

Torrey 1988 Standing on the Rock

By James Boice

[Speaker 1]

Some were not here last night, and I wanted to let you know that following Dr. David Hocking's address, we know of several--I said four to five, it could be as many as is seven--that have let us know that they made a first time decision for Christ, the Savior and Lord of their lives. A number of others have stated to me and to the staff that's working that God is really working and moving during this week and prayers are being answered. So when Scripture says that there's the washing of the water of the Word of God, we know that that's true. So with that enthusiasm, we warmly welcome you, Doctor Boice once again, to open the Scripture to us.

[James Boice]

Thank you very much. I'm always very impressed at a conference like this when speakers come from different places and different backgrounds and certainly with different concerns on their minds. And yet, as they pray about what they should speak about when they arrive in a very wonderful way, God brings that all together to make one picture and one theme. I've always enjoyed coming to Biola for that reason, because nobody tells me what to speak.

As a matter of fact, I didn't even know the theme of the conference until I got here, but I was delighted yesterday when Dr. Hocking began to find that what I had to say was fitting in on exactly the same wavelength that he was on. And I think from what he had said yesterday that what we have to do here today will fit as well. Now let me just review briefly what I'm trying to do in these four sessions in which we're all together. And then I'd like to read a passage of

Scripture which will be the basis of our study. I began yesterday by thinking of the world in which we live and trying to get a handle on what makes it unique.

There's a sense in which you can talk about the world in exactly the same terms in any century or any decade, because the world is without God and Godless characteristics are always present.

But I wasn't trying to deal with that. I was trying to ask, what is it that really makes our particular culture unique? Because recognizing the need and the characteristics of the culture is going to determine to some extent how we approach it. And I began to show that it's characterized by a mindlessness which has its roots and relativism, and the product of that is an inability of people in our time to make commitments.

I asked the question, what do we need in a time like that? And the obvious answer is people who know God because God is the only absolute to know God is to know where absolutes come from, and the only people that are going to make a difference in a culture like ours, which is drifting aimlessly from one thing to another without commitments is people who are anchored to the rock of ages. So we started with that, and I pick up from that today.

Now, Dr. Hocking has been talking about the word of God, and that's what I want to do as well in this session. And I want to read from 2 Timothy chapter 3 as the basis for our study. I'll read the first five verses of that chapter and then skip to verse ten and read to the end. This contains verses which most of you will have memorized those at the end that define Scripture as being God-breathed. The new international version says, God breathed the new King James, the old King James.

New King James as well says, inspired, "God-breathed" is an accurate translation of the Greek. Now let me read that. Then we'll pray, and then we'll begin to think about it together. "Mark this. There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness. But denying its power, have nothing to do with them.

"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecution, sufferings. What kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have been come convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for Salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Now let's pray. Our Father, whenever we turn to your word, we turn at the same time to you because you speak in it, and we come as suppliants, asking you to reveal yourself to us as we

read. And as we study, we know we're unable to understand spiritual things by ourselves. And so we need that work of your spirit and our heart to give us understanding.

We ask you to give us that. Now, as we study these words together and use them profitably in our lives, even as this passage promises, Scripture will do so that we might be changed by it and go from here strengthened men and women for the task that you have before us. We pray that in Jesus name Amen. I was talking yesterday, as I said a moment ago about the kind of world in which we live. But it's evident, I'm sure, as you look at these verses, that Paul is also talking about the kind of world in which we live.

But he is doing it in his own terms, and from his own perspective, he calls it the last days. I'm sure that phrase, the last days is used in different ways in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the last days, the very last days, the years just before the return of Jesus Christ. And at other times, it seems it refers to the last days in a more general way, as embracing that entire period of time that came comes between the first coming of Jesus Christ and the second.

And so the question is, as we look at that, what is that phrase referring to here, when Paul describes the last days as being times when people are characterized by all these things? Is he talking about a final, terrible period of world apostasy just before the coming of Jesus Christ, or is he describing the age in which we live, which would describe the culture of America in our time? I'm not sure in every case that we can decide that clearly. And it may very well be here that he's thinking about the last times, but it's significant, certainly, that he's writing these words to Timothy in order to instruct Timothy what to do in such days.

So that means, you see, at least that the days in which Timothy was living were going to be characterized in part and not essentially different from what was going to be experienced at the very last time. And if that's true, well, then that means this is describing the times in which we live as well. I was talking yesterday about our relativism and our mindlessness, our inability to make commitments. Much of that is reflected in the kind of things we find here. This is the culture in which we find ourselves where people are lovers of themselves and lovers of money and boastful and proud and abusive in all those things.

Of course, we don't use those names for it. Nobody wants to use the proper names for sin. So we rephrase things. And all of what Paul is talking about here, we dress up in language that makes it sound more acceptable. So where we talk about lovers of themselves, we just talk about self-esteem, don't we? And that's supposed to be something good, or as the New Age movement develops, it's just a preoccupation with oneself and with one's potential. The human potential movement is a modern expression of what Paul is talking about lovers of themselves.

Some years ago, Time magazine had a cover story on the new Narcissism. Narcissism is a preoccupation with one self-love of one's self. And of course, that's exactly what we have. Lovers of money. That's our materialism. We live in a very materialistic age. In fact, there has probably never been a more materialistic age in all of history than our own people today live for things. And that's understandable, isn't it, if they've lost touch of any absolutes if they don't have an awareness of God, if there's no perception of a spiritual reality or the existence of a soul

beyond bodily existence, well, then you might as well focus on bodily existence and do everything possible to make this life in which we live enjoyable.

So if things do that well, by all means, let's accumulate all of the things we can. We don't call it lovers of money. We call it materialism, and we give a great name to that. We say, oh, materialism, that's good materialistic things, the good life. But nevertheless, that's what Paul is talking about. Boastful proud, abusive. Well, we don't want to say that we're boastful proud or abusive, but we do talk about letting it all hang out or expressing ourselves. We talk about being arrogant. We use that in a good way.

Sometimes we say, boy, he's arrogant means he really puts himself first, and he speaks up. And nevertheless, that's what Paul is saying, disobedient to their parents. We call it the generation gap, ungrateful, unholy. We call unholy the new morality without love, unforgiving all of those things, lovers of pleasure. That's the new hedonism more than lovers of God. I read that, and I think that's a dreadful description. And when I compare it to our own age, my sense of the dread of this is heightened. I say it is terrible.

If, as God looks at it, this is really the kind of age in which we live. And then I come to that last phrase, and that makes it even worse, because you see, when Paul says in verse five, having described all of this, that they have a form of Godliness, but deny its power. What He's saying is these things that are so terrible are not merely things that we see out there in the world, that Godless culture in which we live. But those are the very things that are seen also, at times at increasingly within the so called Church of Jesus Christ, because after all, what does it mean to

say, having a form of Godliness, but denying its power, it means having the form of Christianity going to Church, going through all the nice things that religious people are supposed to do, but nevertheless not being changed by the Holy Spirit of God and being just like the world outside.

That's what really bothers me about the Church today is that we are so much like the world outside. I don't know why that should be. The Gallup polls from time to time survey American culture in a religious sense and analyzes get people to respond, how many say they're born again and so on, and every time they do that, a lot of people say they're born again. Latest figures I heard were about 60 million people in America. That's a great number of people now, I don't know whether all those people who say they're born again really are born again.

That's a popular term today. You can have all kinds of born again things somebody was saying here the other day, the New Age movement talks about rebirth, new birth and so forth. That's true. It's very popular. But nevertheless, being born again has a certain religious content. And America has a certain tradition of religion. And when people say they're born again, I assume that a certain number, perhaps a large portion of those that respond that way really are. I don't know what the number is, but there are a lot of people out there.

The same sort of thing bothered George Gallup, by the way, and he was disturbed to find that so many people would say they're born again. And yet there would be such a small impact on the culture. So he devised another scale number of years ago to ferret out from among all those who simply have a kind of religious background, those for whom, apparently, at least on a personal

level, being religious really made a difference. He had a scale from highly religious, not so religious, not religious at all, and so forth.

And he discovered that the figures actually were about one in eight, for whom, at least on a personal level, religion really seemed to make a difference. Those presumably are the really born again people. Now, the question is, if we have even that many born again people in America, why are we making so little difference? Why are the churches so very much like the world outside? You analyze the attitudes of people in the churches to most of the moral issues of the day. And in most issues, I suppose abortion is one exception, because that's become a major cause.

But in most issues, the attitude of the people in the churches is indistinguishable from the attitude of people in the world, maybe a little more cautious, maybe a little more conservative, but basically no different. And you see, that's what Paul is saying. That's why in the last days, terrible times will come if the Church isn't any different, we are in big, big trouble. Now. Having described a situation like that, Paul turns to Timothy and says, Timothy, Now, I have the solution for you because I'm going to tell you what to do in such an hour.

And we read that and we say, well, what in the world is he going to tell Timothy to do here? He's pointing forward to terrible times that are coming the last days, particularly horrendous times when even the Church is not going to have within it the kind of power that he used to have or had in the Day of the Apostle Paul himself. What is the Apostle Paul going to tell Timothy? Is

he going to say, Timothy? Now, look, when these terrible times come, I want you to know that there is a secret weapon which you can choose and use, which has never been used before.

But when you produce it in those terrible last days is going to be effective now. It's a secret.

Keep it hidden until those last days come. Paul doesn't do anything of the sword. He says to him instead, look, I have a solution for you, and it's a good solution. It's just what you need for those terrible last days. But he says, it's nothing different than what you've ever had. It's simply the word of God. What I want you to do, Timothy, is continue in what you have already learned.

That is continue in the Scriptures because that's from where you learned it. People that you know have taught it to you from the Scriptures. I want you to continue in that. And if we say to Paul at that point, well, Paul, why here? You're talking about dreadful times, times that are so dreadful that even the Church is going to become indistinguishable from the world, certainly to go back to something that we have had before is inadequate. Why Paul, would you ever insist about returning to the simple word of God?

And Paul gives the answer in those verses that we know because he said, look, it's as simple as this. The Bible is God breathed. What does that mean? God breathed. It means it comes to us from the mouth of God, and it carries with it the same power that God displayed when God created the universe by the power of his spoken word. When God said, Let there be light, there was light. When God said, Let there be heaven and let there be Earth, there was heaven and Earth.

When God separated the water from the land, it was separated all by the word of his mouth. And Paul says, that's what the Bible is. The Bible is not like any other book or in some ways it is. You pick it up. It's on paper. There are words as a cover. You print it, you distribute it. It's just like every other book. In that respect, the Bible is not like any other book in terms of its contents. Every other book in the world is the product of human thought.

That is, it's a human book. But the Bible is not a human book. It comes to us through human agencies. But it is the word of God, and it carries with it a power which no other book on earth has. And the reason the Church has become so much like the world is that the Church really does not know its book and therefore does not hear the word of God. I ask the question, is that true of you? It's quite possible to grow up in a Christian Church, to go to a Christian school, to have all kinds of Christian influence, even to know what's in the Bible, because people have been telling you about it, but not really know it not really study it, not really let it make an impact on your life.

And so therefore, really, although you profess something different, never really be in contact with the God who has given it. If there's anything that comes out of this conference, I hope at least that will come out that you will turn to the Bible with fresh zeal, realizing that when you turn to it, you're turning to the God who spoke these words originally. Now let me talk a little bit about the views of Scripture that are prevalent today because the devil is very subtle and recognizing that the Bible is the way God works and speaks within the Church and to the world, the devil has certainly over the years doing everything he can to undermine its authority.

And one thing he has done is get the church to adopt a low view of Scripture rather than recognizing that it is what Paul declares it to be. I suppose without simplifying, it's possible to say there really only are three different views about the Bible. One is that the Bible is the word of man, and that's the old Liberal view. The other is that the Bible is the word of God, and that's the classic evangelical view the view of the Church throughout all the centuries. And then there's something that we have in our own time, which is a strange combination of the two.

It says that the Bible is not the word of man, and it's not the word of God either. Actually, it's the word of God and the word of man. Now there's a proper way of saying that classic theology has always said that the Bible is indeed both the word of God and the word of man. In this sense that God gives his word through human agents. And that's what inspiration is all about God by the power of his Spirit came upon the minds and the thought processes of the human writers, so that what they produce is exactly what God intended to be written.

That is the classic evangelical view. But when I'm talking about this new view today, I don't mean that classical view, so that all of the Bible is both at the same time the word of God and the word of man, but rather that parts of the Bible are the word of God, and parts of the Bible are the word of man. That's very popular because it's kind of nice, isn't it? If the Bible is partly God and partly man, then you can come to it more or less in a pick or choose fashion.

And when you find something that's helpful to you or that encourages you or reinforces what it is you want to do, you say, well, that's obviously a God. But when you come to a part of the Bible that says something contrary to that and is used by God to correct you and redirect you, you say,

Well, I mean, I can't be of God, that must be a man and therefore must be mistaken. Now we have that within the evangelical world today, and that's what this battle for the Bible is all about.

It's really not a battle over details of tiny little things, although it has bearing upon that. But it's really over the issue whether the whole Bible can be trusted, so that when we turn to it, no matter where we turn, we can know that it's God speaking to us and not man. Some years ago, when the International Council on Biblical and Arrangement first got underway, I got an invitation from a student group at Princeton Theological Seminary to come and talk about the inerrancy of the Bible.

Now those were heady days for us. We were just getting the organization underway. We were glad to have every opportunity we could. We were trying to involve the secular media in what we were doing, and we got some good coverage in papers. And it was as a result of that that the invitation came. But when the invitation came from Princeton, I really wasn't happy to go. And the reason was that I had gone to Princeton myself for seminary, and I knew that in my days there was hardly anybody there who had a high view of the Bible at all, or a few evangelical students.

We felt I think that there were about eight of us. We would all sit around one table in the dining room, but everybody else seemed to be on the other side. So what I envisioned of happening was this I would come to talk about the inerrancy of the Bible, and there in the front row would be about the eight evangelical students that had invited me to come. And then no other students would be there. But all of my old professors would come and they'd all be sitting there.

And I imagined it would go like this. I would give my little talk, and then it would be a time for questions, and the students wouldn't say anything at all. And then the professors would be in to ask their questions, and they would say things like this. They would say, I hope they would at least say Dr. Boice and not Jimmy. Dr. Bois in the latest issue of the [indecipherable]. And they name a German Professor. He has written so. And so what do you think of his argument?

And I imagine I would be embarrassed by that kind of a question because I had been spending years in the pastor and I hadn't been reading all the theological journals, and it would be very easy for area night professors to catch me up that way, make me look bad. And I would have had to say, I'm sorry I haven't read that article. I don't know what it says. All they'd say hasn't even read the article. Then the next one would ask another question along the same line.

And in about 20 minutes of that, I would look very foolish. Well, I didn't know what to do, so I was thinking it over, and I remembered something that I had learned years ago about question and answer periods. It's always good to have somebody with you when you do a question and answer period. And that way, you see, if you know the answer to the question, well, you answer it, you appear very wise. And if you don't, you defer to the person who's with you and you appear humble.

And I thought, Well, that's what I need as somebody that would appear with me in this session. So I remembered Dr. John Gerstner from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a sister institution to Princeton, also an arrangement. And I thought, Well, he's heard all these questions again and

again. At least they'll respect him. Well, we arrived, and I was very surprised by a number of things. First of all, none of the professors came, so I didn't have to worry about that at all.

Number two, lots of students came about 400, 500.

Maybe. I really never thought there would be that much interest. And then when we came to the time for questions, it wasn't just the 15 minutes or the 20 minutes of questions that I expected, but rather, the questions went on and on and on. We were to come at twelve, start speaking at 1230. It was supposed to be done by 130, but 130. The questions were going on 230. They were still going on 03:00. There were still about 300 people there. 04:00, 430. Finally, about 430.

We had to leave. And so we just brought the thing to an end. Lots of students in a seminary that really doesn't have a high view of scripture. Nevertheless, very interested in the question. They were asking all sorts of critical questions. They didn't believe it. And we did what we could to defend a high view of Scripture. And afterwards I remember going away saying, Well, I don't think we convinced anybody, but at least we presented the case. And about two days later, I got a letter from one of the students who had been there, and he said something like this.

He said, I have never been a believer in an arrangement. I haven't had a high view of the Scripture, but I couldn't help but think as I was listening there yesterday that the two of you are right and all of us were wrong, at least where this very significant point is concerned, why you stand where you stand makes all the difference in the world. I thought that was pretty good. As a matter of fact, that's so good. I told that again and again, because that really is it.

Here is somebody who is adrift and that sea of relativity that I was talking about, who had no short anchor for his soul. And he recognized that if that's the way you operated, well, then it was going to have an impact not only upon your entire life, but upon your Ministry. And so where you stood and why you stood there, especially if you could stand upon Scripture, makes all the difference in the world. Since I'm talking about the Bible and the word of God, we're also talking about relativity.

Let me bring the two together in this story. This story also concerns Princeton Theological Seminary. Some years ago, a professor was expounding in the class Modern theory of language, according to which words really don't stand for anything. Absolute word just means what it means to me. And it means what it means to you. And I don't really know what it means to you or what it means to me. That's sort of a discouraging philosophy because it makes communication meaningless. And the students weren't buying this. That was even a bit radical for them.

So they were saying, no, that isn't right. It's true that we sometimes misunderstand what we mean when we're using a particular word. But that's what theology is all about. To try to sort out what we really mean by the word. That's what learning is. That's why we go to school. That's why we try to define things clearly. And the professor didn't buy that. One of the students said, look, if we're sitting here in the classroom and I shout out, oh, look, an airplane. Every one of us will look out the window up in the sky.

Now we might have different ideas of what kind of an airplane we're going to see. Some might think of a big one. Some might think of a small one or whatever, but we all have some idea. The word carries some definable, absolute content. And the professor said, no, well, I sat there thinking about that for a while, and then one of the students said somewhat out loud, musing it over. You know, if words are that meaningless, if it's all just relative, then trying to communicate by words is meaningless as well.

And the professor was letting them go on. Yes, he was agreeing. And then a student said, Well, if that's the case of trying to communicate by words as meaningless, they are trying to communicate by words. Here in this classroom. Talking about words is also meaningless. And the professor was beginning to get worried about this time because he didn't think it was quite all that meaningless. At least what he was saying wasn't. And then another student said, well, if our being here and talking about words is meaningless, then what are we going to do with the rest of the hour?

And finally another student said, Well, I think we ought to go out and play football. So they all got up and they marched out of the professor's classroom out of the field and began to play football. Because, of course, that's what it comes down to. If everything is relative, if nothing has any absolute value, well, then let's live eat drink and be Merry, because tomorrow we die and they voted with their feet. And that's exactly what's happening in the churches. People are voting with their feet as well.

They don't hear a sure word from God. So they say, look, if there's no sure word from God here, there's no sure word from God anywhere. There's no sense even coming here. Let's live for ourselves. And they fall into the pattern that Paul is talking about in the first part of the chapter. That is the kind of culture in which we live. Now. I know somebody is going to say, I hear it all the time from more Liberal people. It would be very nice to believe, as you obviously want to believe, that God has given us a sure word from heaven, something in which we can absolutely trust.

But it's just not possible to do that. It would be nice. I wish we could. It would be very safe. It would be secure. You wouldn't have to think. But when you do think and you investigate the evidence, what you find is that we don't have that kind of a Bible because the Bible. Well, we know, as all the data has come in from different scientific inquiries, historical studies, comparative religions, all of that, we simply know that the Bible is filled with errors. It would be nice to be able to say that the Bible is the word of God completely in the hall and in its parts.

But you just can't do that anymore. At least not if you're an honest person. When I was in seminary, I suppose that's the question that I wrestled with hardest. I didn't really go to seminary with a high view of Scripture and lose it and then recover it. I didn't come in with a low view and find it. I came in with a fairly high view of Scripture, and I left with a high view of Scripture. But nevertheless, that's what I wrestled with, because if all the professors in a Liberal institution learned men are saying, look, just as you get to know the facts, if you're just honest, you can't hold that old view of the scripture.

Well, anybody who's honest is trying to grapple with that, especially if you're a student has to say, Well, what do you say to that? How do you respond to that kind of an argument? And so I began to wrestle with it. And I began to investigate some of these things that were claimed to be heirs in the Bible. What I found was important, I think, and I want to share it with you. And it's just a simple, simple thing. As the data has come in, from historical studies, from comparative religions, from linguistics and all that sort of thing.

It is simply not true that we have discovered more and more errors in the Bible. As a matter of fact, the contrary is true things that we did not understand, which even in earlier generations, even in the Middle Ages, people were saying were errors tend to be explained by the data as it comes. I sometimes put it this way. I say, look, if you could put a line on a blackboard, if I had one behind me here, I would do it, starting with point A over on the left side and going over to point B on the right.

And if you let that line stand for all the data in the Bible, and then let a portion of the line be solid standing for all of the data in the Bible that we have no real reason for questioning, and a little bit of the line over there in the end, be a dotted line for portions of the Bible that we don't really understand, things that perhaps seem to be contradictory or where there's some sort of problem with the historical record. Almost all scholars of any persuasion, if they're honest, would say most of the line is solid.

All they would mean by that is that the Bible is a very reliable book. Historically, most scholars would say that now there'd be some difference in the proportion of the line. Some would say the

solid line is 70%. Real Conservatives would say, oh no, it's 95% and so forth. But even your most conservative people would admit there are some things we don't understand, and even the most Liberal people would say there's much of it that we do and is reliable. Now I asked the question and that kind of a framework with that kind of a line as the data has come in over the decades, especially in the last 30, 40, 50 years.

In what direction is that solid line moving as the data comes in? Does that solid line get longer and longer and the dotted line gets shorter and shorter? Do the questions tend to be resolved, or is it the other way around as the data comes in as the dotted line gets longer and longer? And does the solid line get shorter and shorter? And I would maintain that in any average, honest gathering of honest scholars, almost everybody would confess that as the data comes in over the generations, that solid line has gotten longer and longer.

That's the case. You see, it is quite possible to be intellectually honest and at the same time say, I believe what the Bible claims about itself that it's God's book, and because it's God's book, it is Truthful in the whole and in its parts. I noticed some years ago that Time magazine, which is hardly an evangelical house organ, came out with an issue on the Bible in which they said virtually the same thing. The cover story was on the Bible. It had a picture of three wise men.

The issue came out just before Christmas, and the cover bore the words, how true is the Bible? Well, I thought it was interesting, and so I wanted to read it, and I did. And I read it carefully. I found they gave ample attention to the Liberal critics. They gave some of the evangelical responses, and when they got to the end, they wrapped it up in a rather conservative way. They

said, look, people who feel the Earth's shake when a verse of the Bible is challenged would have to conclude that the credibility of the Bible has been lessened.

But people who look for something else in the Bible might well conclude that its credibility has been enhanced over the decades, as the critics have brought their heaviest artillery to bear against the Bible. The Bible has not only withstood the siege but is better for the attack. Well, I read that. And I thought, that's pretty good, you know. But I said, I'm going to have to wait and see what appears in the Letters column in two weeks, because I can't believe that that's going to go utterly unchallenged by the Liberal critics.

And I was right. Two weeks later was the issue in hypertension. There were two letters from two very Liberal scholars. One was Martin Marty of the University of Chicago. The other was Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School, and one of them letters began, I forget which one it was. The faith of your Bible believers is the opposite of biblical faith. Well, I read that and I got angry. I said, isn't that awful? Time magazine wasn't claiming in arrangement for the Bible. It wasn't even claiming that the Bible was inspired.

All Time magazine was saying, is the Bible is a reliable book? And here are these Liberal scholars. They can't even stand to have time Magazine say the Bible is reliable. I got so angry I had to stop and pray about it. And I think the Lord said to me, not audibly. But if he did, it would have had a Jewish accent. I think he said to me, Look, I'm not upset by it. Why should you be upset by it? He said, Why don't you go on and read the magazine?

I said, all right, I'll do that. And I went on from where I was reading these letters. They were about page 38 up near the beginning, and I read on from that point toward the back. And eventually about page 68. I came to an article in the science section. Now this article in the Science section told about an archeological expedition that a Jewish archaeologist named Bino Rosenberg had been doing in the Southern area of the Sinai. He had gone down to that little area just off the Gulf of Aqaba, where there's a site that the guides will tell you is the site of Solomon's mines, where he smelted it down the gold for the temple.

And Rosenberg wondered if that was really true. Had the Jews ever actually occupied that site? And if so, when so, he excavated the site and found out that as a matter of fact, the site was occupied by Jewish forces at the time of Solomon, and therefore might very well have been where Solomon melted down the gold for the temple. But at any rate, he wasn't quite satisfied with that. He went on back to see who had been at the site before that, and the Egyptians had been there.

But everybody knows that the Egyptians didn't invent metallurgical techniques. It's in the historical records, the written records. And so that site had to be constructed by somebody prior to the Egyptians. And so he excavated further. And eventually he found that the site had been established by the Medianites. Now Time magazine realized that nobody among their leadership would know who the Medianites were. So at this point in the story, they put in a little explanation. They said the Medianites were a little known people who dwelled in the area and who are identified in the Book of Genesis as the first metal workers.

I got to that point and I stopped and I laughed. I said, that really is funniest, and it proves the Holy Spirit has a sense of humor because in all the issues of Time magazine that that article on archeology could have appeared. It appeared in the very issue in which these Liberal scholars were saying, the faith of your Bible believers is the opposite of biblical faith. What you had there, you see, is one more tiny little bit of evidence as God nudged that solid line a little bit further to the right.

I sometimes say to the theological students, because we have a lot of them in Philadelphia that come to the Church. If you want to be thought very wise and clever now, but you're not afraid of looking like a fool. In about 30 years, you make a career finding all the problems in the Bible you put into writing with your name at the head of the article. All the reasons why we can't believe the Bible is the God breathed word of God. But if you're not afraid of being thought a fool now, knowing that as time goes on, the verdict of history will tend to vindicate you.

Well, then you take your stand upon this book. Now let me say one other thing about it. We've talked about the nature of the times in which we live, and we've talked about the solution to those times, the use of the Bible. We've seen why it's important, because it's God breathe. Let me say one other thing about it. In verse 16, Paul with classic biblical understatement says that the Bible is useful. That's something that should speak to us because we're so pragmatic. One of the questions we always ask of anything is what good is it?

And here is Paul saying with classic understatement, the Bible is useful if you say useful for what he spells it out. Useful for teaching rebuking, correcting training in righteousness. In other

words, useful for all things in order that. Here's what I was talking about yesterday in order that the man of God, the woman of God, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. What does it mean? That the person who studies the Scripture will by the power of the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through it, come to know God, and so take on the characteristics of God and actually be useful in the world.

You realize that the Bible has that power. Harry Ironside has a wonderful story in one of his books about a time when he was in San Francisco and was going across the city to a Sunday afternoon speaking engagement. When he passed a group of Salvation Army workers on the street. They were having a street meeting, and because he was well known, they stopped him. They asked him to stand up and give his testimony, and he did. While he was giving his testimony, he noticed a man come to the back of the crowd.

He wasn't one of the derelict to whom they were primarily speaking. This man was very well dressed, and while Arnside was speaking pulled something out of his pocket and he wrote on it. And then when Arnside finished, he came through the crowd very carefully and he handed Arnside this card and Arnside looked at it had the name of a very famous socialist of the day, sort of an agnostic atheist speaker, very popular. And on the other side of the card, the blank side the man had written, I challenge you to debate with me the subject Agnosticism versus Christianity. Next Sunday afternoon, Hall of Science 04:00. I will pay all expenses.

Ironside took that card and he stepped back up on the platform and he read it. Everybody knew who the man was, and he said something like this. He said, I will agree to this debate. I already

have something that I'm supposed to do next Sunday afternoon, but I'll cancel it. And I will be glad to take part in this debate. If this gentleman who wants to debate the virtues of agnosticism will do two things to show that he has something worth debating about next Sunday afternoon. When he comes to the debate, I want him to bring with him two people, and here are their characteristics. First of all, I want him to bring a man who at one point was well known, established leader in his community. But because of some vice, perhaps alcoholism or greed, perhaps embezzlement or whatever it may be some vice. I won't specify which he fell from that position and became what we would commonly call a down and outer. There are plenty of them around the city where they were meeting, and a man who ruined his life, he had ruined himself.

He deserted his family, he fell into low life and so forth. But then one day, as he was walking across the city, he saw a sign advertising a lecture being given by this gentleman on the virtues of agnosticism. And he didn't have anything else to do. So he went in. He sat in the back of a lecture hall, and he heard that address on Agnosticism. And he said to himself as he listened, that is exactly what I need to turn my life around. And so he became an intelligent agnostic.

And as a result of picking up that particular philosophy, his life was changed. He brought himself back up out of the gutter. He reestablished himself in society. And that was a credit to society and to his family and to himself. And then he said, I want him to do the same thing for a woman, find a woman who has fallen into the low life, lived here as a prostitute, been the victim of man's evil passions. But who one day like this man, wandered into a lecture, heard a lecture, and agnosticism.

And as a result of hearing that said, that is just what I need to turn myself around and get out of this mess that I'm in. And so by becoming an intelligent agnostic, this girl found her way back up out of the depths of sin and got established in society, has a family and so forth. And he said, now, if this gentleman will do that to show that he has something worth debating about, I, for my part, promised to bring 100 such people who have been transformed by the gospel that this man ridicules, he said, I don't think it would be hard to find 100 in the city turned to the Salvation Army captain, a girl who was standing there had been leading the meeting.

And he said to her, would you have anybody like that in this Salvation Army Corps? She said, oh, yes, at least 40. And he said, all right, there's 40. I suppose I can get 60 more easily from the other missions around the city. And next Sunday afternoon, we'll do that. You come with your two. I'll come with my hundred. And the Salvation Army girl who was there was getting the spirit of the thing. She said, oh, yeah. We'll give you a brass band. And Ironside said, well, that's fine.

When I have my brass band, I'm going to come in. We're all going to be singing Onward Christian soldiers, and I'll be ready for the debate. And the agnostic must have had a bit of a sense of humor. He just sort of waved his hand to say nothing doing, and he slipped away. You see, that's what the power of the gospel and the word of God does. The world may ridicule it. But it is the gospel of power, and it transforms men and women. Now our duty is twofold, first of all, to know it in order that we become the kind of men and women who have something of which to testify.

It's got to be real for us. And secondly, having become like that, our duty is to proclaim it to the world. I'll tell you one last story in the 60s, when there were so many student riots in this country was also happening around the world. And in France, in one University, a group of communist students, they were disposed toward the Chinese version of communism. At the time they took over, the University, closed it down and set up a table in the courtyard where they were selling the little red books of the Thoughts of Chairman Mao.

And they had a great big banner up their banner said, Read the Little red Book by Chairman Mao. Now the Christians in the University were rather small in number. And in France, the Christian groups always have difficulty establishing themselves. The universities are not hospitable. But they recognized this as an opportunity. And they said to themselves, Look, let's see what we can do. So they got in touch with the University officials and they said, would you mind if we set up a counter demonstration? They figured they'd get on good with the officials.

And then afterwards they'd have an entree into the University. And the officials were glad to have any help they could get. So they said, Fine. Well, then they wrote to the equivalent of the American Bible Society in France. And they said, do you have any red bound copies of the New Testament? And they said, yes, well, they said, Send them all down. We're going to sell them. And then when they had their red bound copies of the New Testament, they had the opportunity to speak. They set up a table in the same courtyard opposite the table of the Chinese Communist University students.

And they had a Chinese Christian girl in their group. And they got her to stand behind the table and sell it. So the Chinese Communists, none of whom were Chinese, were selling the little red bound copies of the Thoughts of Chairman Mao. And they had their red New Testaments. They had a Chinese Christian girl to sell it. And then they put up their banner and their banner said, Read the little red Book by Jesus Christ. Now that's our challenge. You see, to go to the world to live like that, first of all, to really know our God, and then to challenge people to come to that word where God makes Himself known.

We will do that. God will bless it because he delights to bless His word. He said, I'll not allow my word to return it to me void, but it will always accomplish the purpose wherein do I send it in your life and in the life of those to whom you witness? Let us pray, Father, we ask you to bless this time that we have had for our encouragement and Godliness, specially where that has to do with our study, our faithful study of the Scriptures, and also in our witness, as we being fed by the Scripture by Your Grace.

Then take it and proclaim it faithfully to those about us. Do grant that although we are not responsible for the whole Church of Jesus Christ in our day, nevertheless, where we are and where we're a part of it grant that we might make a difference so that we are not like that culture described in the early verses of 2 Timothy 3, but rather are those who actually give evidence of having been with Jesus. We pray in his name, Amen and Amen.

[Speaker 1]

Boice. Torrey 1988 Standing on the Rock

Thank you, Dr. Boice. So reminder ten maybe twelve people who love God just for about five minutes you are dismissed. Thanks.