

Matthew
Every Stroke Inspired: Embracing Jesus' High View of Scripture (Part 2)
Matthew 5:17-20
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I think you understand that our world is filled with people claiming to have the truth. And lying back of every truth claim, there is a foundational authority, the place where that philosophy or that religion stands, the person or the writings or the ideas to which they ultimately appeal as their authority. In fact, when you're speaking with anyone about what they believe, a key question to ask them is, "What or who is your authority?" Because everybody has an authority, it's true of everyone here this morning. In fact, let me challenge you to ask yourself this question, "Ultimately, what is my authority? What is the authority on which I have built my life?" There are many sources of authority in our society.

Of course, there are many who rely on their sacred writings. Buddhism rests on the sayings of Buddha. Islam on the prophecy of Muhammad in the Koran. Mormonism on the writings of Joseph Smith. For those who embrace scientific naturalism, the ultimate authority is the cosmos as interpreted by its humanistic scientists. Empiricism insists that the human senses are really the foundational authority. Rationalism says it's human reason. But for most people in our world, they are their own authority. Our world is increasingly filled with people who create their own sort of unique quilt patchwork kind of religion or philosophy or ideology. We have designer clothes, designer dog breeds; now we have designer religion! They view all of the available philosophies and religions out there as a kind of buffet line. And they just pick parts from each that they like, "Ooh, I'll take a little Christianity, and I'll have some scientific naturalism and throw a little Eastern mysticism on my plate as well. I know I really like that part of postmodernism that says truth and morality is relative, so I'll take some of that too." That is honestly how most people today determine what they believe.

Sadly, when you take that approach, you are the real source of authority in your life. You are staking your life and eternity on yourself. But for us, as Christians, who are followers of Jesus Christ, our ultimate source of authority is the Bible, the Bible. But why is it that we believe the Bible? There are many answers to that question, but the primary reason we believe the Bible is Jesus Christ. We believe the Old Testament because He often affirmed it to be the very words of

the living God, and we believe the New Testament because He pre-authenticated it, not by giving us a list of books, but by choosing the men who would write it under His authority. So our ultimate authority is the written Word and the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the point that Jesus makes as He begins the body of what we call "The Sermon on the Mount," which we began to study, the section we began to study last week. And in this section that I just read to you a moment ago, Matthew, chapter 5, verses 17 to 20, Jesus essentially says, "As my disciples, you must believe about the Bible exactly what I believe because I believe it." In fact, if I wanted to summarize Matthew, chapter 5, verses 17 to 20, I would do it like this, "A true subject of Jesus' spiritual kingdom today, and who will eventually be part of his physical kingdom on earth, that person will always have a right relationship to the Scripture. A true Christian can always be recognized by how he or she responds to the Scripture." In this paragraph, Jesus identifies three responses to Scripture that should characterize every genuine believer.

Last time, we looked at just the first response. We must "Affirm Jesus' Relationship to Scripture," that's the message of verse 17. I pointed out to you that when Jesus preached this Sermon, there was already, and had been for some four-hundred years, a definitive list of Books that were accepted as from God, inspired by God, breathed out by God. Jesus calls them, in verse 17, "The Law and the Prophets." As we learned, the books that He was referring to, constituted the Jewish canon of the first century and contained exactly the same content as the thirty-nine books in our Old Testament today. And Jesus made two assertions, in verse 17, about how you and I are to think about His relationship to the Old Testament. In the first half of verse 17, he says, "You need to understand that: He Did Not Come to Abolish the Old Testament." And in the second half of verse 17, that "He Came Instead to Fulfill the Old Testament." Exactly how did He do that? Well, "He perfectly explained its meaning in His teaching." "He perfectly obeyed its commands in His life." And "He perfectly embodied its message in His person," both "Its prophecies about the Messiah" as well as "Its ceremonies and sacrifices." That's what we dealt with last week.

Now that brings us today to a second response that all believers must have toward the Scripture. And this comes in verse 18. We must "Adopt Jesus' View of Scripture," we must adopt Jesus' view of Scripture. Look at how verse 18 begins. "For," you see the linking word, here's the reason,

here's the reason Jesus did not come, verse 17, "to (tear down and) abolish the Law or the Prophets (the Old Testament), but to fulfill (the Old Testament). For (because) truly I say to you..."

Now the Greek word for 'truly' is actually ultimately the Hebrew word 'amen' or anglicized 'amen.' It's just transliterated here into Greek. It refers to a statement that is 'firm or reliable.' At the end of a sentence or the end of a prayer, as we often use it, this word means 'it's true' or 'let it be true.' But at the beginning of a sentence, as it is here, combined with I say to you, we could paraphrase it like this, "Jesus is saying, 'Let me tell you the way things really are,

truly I say to you, truly this is the way things are.'" He uses this expression to add veritas to what He's about to say. In fact, He uses it some thirty-one times in Matthew's Gospel. Here, it's to highlight His view of Scripture. Jesus here tells us exactly what He believed and what you must believe about the Old Testament. And He does so in one of the most powerful, compelling statements that He ever made. Look again at verse 18, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Now notice, first of all, the change in expression. Back in verse 17, He speaks of "the Law and the Prophets," and in verse 18, He simply speaks of "The Law." But both of those expressions refer to the entire Hebrew Scripture, to our Old Testament. The word 'Law' is often used like that in the New Testament. Just a couple of examples, John 10:34 speaks of "the Law," speaking, and then Jesus quotes the Psalms (82:6). In 1 Corinthians 14:21, Paul speaks about "the Law," saying and he quotes from Isaiah 28:11. So there are other examples as well. So, "the Law" is the same thing as "the Law and the Prophets," or as at the end of Luke 24, "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms," that three-sectioned description the Jews had of the Old Testament. He's talking about, in every case, the Old Testament.

So he's still talking here in verse 18 about the entire Old Testament. And notice He affirms, in the strongest possible terms, His complete confidence in the Old Testament, but specifically in several unchanging attributes that characterize the Scripture. I want you to see the attributes of Scripture that Jesus embraced, and that He demands that you and I adopt. The first attribute of Scripture that He discusses here that I want to address is "Its Permanent Authority," its permanent authority. Notice in verse 18 this expression, "until heaven and earth pass away," until heaven and earth pass away. Now you know that there is an actual day coming when the present heavens and earth

will be destroyed. We saw that as we studied through the book of Revelation. Peter, in 2 Peter 3:10 says, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” So there's coming a day when this universe will be destroyed. So, Jesus may be saying here, in verse 18, that God's Word will endure as long as this present universe stands, until it is destroyed in the future. However, I think it's more likely, and most scholars would agree, that Jesus is using these words “until heaven and earth pass away” as a kind of proverbial statement meaning ‘never.’ “It’s never going to happen” because that's how Jesus uses this expression in a similar context. In Luke 16, verse 17, listen to the difference, listen to how He says it here. He says, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.” Notice that expression, “it is easier.” That's the idea here. Jesus says it's far easier for the universe, as we know it, to go out of existence than for the smallest stroke of a letter in God's word to fail.

Think about that for a moment. If I were to ask you, “What is the most stable, unchanging element on earth?” what would you say? It's not the mountains, it's not Gibraltar, it's not the elements that you learned in science class, it's not even this planet itself. All of those things will one day be destroyed. The most stable, unchanging reality on planet earth is that Bible that you hold in your hand. That's what Jesus is saying. It’s permanent, it's unwavering, it's unchanging, it is eternal! The Scripture is our rock of Gibraltar. Turn back to Psalm 119; Psalm 119, as the psalmist extols the virtues of the Scripture, notice a couple of things that he writes. Psalm 119, verse 89, “Forever, O LORD (Yahweh), Your word is settled in heaven.” It's unchanging, it's eternal, it's settled in heaven, nothing can change it, nothing can affect it. Look at verse 152, over a page, “Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever.” What God has written in His Word is forever, it's permanent. Look at verse 160 and notice the difference in the two halves of verse 160, “The sum of Your word is truth.” He's talking now about the entirety of the Scripture, “The sum of your word is truth,” and then he goes to every single statement, “and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.” The whole is everlasting, and every single statement in Scripture is everlasting! Isaiah 40, verse 8 says, “The grass withers, and the flower fades, but the word of our God (What? it) stands forever,” it stands forever. That's the truth about the Scriptures you hold in your hand.

Remarkably, Jesus said the very same thing about His own words. This is Matthew 24, verse 35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” They are just as permanent, just as eternal as the Old Testament in your Bible. In fact, this is equally true of the writings of Jesus' Apostles. 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 37, Paul writes, “...the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment (What I'm writing is as if it was from Jesus Himself.). But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized.” If he's going to disregard the Scriptures, then you disregard Him. In other words, Paul is saying all churches must acknowledge that what the Apostles wrote are the commands of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:2, he writes, “...hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.” Here Paul says all churches are bound to obey the Apostles' commands, including their written words. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 3, verse 14, we read, “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him.” In other words, Paul says, “Those who refuse to recognize the authority of and to obey the Apostles' words written in the New Testament, they are to be put out of the church.” They don't even deserve to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ. So, Jesus authenticated the Old Testament as the very words of God, and He pre-authenticated the New Testament as having exactly the same authority—His words, His Apostles' words.

By the way, this also means that Jesus has the right Himself, or through His Apostles, to declare a portion of the Old Testament fulfilled, and therefore no longer binding, as He does with the ceremonial and sacrificial laws. He has the right, in the book of Hebrews, to say, “No more sacrifices, those were completed in Me.” He has the right to say in Colossians 2, “Don't let anyone judge you in respect to keeping the annual feasts, or the monthly new moon festivals, or the weekly Sabbaths. Those have been fulfilled in me.” He has the right to say that.

Now, there are two implications, however, of the word's permanent authority. Number one, if the word is truly permanent in His authority, if it's forever settled in heaven, then it means it should be your authority. If God has spoken, and He has, and if what He says has eternal, permanent authority, then it means you must believe it and obey it.

There's a second implication, and that is, if it's permanent in its authority, then it's always relevant. God's word is not bound to a particular time or a particular place. The Gospel of Matthew ends with this assertion, Matthew 28, verse 19 and following, “Go therefore and make disciples (Of

what?) all the nations (and when you make them disciples)...teaching them to observe (obey) all that I have commanded you; (And then He ends by saying.) even to the end of the age.” In other words, “in every place, and in every time until I come back, My Word is eternally relevant!” That's its permanent authority.

Now, back in our text, Matthew chapter 5, Jesus affirms a second attribute of Scripture, and that is “Its Verbal Inspiration,” its verbal inspiration. Many of you know those words but let me explain them. Let me remind you of what these two words mean. Theologians use these two words to explain what the Scripture teaches about itself. Let's take each of them individually. Let's start with the word ‘inspiration.’ The word ‘inspiration’ actually comes from Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of 2 Timothy 3:16, where he used the Latin word ‘*inspirato.*’ That's why our English text says, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” It comes from the Latin word ‘*inspirato.*’ Now, that translation can be confusing, because, literally, the Latin word ‘inspire’ and the English word ‘inspire’ means ‘to breathe into.’ That's not what Paul was saying happened with the Scripture. God didn't breathe into the Scripture. The Greek word is ‘*theonopneustos.*’ It means ‘God breathed,’ in the sense not that God breathed into, but in the sense that God breathed out all of the words of Scripture. You see, there's something profound that Paul is saying, and I've shared this with you many times before. All of Scripture is the product of God's breath in the same way that your words are the product of your breath. Right now, I'm speaking, and my breath is shaping and framing the words that I speak. These words are ‘Tom-breathed.’ “All Scripture is God-breathed,” that's Paul's point! To read Scripture is to hear God speak! That's the word ‘inspiration.’

Let's take the word ‘verbal.’ By ‘verbal,’ we mean that God is the source, not only of the ideas in Scripture, or even the sentences in Scripture, but of the very words recorded in Scripture. He ‘breathed out through His Holy Spirit’ every single word in the original autographs, that is, in the original documents that each biblical author wrote. That is what the church has believed and taught for 2,000 years. Origen, one of the early church fathers, put it like this, “Every reader of Scripture reverentially understands that he is dealing with divine, non-human words in the sacred books.” He didn't mean the human authors didn't write; he means that ultimately, the source of those words is not the human author, but God Himself, God and the author together speaking. Hippolytus wrote this:

Just as it is with musical instruments, so that they always have the word like the pick in union with them. (In other words, God is playing the Apostles like a pick plays a string on a harp.) And when moved by Him, the prophets announced what God willed, for they did not speak of their own power, let there be no mistake as to that, neither did they declare what pleased themselves.

That's what's always been taught about the Scripture. Why? Because that is exactly what Jesus believed about the Scripture. If I had time, I could take you to several texts where during Jesus' ministry, it's recorded in the Gospels, He argued a theological point on the basis of a single Hebrew word in the Old Testament.

For example, in Matthew, chapter 22, verse 44, Jesus argues for the deity of the Messiah based on the Hebrew pronoun "My." David said, "THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD," or "OF MY LORD." In another place, Matthew 22:32, Jesus argues for the resurrection based on the tense of a Hebrew verb, where God says long after Abraham had died, God says, "I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM," and Jesus argues for the resurrection on that basis. He believed every word, but in our text, Jesus goes even farther.

Look at verse 18, "...not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law..." Let me give you that, literally, as it translates from the Greek text. Here it is, "one 'yōta,'" and I'll explain that in a moment, that's not Star Wars, just so you know, "one 'yōta' (or one little horn), no, not at all, shall pass away." That's literally how it reads in the Greek text. Now let's take that apart. 'Yota' is the smallest letter. In Greek, 'yōta' is the smallest Greek letter. It's the word that Matthew writes in the inspired text here. And in Greek, 'yōta' resembles our lowercase 'i.' In fact, it's equivalent to our 'i' in English. In Hebrew, and when Jesus spoke the sermon that day, it's very possible, perhaps even likely, that He used the name, not of the smallest Greek letter, but of the smallest Hebrew letter 'yodh.' It's equivalent to our English letter 'y.' The Hebrew letter looks a lot like our apostrophe in English. You can see it circled there on the screen. There are more than 66,000 'yodhs' in the Old Testament, and no, I didn't count them personally. I'm taking someone else's word for that. But Jesus says, "Not one shall pass." I mean, how bad can it be if one of those tiny little apostrophe letters out of 66,000 is missing? How bad can that be? And Jesus said, "Not going to happen, not one will pass away!"

But then he talks not about only the smallest letter, but about the stroke. Now the Greek word for stroke literally means ‘little horn.’ It refers to the small pen stroke or projection that distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another. Think about the English capital letters ‘O’ and ‘Q.’ Those capital letters are exactly alike except for what? That tiny little squiggle at the bottom of the ‘Q.’ That’s this word, ‘little horn.’ The same is true in Hebrew. Let me give you a couple of pairs of Hebrew letters. First of all, there’s the Hebrew letter ‘*beth*’—it’s like our ‘b.’ And you can see and compare it to ‘*kaf*’—the Hebrew letter that’s like our ‘k.’ Here’s another set. Take the Hebrew letter ‘*daleth*,’ which is like our ‘d,’ and ‘*resh*,’ which is like our ‘r.’ Now compare those and you’ll see that in both cases there are those tiny little pen projections that distinguish these letters from its comparable letter. The small little pen stroke on *beth* and ‘*daleth*’ that make them distinct. Think about what Jesus is saying here. Jesus says, “...not one of those small marks (or projections) will pass away (lose its force or become invalid), not one!” Jesus is making the remarkable claim that the Old Testament Scripture is breathed out by God not only in its words but to the smallest individual letter and the tiniest pen stroke. That is the first century equivalent to the dot of an ‘i’ and the cross of a ‘t.’ As R. Laird Harris puts it, “Jesus declared the Scriptures were letter perfect.” It’s exactly right.

Now, if you’re here this morning and you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you have repented and believed in Him as Savior and Lord, you need to understand that this is exactly what Jesus requires you to believe about the Scripture. It’s what He believed and it’s what He demands that you believe. Because we have it on His authority and there is no authority more deserving of our confidence. There is no human authority, whether it’s me or some scholar out there or some consensus of scholars in which you should put your eternal trust and hope that deserves more of it than Jesus Christ! This is what He taught, and this is what He believed, and this is what He demands you believe; that you embrace that it is verbally inspired down to the words, the letters, and the pen strokes. It is breathed out by God Himself!

There’s a third attribute of the Scripture that we must adopt and that is “Its Plenary Inspiration,” its plenary inspiration. We’ve already looked at the word ‘inspiration,’ but let’s consider that word ‘plenary.’ Now you’ll remember back up in verse 17, Jesus referred to “the Law or (and) the Prophets,” and by that He meant the entirety of the Hebrew Old Testament. He makes the same point in verse 18 because He speaks about “the Law,” but notice what He says, “not the smallest

letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until (What?) **all** is accomplished.” Now in theological terms, the word ‘plenary’ simply means ‘all.’ Not only every word, letter, and stroke of the Old Testament, but **all** of it is “breathed out by God; not even one small letter or stroke shall pass from the law until **all** of it in its entirety is accomplished.” Do you see what Jesus is doing here? In part of this verse, He's affirming every letter and pen stroke individually, but He goes on to confirm that all of its letters and all of its pen strokes and all of its words, the entire Old Testament is the Word of God. As John Wenham put it, “Christ held the Old Testament to be historically true, completely authoritative, and divinely inspired. To Him, the God of the Old Testament was the living God, and the teaching of the Old Testament was the teaching of the living God. To Him, what Scripture said, God said.” I challenge you to read through the Gospels, and if you read through them carefully, you will discover that again and again and again, Jesus refers back to the Old Testament and He treated its Old Testament narratives as real history.

I mean, think about this. Here is a collection of actual things Jesus commented on from the Old Testament. He taught that Genesis 1 and 2 is a historical record of the creation and the creation of man. He affirmed the historicity of Adam and Eve, real people, the marriage of Adam and Eve, the fall of man, the temptation in the garden, the murder of Abel, the reality of Noah, and the worldwide flood. He refers to the days of Lot, the divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire, the giving of the Law at Sinai, the Ten Commandments, Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, Jacob's giving a field to Joseph, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch—the first five books of our Old Testament. Jesus affirmed the famine in the days of Elijah, that Naaman the Syrian was cleansed of leprosy by Elisha, that the Queen of Sheba met Solomon, that Jonah was in the belly of a great fish for three days, that Jonah preached a message to Nineveh in which the people of Nineveh repented, and He ends the Jewish Old Testament by affirming the stoning of Zechariah. You see what I'm trying to say to you is this, “In the Gospel record, Jesus confirmed that all of those narratives in the Old Testament are historical facts, and that's what He expects you to affirm as well.” If you're His disciple, you must believe what He believed about the Old Testament. You must believe that it is God-breathed in its entirety, not only in its affirmation of the way of salvation, but also in the way the world was created.

You know, there are Christians who want to synchronize the Bible, fit it into the findings of modern science, because frankly, it's more comfortable. And they argue, therefore, that the

theological statements of Scripture are true, but not necessarily the scientific and the historical facts. That is a completely illogical position. I mean, think about it, if one word of Scripture is wrong, then none of it can be trusted, because we have no legitimate way to discern the difference. If God didn't destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, then how do we know there's only one God, as He claims elsewhere? And how do we know Jesus wasn't lying because He confirmed this historical fact? If Jonah wasn't swallowed by a great fish, then how can we be sure that God will extend mercy to us as repentant Gentiles as the rest of Jonah promises? You see, it all rises or falls together, both its redemptive promises and its historical facts. That's why Jesus affirmed Scripture's plenary inspiration, all of it breathed out by God, and you and I must as well.

Now, if you're here this morning and you say, "Tom, you know, I'm here because, you know, my parents make me come, or because my spouse comes, or maybe I'm here to hear the kids sing this morning, I'm a parent, a grandparent, but I'm not a follower of Jesus Christ." Let me just speak to you for a moment. What is the source of the authority for what you believe? Is your confidence in some expert? Some human group of experts? Is your authority some scientist(s), some textbook that you had in college, some professor that you really liked and respected, but frankly, he or she can't get their own life together? Is that your authority? Is your confidence in some guru, some self-help expert, some YouTube channel, or the shared views of our culture, is that where your authority is? Or worst of all, is your confidence in yourself? Let me ask you this morning, are you really willing to stake everything on your own mind, your own knowledge, your own wisdom? Are you really willing to gamble your life and your eternity on you? Listen, the Bible says if you are, you're a fool. Jeremiah 17:5, "Thus says the LORD (Yahweh), 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD.'" Let me ask you this morning, "If you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, is your ultimate source of authority absolutely trustworthy? Has it always proven to be true?" If it's not our God, then it hasn't. Let me plead with you this morning, stop putting your confidence and trust in some unreliable authority. Instead, put your full trust and confidence in Jesus Christ. He's the only person in human history who's proven to be worthy of your trust, and it's what He claimed for Himself. John 14:6, He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through (by) me." Jesus put His full trust, and He urged us to place ours in the Scripture you hold in your hands as the very words of God.

By the way, if you're not a believer, Jesus also said the only way that you will ever be forgiven of your sins, the only way that you have any hope of heaven, the only way that you can know your Creator is through what Jesus called "the Gospel." In Mark, chapter 1, Mark's first recorded sermon of Jesus, Jesus said, "You must repent and believe the gospel. What is the Gospel? What's the good news? Jesus taught that there's only one true God. He made all things, and you exist for Him, and you're responsible to love Him with all your heart and to obey His commands. But sadly, all of us have sinned against that God, and we fall short of His glory and the wages, what we earn for our sin, Jesus said, is death, spiritual death; that's how we're born, dead to God. Physical death is coming someday, but Jesus also spoke of eternal death in a place called hell. That's the wages of our sin. But Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, came into the world as a Man, as God, fully God, fully Man, to save sinners from the penalty their sin deserved before God. How did He do that? Through His sinless life, through His substitutionary death, He died on the cross to pay the debt our sin deserved so that God could be just and forgive our sins and, His glorious resurrection. That's the Gospel.

But you know what else Jesus taught? If you're going to benefit from that Gospel, you have to repent of your sins, and you have to believe in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ. That's the only way your sins will ever be forgiven. That's the only way you'll ever know your Creator. It's the only way you have a hope of heaven. That's what Jesus taught.

If you're here this morning and you're already a believer, if you already belong to Jesus and to His spiritual kingdom, then He demands, friend, of you that you believe about the Scripture what He believed. You must believe in its permanent authority, its verbal inspiration, down to the words, the letters, and the pen strokes, and its plenary inspiration, all of it. And the next time somebody asks you why you believe the Bible, tell them it's because it's what Jesus believed, and you believe Him. He's your authority for believing the Bible. And then ask them, so what's your authority for rejecting the Bible? Mine's Jesus. What's yours? Jesus believed, and we must believe. As B.B. Warfield put it, "When the Bible speaks, God speaks." There are other unchanging attributes of the Scripture Jesus believed, and that we must adopt. Lord willing, we'll look at them together next time.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for the treasure of Your Word. Thank You that we have in it, as our Lord taught us, not only ideas that find their source in You, not only sentences that find their source in You, but words and letters and even the tiniest pen strokes. Father, thank You that we can have confidence in Your Word because Jesus, our Lord, confirmed it and affirmed it to be Your very Word to us. Lord, forgive us. Forgive us as those who know You, as having this treasure and treating it so lightly. Father, help us to read it more, to study it more, to meditate on it more, to memorize it more, to obey its demands more carefully, to treasure its promises more joyfully.

And Father, for those here this morning who don't know You, I pray that You would use Your powerful Word, the Gospel that they've heard this morning, to open their blind eyes to the truth of their relationship to You, to help them to see the beauty of Jesus Christ, to see the amazing invitation that's in the Gospel that I've explained this morning. And Lord, may Your Spirit use that Word to draw them powerfully to Yourself. We pray, Father, that You would do this this morning because Your Son deserves the reward of His suffering. We pray it in His name. Amen.