of them believed the verse that is our text for this morning.

## Note

NOW IT'S VITAL THAT WE REMEMBER THIS IS SOMETHING WE SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN. We never give up hope that somebody will be saved. And until we get to heaven, we'll never know whether men such as these who had heard the gospel during their lifetime, responded to it sometime before their last breath. I like how one man put it, "The Savior still calls people to work in His vineyard when the sun is almost down." He saved the thief on the cross in his dying moments, and we never stop hoping for those we love, right up until the last breath. So these men MAY be with the Lord... we simply don't know.

That being said, though... if these men did, indeed, die as unbelievers, as the evidence seems to suggest, then they are in hell today, and we will never meet them.

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)*

Now consider those four words - *In the beginning, God*. Nothing about our faith... nothing that we teach here at FBC... nothing else that we read in God's Word, the Bible... nothing about the Christian faith is possibly true, without those four words. They are the basis of everything else we believe.

Consider then, the rest of the verse - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. If the first half is true, there is simply no reason to doubt the second half.

We've been digging deeper into our FBC statement of faith. One of the things written therein is:

WE BELIEVE the Biblical account of the creation of the universe through the direct and immediate creative acts of God.

WE BELIEVE in the unique creation of man in the image and likeness of God and that physical life is His sovereign gift. The deliberate killing of the unborn, the sick, disabled or elderly is wrong and an abomination before Him.

Let's consider that truth this morning: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*.

## We believe God created EVERYTHING.

cf. *Genesis 1:1*

It's not considered enlightened, I know. It's even considered ignorant. You risk being considered part of the flat earth society when you let it be known you believe in the Genesis account of creation. So be it. I believe in the Genesis account of creation. Our statement of faith, which we subscribe to as a church says it clearly:

WE BELIEVE the Biblical account of the creation of the universe through the direct and immediate creative acts of God.

- But what about Darwin, preacher? He was wrong.
- But what about the science of evolution, preacher? False science... bad science... erroneous conclusions. It is wrong.
- But what about all the scientific evidence, preacher? What about carbon-14 dating methods? What about the fossil record? What about blah blah blah? WRONG WRONG WRONG!

We Christians better get stiffer spines and be more willing to stand and say NO when the truths of God are denied. Christianity and its beliefs are under attack more right now than they have ever been, and much of it is because most Christians are spineless and won't stand for the truth.

ILLUS - I read this week that a couple of students were suspended for "Tebowing". There's probably more to this story than that, but the fact is, it's becoming more and more common for Christians to meekly cave to the world when it says "don't you dare act like a Christian around here." Where are the Daniel's, who will PRAY OPENLY when doing so carries the threat of the world?

ILLUS - Recently an atheist group in Wisconsin, or Minnesota, or someplace up there, sent a letter to a town in Texas demanding that they remove a nativity scene from the town square. The authority in that town rightly told them to pound sand. It was a refreshing news story in a day when most Christians would have crawled into the fetal position and caved to their godless ravings. I read an article quoting Ray Comfort, an evangelist and author. Ray basically stated that he was fed up with these attacks by atheists on Christianity, and that from this point on whenever he hears of such a target by some atheist group, that is going to be "ground zero" for evangelism. We need more of that!

This pitiful caving to the world is nowhere more evident than when it comes to the Biblical account of creation. Oh the gyrations that Christianity has gone through just to avoid telling the evolutionists to pound sand. Why won't we just stand for the truth of the Bible?

Now listen to me carefully. There is ample scientific evidence to support the Genesis creation account. And there are godly men and women who have spent their lives in developing resources and evidences to show that. The evidence, viewed objectively, supports the creation account far more than it does the evolutionary model. Dating methods that are used to suggest an age of millions of years for the earth, are based on flawed assumptions. The fossil record demonstrates creation, not evolution. And the same is true for every supposed evidence that godless scientists come up with. Go read the works of godly scientists, and you'll see what I mean.

But I'm not one of them. I'm not a scientist. I believe what I believe because God said it in the Bible. And that brings me back to my initial point. If the first four words are true, why question the next six? If you want to know more about the scientific evidence, come see me and I'll point you to more resources than you can digest. But for this morning, will you simply hear the Bible? *IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED...*

We believe it, because it's in the Bible.

"Oh come on, preacher. One little verse? The whole civilized world professes and believes that we evolved from goo and you believe we were created by God because of one little verse?"

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3 NKJV)*

*Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (Psalm 90:2 NKJV)*

*This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, (Genesis 2:4 NKJV)*

*You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You. (Nehemiah 9:6 NKJV)*

*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. (Psalm 33:6 NKJV)*

*Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. (Psalm 102:25 NKJV)*

*Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:7 NKJV)*

*Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; (Isaiah 44:24 NKJV)*

*For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: “I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:18 NKJV)*

*He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. (Jeremiah 10:12 NKJV)*

*and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. (Acts 14:15 NKJV)*

*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. (Acts 17:24 NKJV)*

*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16 NKJV)*

*... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:2 NKJV)*

*“You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. (Hebrews 1:10 NKJV)*

*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV)*

Not just one verse! The whole Bible screams it.

*“You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:11 NKJV)*

It matters not what science says. There is just no need to try and fit what God said into what men say. There is no need to adjust it, or modify the perfect, all-knowing, and omnipotent God's explanation to fit the flawed assumption of foolish and lost men. *Let God be true, but every man a liar. (Romans 3:4 NKJV)*

*In the beginning God created... (Genesis 1:1)*

Now, it's not my goal this morning to get into specifics. I just want to trumpet the general truth that:

WE BELIEVE the Biblical account of the creation of the universe through the direct and immediate creative acts of God.

But having done that, there is one specific creative act that I would like to discuss:

## We believe God created you and me.

The first chapter of *Genesis* describes the creation of light, heaven and earth, the land and the seas, vegetation, the sun, moon, and stars, life that flies, life that swims, and life that lives on land.

And... it describes the creation of mankind - cf. *Genesis 1:26-28*

WE BELIEVE in the unique creation of man in the image and likeness of God and that physical life is His sovereign gift. The deliberate killing of the unborn, the sick, disabled or elderly is wrong and an abomination before Him.

The story of God's creation of man, both male and female is a wonderful story. It is developed even more in *Genesis 2*. Again, I'll leave the specifics for your personal study. I hope you'll read it, and marvel at what God has done. Because, as the Psalmist put it, *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. (Psalm 139:14 NKJV)*

You are a creation of God! You were created in the image of God! You a fearfully and wonderfully made! You are a marvelous work of the almighty God of the universe! Think of it!

But our statement of faith doesn't just say that you and I were created. It says something else, doesn't it - something that bolsters the words of the Psalmist. It says that "The deliberate killing of the unborn, the sick, disabled or elderly is wrong and an abomination before Him." In other words, you and I were not only created, but because we were created... by God... we are special. Our life has meaning and purpose. YOUR life is special and it has meaning and purpose. EVERY LIFE is special, and it has meaning and purpose. Life is God's sovereign gift.

Now in society today, it is common to find the attitude that values a child's life more than an adult's life. (i.e. except when that child hasn't been born yet, at which point society gives it no value) A story of multiple deaths will appear in our newspapers and comments will flow about how terrible it was because, "some of them were just children." But at the risk of shocking some of you who have bought into the world's view, let me say plainly that if the Bible is true, there is no more value to a child's life than to an elderly person's life. Stated more positively, there is no LESS value to an elderly person's life than to a child's life. If you bristle at that thought, then you need to read your Bible more.

Similarly, there is no less value to a handicapped person's life than to an athlete's life. ALL were created by God, and ALL were created in the image of God, and ALL are loved and precious to the One Who created them.

That is why, at FBC, we will never support "a woman's right to choose" - the world's nice of way of describing abortion. Nor will we ever subscribe to the devil-inspired idea that medical care should be somehow slanted toward those the world considers more productive. We will not support, and we will always fight against, the killing of the unborn, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly, for all these things are an abomination to our God Who created each of them in His image.

## Conclusion:

And so, God created it all. What a wonder. Glory! As you pass through God's creation today, look at it... rejoice in it... thank and praise Him for creating it.

And, He created me... He created you... and therefore we are special. I like the way Paul put it in *Ephesians 2:8-10 - We are HIS WORKMANSHIP... (Greek POEIMA - His poem... His masterpiece.)*

Perhaps, though, you're sitting here wondering why this matters to you. What difference does it make whether I was created or whether I evolved from soup? How does that really apply to the situations I face today? And maybe, you're here this morning wishing you could shout out, "If God created me in His image, and made me so special, why is my life such a mess?"

Well, the Bible story doesn't end with creation. If you keep reading in *Genesis*, you find that even though things were perfect and good when God created, something went wrong. We broke it. Sin entered the picture. And the wonderful creator God Who had made you and me to walk with Him and talk with Him in the garden during the cool of the day, now could not look upon the wreck that we had made of it. Now, *your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.* (Isaiah 59:2 NKJV)

The creator could have wiped it away and started over. He could have thrown his ruined creation in the trash and made a new one. But He chose a different solution. He stepped in to fix it. And the fix is what we celebrate this Christmas week! He sent His Son to Bethlehem, to be born to the virgin Mary... to live a sinless life, and die in your place - to fix the mess of your life!

He, Who had *in the beginning created the heavens and the earth*, now sent His son to recreate it... His Son, Who now says, *Behold, I make all things new!*

He, Who had *in the image of God created us*, now sent His son, of Whom the Bible says, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV)

ILLUS - I remember sitting in my grandmother's living room as a young man. One particular summer, something strange started happening. She had a large picture window that looked out onto her yard, and one day a beautiful red cardinal bashed right into that window. We were sitting there at the time, and concluded he must have gone grievously astray with his navigation system. Just a mistake, we thought, until he did it again. And again... and again... and again.... That bird flew straight at that window over and over until the window was smeared with blood. He had apparently seen his reflection. And he apparently didn't like what he saw. He was a beautiful creation of God. Apparently, that's not what he saw when he looked in the glass.

If you are like that bird, this morning... if you're thinking "for a creation of God, I sure am a mess," then may I suggest you turn your life over to One Who created you... more specifically, to the One Who came that first Christmas to fix you... to recreate you... to make you new and perfect.

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# Chapter 11. Digging Deeper - Ecclesiology

***GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES!***

READ - *Acts 1:1-12*

TEXT - *Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8*

THEME - The church has a job to do, and if the church does not do it, who will?

## Introduction:

Two goals for the sermon this morning:

1. Continue with our "Digging Deeper" series, which is nearing completion.
2. Introduce the 6-10 Plan, which will hopefully guide us as we start out the New Year of 2012.

SO... we'll refer to two documents alongside our Bibles today - our church statement of faith, and the 6-10 Plan, copies of which are available in the foyer at the rear.

Our "Digging Deeper into our Statement of Faith" series is meant to give clarity and understanding to what we believe as a church. We've been looking at it for several weeks now, and come now to this line in our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the primacy of the Church as an ordained institution of God with Christ as its Head. We recognize the authority of the local church and subscribe to the ordinances of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper for all those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Matthew 16:18,19; Ephesians 2:20; Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

## The Church Is Important.

Let me make a few comments about what our statement of faith says about the church:

IT IS IMPORTANT.

There is a thought among some that a Christian can live a perfectly acceptable Christian life without active participation in a local church.

Now obviously, you are not in that number, for you are actively participating here this morning. But you might just get mad at me someday... or somebody here might hurt your feelings... or offend you in some way - and you may just decide sometime in the future that you're gonna take your ball and go home! That thought - I can be a good Christian without the church - may come into your mind someday, and mark it down, if it does, you will be wrong.

There is no such thing in the Bible as a Christian who is right with God and yet remains outside the church.

Oh, it happened, even in New Testament times.

*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25 NKJV)*

WE BELIEVE in the primacy of the Church as an ordained institution of God...

IT IS IMPORTANT.

IT IS HIS!

There often seems to be confusion about who is in charge of the church. Always has been. But only for those who seek answers outside the Bible, for the Bible makes it crystal clear - *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18 NKJV)*

We are an elder-led congregation... at least we're prayerfully and carefully working toward that goal. But no matter who is humanly tasked with leading, here, we recognize the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ over everything we say and do.

WE BELIEVE in the primacy of the Church as an ordained institution of God with Christ as its Head.

The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word.  
From heaven He came and sought her  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her  
And for her life He died.  
-- Samuel J. Stone, 1866

IT IS HIS.

IT HAS TWO ORDINANCES.

We believe that our head, Jesus Christ, instituted two particular practices (or ordinances. Websters defines the word ORDINANCE as follows:).

- 1        a : an authoritative decree or direction : ORDER  
          b : a law set forth by a governmental authority specifically :  
          a municipal regulation
- 2        : something ordained or decreed by fate or a deity
- 3        : a prescribed usage, practice, or ceremony

You don't have to come here long before you understand we take the ordinances of believer's baptism and communion seriously. At this church, baptism is practiced as it is taught in the Bible. We do not baptize babies, but rather baby Christians. Baptism is an act of obedience and identification and must happen after a person trusts Christ. We do not sprinkle or pour, but rather practice the only Biblical mode of baptism,

which is immersion in water (hence the monstrous tank behind me). Such baptism is a requirement for membership at FBC. We also practice communion, and did just a few minute ago. We accept that both of these practices are ordinances commanded by our Lord.

We recognize the authority of the local church and subscribe to the ordinances of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper for all those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

IT HAS TWO ORDINANCES.

That's what our Statement of Faith has to say about Ecclesiology.

## The Church Has A Mission

Now that we've briefly looked at the "Digging Deeper" goal for today's sermon, let's turn our attention now to the second goal - our 6-10 Plan.

And the first question our 6-10 Plan attempts to answer is - "What is the Mission of the Church?"

I've been thinking about this topic for some time now. What is the mission of the church? Ask 100 people, and you may just get 100 answers. But that's only if they use something other than the Bible to define it, for the Bible is actually quite clear on the matter.

Allow me to quote directly from the 6-10 Plan:

What does "mission" mean?

We need a clear understanding of the word. And basically, the definition of the word mission, is "the task which we are sent to accomplish."

There are many good things that a church can and should be engaged in, but the "mission" of the church is much more focused - that specific thing which we are sent to do. In military conflict, there is no question about the meaning of the word "mission." It is a narrowly defined objective... it is a specific and defined task... it is a specific task that the military is sent to accomplish.

What are we, as a church, sent into our world to accomplish? Answer that question, and we know our mission.

For the last couple of months, the 6-10 Project has been underway, and along with a lot of prayer and thought on my part, a cross-sectional team of members here was pulled together and met twice. They were a wonderful sounding board for me, as I worked through these issues. They helped to clarify and crystalize my thinking about the church - what it is, what it is to be doing, and what, specifically, THIS CHURCH needs to focus on for the next few years.

We discussed these things under 3 main topics - Our MISSION, Our VISION, and Our GOALS. Each building upon the other. We can't set goals until we have a vision where we should be going, and we can't have a right vision without knowing our purpose... our main job... our MISSION.

ILLUS - My son Joshua dabbled in little league. I am embarrassed by a memory of one particular game. They were short an umpire, and I was pressed into service behind the plate. I'd never done it before and

was terrified. Little league parents are vicious things. All went well until one little boy dribbled one to back toward the pitcher, show bobbled it around for a minute and feebly threw it to first base, just about the time the little batter was arriving. Dust flew. All heads turned toward me. I hadn't seen it clearly at all, and so I chose the safe route (I thought) and yelled "SAFE." I could hear people muttering on both teams that I must be blind... on the take... etc. I didn't see clearly, and I made the wrong call.

ILLUS - Peter Falk (1927-2011) was an actor who spent his career playing a wide range of roles in comedy and drama. Most notably, he played an eccentric, rumped but always triumphant detective in the hit show "Columbo." In real life Falk had a glass eye, resulting from an operation to remove a cancerous tumor when he was 3. In spite of his missing eye, he was a high school athlete. In one story he liked to tell, after being called out at third base during a baseball game, he removed his eye and handed it to the umpire. "You'll do better with this," he said. (Bruce Weber, "Peter Falk, Rumped and Crafty Actor in Television's 'Columbo,' Dies at 83," The New York Times (6-24-11))

We need to SEE OUR MISSION before we consider anything else.

So, what is the mission of the church? Here is what we determined:

Jesus has already defined our mission!

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV)*

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15 NKJV)*

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NKJV)*

The 6-10 Team determined that there are 4 major components to our mission, based on these passages - GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES.

QUOTE - "The church has but one mission in this world: to lead people destined to spend eternity in hell to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and an eternity in heaven." (John MacArthur, Alone With God)

SO... the church is IMPORTANT. And the church has a MISSION. That mission is to (say it with me) - GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES.

## We Need to Focus on Our Mission

1. Our focus needs to be on our mission to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES.

Our VISION - our answer to the question, "What do we want to see happen here in the next 5 years?" - our answer to the question, "If God can do anything here over the next 5 years (AND HE CAN), then what are we going to ask Him for?" - OUR VISION, needs to be based on that MISSION. Oh Lord, how can we to the greatest degree GO, and MAKE DISCIPLES, and DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES?

And our GOALS - the actual actionable steps where we decide to use our time and talents and treasure to DO SOMETHING, must directly map back as well. Everything we do must be for the PRIMARY PURPOSE of fulfilling our mission.

ILLUS - Always, Jesus is our primary example. He DID many good things - blind, lame, deaf, sick, weary, hungry, thirsty, demon possessed - even DEAD. But ALWAYS the GOAL WAS THE SOUL.

The other things were tools to reach the SOUL - to help them believe - to accomplish His MISSION, which is told us in the Bible - *to seek and to save that which was lost.*

QUOTE - "Keep the main thing the main thing."

ILLUS - In every endeavor we must learn to FOCUS if we want to succeed. Athletes know this. Business people know this. One business man said the secret of success is to pick 1 thing and do it better than anybody else.

May God help us to FOCUS ON OUR MISSION - Our GREAT COMMISSION, to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES.

Now, in no way do I mean to imply that we are off track here. On the contrary, I believe these things not only describe what our focus should be for the next 5 years, but validate we've been on the right course to date. I have been with you for 5 years now... and reaching a milestone such as our 5 year anniversary together is an opportunity to stop and assess... it's a good time to pull up... look around, and ensure we're headed in the right direction.

## Conclusion:

And so, the church is IMPORTANT, it has a MISSION, and we need to FOCUS on that mission.

Friendship Bible Church, I'm asking you to join me as we march forward into 2012 with a clear MISSION, bold VISION and defined GOALS.

I want you to pick up one of the annual reports today, and spend some time reading the 6-10 Plan contained therein. It's not packed with detail - mostly bullet points and thought starters, but hopefully it will enable you to see where we're headed as a church, and to get on board with it.

As you read the report, I ask 3 things of you:

1. Read the first part of the report - MISSION, and then ask God to make our mission your mission.

If you don't feel the importance of it, ask God to help you with that. Understand the mission... believe the mission... embrace the mission... it is not just our mission, it is YOUR'S, too!

And we NEED unity of purpose... unity of mission, if we are going to accomplish what God wants over the next few years.

2. Read the second part of the report - VISION, and then catch hold of it!

I asked the 6-10 Team to consider the question, "If anything were possible, what would you like to see happen here to accomplish our mission over the next 5 years?" I told them to DREAM BIG. And they did. If you read the 6-10 Plan you'll see some bold vision for the next 5 years.

Imagine, if you would, a church that truly reached it's community... it's Jerusalem, for Christ. I see such a church here in the next few years - a church with facilities remodeled to provide maximum effectiveness... a church with new facilities to enable greater effectiveness... a church that makes use of every technology, every tool, every opportunity... a church with discipleship and training programs in place to reach every person, every need, and every heart in Randolph.

Imagine, if you would, a church that reaches beyond its Jerusalem, to Samaria, and the outlying regions. Imagine what we might do once we've tackled Randolph... as we move on to Rootstown, and Atwater, and beyond! Imagine a Friendship Bible Church not only in Randolph, but in other communities, too! Imagine the joy of assisting in the planting of other churches in those areas, or the fostering of sister churches in those areas!

Imagine, if you would, a church that truly reaches to the uttermost parts of the earth. At no time in history has it been more possible for a little church of 100 people like FBC to literally reach every nation on earth! We can do it now! There is no limit to what we can do if we'll just commit to GOING, MAKING DISCIPLES, DOING IT EVERYWHERE, and DOING IT UNTIL JESUS COMES! Imagine a church with a culture of reaching here, there and everywhere. Imagine a church that takes an active role in sending the gospel to every corner of the earth... imagine if we could support a missionary in every country of this world! Imagine!

These are just a few of the things I envision for this church in the next 5 years.

Will you catch the vision?

3. Read the third part of the report - GOALS, and then consider - Will you do your part?

Join us in the Annual Members Meeting which is to follow, and we'll share some of the goals we have for 2012... action items to move us toward this vision... action items to fulfill our mission.

They will take time... they will take talented people... and they will take treasure... if we are going to accomplish them.

We need you. I need you. This church needs you, if we are going to get it done... if we are going to succeed... if we are to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, DO IT EVERYWHERE, and DO IT UNTIL JESUS COMES.

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# Chapter 12. Digging Deeper - Satan

READ - Job 1:1-2:7

TEXT - Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6 NKJV)

THEME - Satan exists... he is the enemy of God and men... but he is a defeated enemy and will one day be removed from the scene.

## Introduction:

Lord willing, this will be the final message in our series, Digging Deeper Into Our Statement of Faith.

I would encourage you to go to the church website and read the entire statement of faith. I read it in its entirety at the beginning of this series, and have been just pulling out pieces since. Read it on your own, and see if we missed anything in these messages. If so, speak up and I'll do my best to address the omission.

But I believe we have covered, at least in some fashion, all the points therein with the following three exceptions:

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the Devil or Satan, the enemy of God and man, and that he is destined for eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire

WE BELIEVE that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

WE BELIEVE that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes.

Two of these can be handled quite quickly, I think. In our overly litigious society which is increasingly hostile toward the church of Jesus Christ, we have to clearly state our beliefs, sometimes simply to protect the church from threat of legal action.

The last section in our statement of faith makes it clear that as members of this church, we believe the Bible prohibits us from taking legal action against the church. Not much comment is needed - just read the clear teaching of the Bible:

READ *1 Cor 6:1-8*, esp. *Vs. 7*, "*Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?*"

And to ensure clarity of our belief in Biblical marriage, as well as protection against those who would try to force the church to marry people who ought not be married, or worse, lend credence to something that doesn't even fit the definition of marriage, we have a statement explaining our beliefs about marriage. Again, little explanation is needed - the scriptures themselves demonstrate the point. Several scriptures are

listed in our statement of faith, including - *Genesis 2:24, Genesis 19:5, Genesis 26:8-9, Leviticus 18:1-30, Romans 1:26--29, Romans 7:2, 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9, 7:10, Ephesians 5:22-23, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, Hebrews 13:4*. For sake of time, this morning, I'll share the first with you, and you can reievw the others on your own.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24 NKJV)*

There is one remaining topic in our statement of faith, though, which is doctrinal and important, and I would like to spend what remains of our time together on that - there is a devil, Satan. He is real, and He is your enemy.

As I reviewed the material in the Bible on Satan, I was actually surprised to see once again just how much there is about this person.

Did you know, for example, that there are 22 names used of him in the Bible?

1. Satan (adversary), his most common name, used some 52 times.
2. The devil (slanderer), used 35 times.
3. The prince of the power of the air Eph. 2:2
4. The god of this age 2 Cor. 4:4
5. The king of death Heb. 2:14
6. The prince of this world John 12:31
7. The ruler of darkness Eph. 6:12
8. Leviathan (one who dwells in the sea of humanity) Isa. 27:1
9. Lucifer (light-bearer, shining one) Isa. 14:12
10. The dragon Rev. 12:7
11. The deceiver Rev. 20:10
12. Apollyon (destroyer) Rev. 9:11
13. Beelzebub (prince of demons) Matt. 12:24
14. Belial (vileness, ruthlessness) 2 Cor. 6:15
15. The wicked one Matt. 13:38
16. The tempter 1 Thess. 3:5
17. The accuser of the brethren Rev. 12:10
18. An angel of light 2 Cor. 11:14-15
19. A liar John 8:44; Gen. 3:4-5
20. A murderer John 8:44
21. The enemy Matt. 13:39
22. A roaring lion 1 Pet. 5:8

(from Wilmingtons Book of Bible Lists)

And did you know that the existence of Satan is taught in 7 Old Testament books, and by EVERY New Testament writer?

I think we are perfectly justified in having this sentence in our statement of faith:

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the Devil or Satan, the enemy of God and man, and that he is destined for eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire.

There's too much to cover adequately in one sermon, but let's try and summarize by concentrating on just a few key things about Satan found in Scripture:

# Satan is the enemy of God and man.

Our text shows what he thinks of both God and men. Certainly, as we read of his taunting of God and his hatred toward Job, we see his enmity toward both.

Now there are many other verses which show Satan behaving as an enemy, either of God or of men:

*Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel. (1 Chronicles 21:1 NKJV)*

*Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. (Zechariah 3:1 NKJV)*

*Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. (1 Thessalonians 2:18 NKJV)*

QUOTE (MacArthur, "Alone With God") - The Christian life is a war against Satan and the forces of evil.

That's because he is our ENEMY... and God's ENEMY.

His enmity manifests itself in several ways:

1. He ACCUSES us before God.

He certainly accused Job before God didn't, he?

*Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (Revelation 12:10 NKJV)*

2. He ACCUSES God (and God's Word) before us - Genesis 3:1-4

*3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (Genesis 3:1-4 NKJV)*

3. He puts believers to the test, trying, tempting, and bringing suffering, to try and get them to fail.

Job may be the clearest example of this in the Bible, but there are plenty more:

*And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. (Luke 22:31 NKJV)*

*Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7 NKJV)*

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10 NKJV)*

(Jesus example prayer in *Matthew 6:13* commonly is read as "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." However there is good evidence that "deliver us from evil" might be more accurately translated as *deliver us from the evil one.*)

4. He actively opposes the gospel, and fights against it.

ILLUS - Jesus' parables of the sower and the soils, in *Matthew 13:3-19* and the tares in the wheat in *Matthew 13:24-39* clearly show Satan actively opposing the work of the gospel... actively fighting against its advance.

There is certainly more that we could say about this, but I'll stop there for now. I'd encourage you to study this topic on your own, and you'll come away from the Bible convinced that Satan is real person, and he is the enemy of God and men.

## But he is a DEFEATED enemy.

ILLUS - We had a game night one time here a few years back. We have another coming up shortly, and I encourage you to come have some fun with us. At the particular game night I'm remembering, a lady who was visiting with us was playing a board game with me and a few others. I was not doing well, and everytime I would lose, she would from an "L" with her hand and hold it up to her head and mouth the words to me "LOSER!"

Satan is a LOSER.

He is not God... nor does he possess the attributes of God. He cannot be everywhere at once, nor does he know everything. He is a created being who will be judged for his sin, just as all other sinners.

His judgment was pronounced by God in Eden (cf. *Genesis 3:14-15*) and that judgment was accomplished on the cross (cf. *Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. (John 12:31 NKJV)*) At the end of the tribulation he will be cast into a pit (cf. *Revelation 20:2*) and at the end of the 1000 year Millenium, he will be cast into the lake of fire to spend all eternity there... never to bother any of us again.

*The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10 NKJV)*

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.  
-- Charitie Bancroft, 1863

Satan has already lost! Jesus defeated him on the cross. Satan is a loser.

## What this means to you and I?

I think it means that while we should definitely respect Satan, we need not fear him.

If there is a lesson from Job's experience (and there are many), it's that nothing happened here, even those things instigated by Satan, without God's oversight and permission. And even in the midst of the worst Satanic oppression that he experienced, Job was under the watchful eye of his loving God who made it all right in the end. (READ THE END OF THE BOOK!)

Now, we ARE told to respect him and be on guard against his influences:

*Be sober, be vigilant... (1 Peter 5:8)*

And we ARE TOLD to arm ourselves against him:

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11 NKJV)*

And we ARE TOLD to be aware of his devices:

*lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:11 NKJV)*

And we ARE TOLD to resist him.

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7 NKJV)*

All these verses tell me we should certainly not take Satan lightly... we should respect him and do everything we can to guard against and resist him.

ILLUS - Weigel - "I challenged the devil." Not exactly a wise approach to Satan. He is powerful.

But my God is bigger... and as long as my God stands between Satan and me, I need not FEAR him.

Jesus prayed for us... and prays - *I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (John 17:15 NKJV)*

ILLUS - He told Peter one day, Satan wants to sift you like wheat... but I have prayed for you. GLORY!

... And He died for us!

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.  
-- Spafford

... And He now guards us... *But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3 NKJV)*

See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on;  
Mighty ones around us falling, courage almost gone!

See the glorious banner waving! Hear the trumpet blow!  
In our Leader's Name we triumph over ev'ry foe.

Fierce and long the battle rages, but our help is near;  
Onward comes our great Commander, cheer, my comrades, cheer!

"Hold the fort, for I am coming," Jesus signals still;  
Wave the answer back to Heaven, "By Thy grace we will."  
-- Philip P. Bliss

Oh, take heart fellow Christian. Satan is a ruined, judged, defeated, and soon to be cast away forever, foe. Because *Greater is He that is in you (that's my King, JESUS), than he that is in the world (that's the devil... Satan). (1 John 4:4)*

ILLUS - I hope I get to see the scene described in *Revelation 20*. READ - *Revelation 20:1-3; 7-10*

What a day that will be.

## Conclusion:

So, are we justified in having this sentence in our statement of faith?

WE BELIEVE in the reality and personality of the Devil or Satan, the enemy of God and man, and that he is destined for eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire.

I think so.

The Bible teaches that Satan is the enemy of God and men... but that he is a defeated enemy, and soon to be removed from the scene altogether. It teaches that we ought to recognize Satan's power... respect and guard against it, but trust in Jesus Christ, Who has forever defeated him.

Ah... but there is another thing the Bible teaches about Satan, and I would be sinful to neglect it:

Although the believer in Christ can be assured of spending eternity in heaven, where Satan will never be - the unbeliever can be assured of spending eternity in hell... the lake of fire... RIGHT ALONGSIDE Satan. I am saved, and will be with Jesus forever. So are most of you. If you are lost, though, you will be in the presence of Satan, forever.

At the end of his story, we see Satan in the "lake of fire" (cf. *Revelation 20:10*). For the one not trusting in Jesus Christ, the end is the same.

*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15 NKJV)*

*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8 NKJV)*

Careless sinner, what will then become of thee?

Horrors, past imagination,  
Will surprise your trembling heart,  
When you hear your condemnation,  
"Hence, accursed wretch, depart!  
Thou, with Satan and his angels, have thy part!"

Satan, who now tries to please you,  
Lest you timely warning take,  
When that word is past, will seize you,  
Plunge you in the burning lake:  
Think, poor sinner, thy eternal all's at stake.  
-- Newton

What will it be for thee? Will you forever be with Jesus and never need experience Satan again? Or will you forever be with Satan in the lake of fire, never to be free of him?

**TRUST CHRIST TODAY... COME TO HIM NOW, THIS MINUTE. ASK HIM TO SAVE YOU RIGHT WHERE YOU SIT. DELIVER YOURSELF NOW BEFORE IT'S FOREVER TOO LATE!**