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# Building on the Word

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE  
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## Introduction

- **(Show Slide #2)** This week we will be continuing a series that Pastor Marc started and Pastor David preached on the last two week called “Building by The Book” based off a book by Kevin DeYoung called ‘Taking God at His Word’. Pastor Marc introduced us to the Acronym SCAN which represents the 4 characteristics of the bible we are talking through. Pastor Marc talked about ‘S’ which is for Sufficient. God’s Word is sufficient for us. There is nothing else supplemental needed. Last week Pastor David talked about the ‘C’ which is the Bibles Clarity. The word is clear and you can read it...you don’t need anyone else to read it or interpret it for you. This morning I will be talking through the ‘A’ for Authority, and next week Pastor Marc will make a triumphant homecoming and he will be talking about the ‘N’ which stands for necessity.
- **(Show Slide #3)** I know a lot of you already know this but most of the sermons are archived our City View website. You can access them and listen to them and many other any time by going to [cityviewlubbock.org](http://cityviewlubbock.org) and clicking the ‘Resources’ link and finding ‘Archived Sermons’.

## Scripture Introduction

- **(Show Slide #4)** The book of Acts opens where the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John end, with a church in its infancy. The apostles have experienced something amazing with their time with Jesus and now it is time to share the good news of Jesus with the world. The book of Acts chronicles how this happened in a society where the leadership was against everything that Jesus stood for.
- To fully and truly grasp what is going on you need to understand the people and political forces of the time. There are three main groups of people that dominate this environment where the message of Jesus would be spread.
  - The first group was the Jews who despite Jesus’s coming were still waiting for the Messiah...instead of recognize Jesus as the Messiah they went it on their own. They did what they have always done, they kept the law and by their own work they would please God.
  - The second group were the Romans. The Romans were bent on turning the known world into their empire. Anything that stood in their way would become Roman or die. The Romans did not really

like Jesus because Jesus came proclaim the truth that he was God, and the Roman's had already filled the spot with Caesar.

- The Greeks were the third group. They were under the thumb of the Roman Empire and wanted desperately to get out from under it. So desperate were they to eliminate Jesus that they used the Roman Empire (which they hated) to help get Jesus crucified.
- The interaction of these three groups of people alone do NOT make for an environment in which Christianity could flourish easily. Many people in this time will go on to be killed in the name of Jesus, as they attempt to tell people some really good news.

### Scripture

- (Show Slide #5, 6, and 7 as I read) With that brief introduction if you will stand and crack open your bibles to Acts chapter 17 we will begin reading at verse 1. Please stand as you find that in your bibles please...
- As we read this together I want you to pay particular attention to the two different cities and their responses to Paul and his message.

17 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. 6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

- Please be seated. (Show Slide #8)

## Sermon

### About the Story

- Often times when I read stories like this in the Bible I wonder why it is that our churches failures were included. Paul's preaching in not one but two cities gets him run off by the people.
- As with this story and many others I look for what is the same and what is the difference. There has to be a good reason for this story to be included...otherwise it just shows Paul's ability to get people upset. (By the way...I am hopeful at the end of the day that I am not run out of here by an angry mob.)
- Paul visits two cities...(Show Slide # 9) this may be the first account of a Tail of Two Cities. It was the best of times...it was the worst of times. The first one he visits is Thessalonica. He comes into the city and he does what Paul does...he preaches and teaches in the synagogue. From the story we see that Paul is teaching about Jesus. He says, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."
- (Show Slide #10) So the message that Paul is telling everyone in both cities is the same message that you should hear on any Sunday including this one, it is all about Jesus. So the big similarity is the message in both of these cities.

- However, the reception of this message is not even close too similar. So then we really need to look at that difference. Why was it that the same message brings such a wildly different response?
- To answer that question, we need to look at the people who rejected Paul's message and compare those people with the people who received Paul's message.
- The story tells us that the Jews in Thessalonica are jealous. They go out and gather up a group of trouble makers and do what trouble makers do...they made trouble. On the other hand, we have the people of Berea which are described as "more noble". When they hear Paul's message of why Jesus is the Messiah they do something that the people in Thessalonica don't do...they go to the Scriptures and look for confirmation...daily.
- This second group of people go to something that they know is true and that is the Word of God as they know it. The "Scriptures" here are not the completed works of the Bible that you have the honor to hold in your hand. These would have been the old testament scriptures. They need to examine these scriptures to see if Jesus is the Messiah. Is this the guy that they have been waiting for?
- They don't jump to any conclusions of an emotional reactions. They don't get to this conclusion or reject it as our friends in Thessalonica did by some sort of knee jerk reaction.
- **(Show Slide #11)** People often come to my door and proclaim to me different "accounts" of Jesus and proclaiming things that I need to do to be saved. Maybe they come to you as well.
- When they do I like to listen to what they have to tell me but there are so many different accounts of people who claim to be Christians out there...which ones should I listen to? Which people are proclaiming to me the gospel that I know and love and which people are trying to deceive me to get at their own twisted motives. Sometimes it is really hard to tell.
- **(Show Slide #12)** Good news for me and you...is that we have the scriptures readily available to us to compare against. Just like the Bereans in this story we read this morning we need to be constantly bouncing the words we are receiving daily, including anything you hear here, with what we know is the truth.

- You see the Word of God which is found in this book has to be the ultimate truth and authority in our life. Something has to have authority in your life.
- As Pastor David talked about last week, we live in a post-modern world where people really thumb their nose at any sort of absolute truth, but that is what the Bible is. This book is the absolute Truth and it needs to have the authority in our lives to guide us, teach us, refine us, and even correct us through our lives.
- To be a Christian is to live by the teaching of God. To be a Christian is submit fully to God and his Word. But here is the deal, we just can't say something has Authority we need to give authority to something.

#### 2 Kinds of Posts on Facebook

- I have pretty well determined that there are two general categories of post that I see most often on social media sites. The first type of post is about the constitution. Stuff about amendments and rights we have or should not have as Americans. The second most popular post are bible scriptures. I find both of these things odd because I also believe that very few of the people that post stuff like this have ever read either of the documents that support it. They are instead piecing things that they want and like together...sound bites of a much bigger picture.

#### People don't know what is the US Constitution or the Bible because they don't read the document they know are important.

- I heard a study a while back that a great many Americans do not know what is in the US Constitution. (Show Slide #13) When read excerpts from the Communist Manifesto a great many Americans agreed that those were probably in the US Constitution. Scary.
- (Show Slide #14) Another survey shows that only (Bullet #1) 5 percent of Americans can correctly answer 10 rudimentary question about the Constitution. The same poll shows that (Bullet #2) 91 percent of Americans believe the U.S. Constitution is important to them and (Bullet #3) 84 percent believe that for the constitutional system to work we must be active and informed citizens. Really?
- (Show Slide #15) On the flip side (Bullet #1) every single day in America there are over 168,000 bibles sold or given away. That is every day. Each year there are more than (Bullet #2) 20 million bibles sold in the US. The

Bible would top the bestselling list each year but it is excluded because the average household has (Bullet #3) 9 bibles and people surveyed said they would like to own more. Another poll indicated that only (Bullet #4) 57 percent of American read their bible only 4 or less times per year. Only (Bullet #5) 26 percent of American read their bible on a regular basis which is defined as 4 or more times per week.

- Based on these statics, looking around the worship center of City View there are a handful of people who don't own bibles...come see me after and maybe we can fix that...if I separate this room down the middle there you have the half that read the bible 4 or less times per year and a small group that sits in the corner that actually read the bible regularly.
- (Show Slide #16) The problem would then seem to me that we don't need more copies of the bible...we just need someone to crack one open. In order to give authority to God's word it might be nice to know what God is saying.
- Don't for one-minute think that this is a lecture on how you are not doing enough to be a "good" Christian...it is definitely NOT. I already know you are NOT a good enough and that is why we desperately need Jesus, but at the same time we are a nation that desperately needs his Word.
- For a great deal of my life I would have considered myself on the opposite end of the spectrum...I didn't read the bible on purpose. I fought the authority...I was a standalone rebel who had the solutions for the problems of this world and they didn't start with a church or a god.
- Long story short...if anyone ever tells you to stand up against the authority...you should ask them on whose authority?

#### Why does the Bible not have Authority?

- So what I would like to do the rest of time this morning is talk about why people struggle with placing their authority into this book and why. I have come up with some excuses that you may heard or maybe even you have now...I know I had all of them through my life.

#### People

- I think anytime we talk about problems we are probably talking about people. When two people are struggling in their marriage it is not the

marriage that is at fault...it is the people. The problem is that people have piles and piles of expectations.

- I really like the Apostle Paul's story. To really grasp at what he is experiencing you need to understand that when Paul shows up in Thessalonica he is greeted by almost no one that trusts him. This guy use to be a guy named Saul and he was a Jew of the Jews. He kept the law to the letter.
- If someone needed stoning, he would hold the coats...and then he meets Jesus and his life is changed. He becomes a new guy...with a new name. The guy that was one-minute persecuting Christians is now trying to convert the Jews.
- The Christians don't trust him...the Jews don't like him...and here he shows up with a message of change.
- When Paul arrives in Thessalonica the people there judge him and not the message he brings. Paul just isn't the guy they want to hear the message from.
- I wonder how often we do that. Things aren't as we expect they should be so we quickly dismiss the message. We throw the baby out with the bath water.
  - "The church didn't look like what I thought a church should look like,
  - the preacher was wearing an ugly shirt,
  - there were not 300 people in each of the 4 Sunday morning services,
  - I sat next to a guy that didn't look like he belonged in church,
  - the music was not what I wanted...and not the volume I expected,
  - and the preacher talked for way too long."
- Look, all those things are great but those are not the primary things we should be looking at...what we should be looking at is the Word of God which all things that matter will have their authority in. That is what the Berean's did...they went to the Scripture...they went to the root of their truth.
- I want very much for that to be my reaction but to be totally honest with you it is hard. It is hard not to turn to my expectations rather than what I know is the truth.

- So how do we do that? We get in God's word and get in tune with what God wants. We write his word on our hearts...which I warn you what God wants is not always what you may want.

#### Kids Example

- If you want to understand the true nature of people all you need to do is look at the kids. Kids exhibit the true nature of any grown up person...they just don't try to hide it.
- For example, they will lie to you for a piece of candy, they will steal for a cookie...and if you have ice cream...someone better have your back because I don't know what they would be willing to do for that. Something I noticed about my kids if they are great at circumventing authority. It is baked into them. Those of you with kids know what I mean. Let me give you an example that happened this past month at my house.
- My wife and I have 4 kids (Show Slide #17) so we have to have some level of authority in our house or the kids will run the house and us into the ground.
- My wife and I share much of the same authority in our house. The kids know they can come and ask for a snack, a drink, for a toy to be brought down, or permission to go outside. They know that they can ask Me or Cindy for what they want and we will decide what they can and can't do at the time.
- The other day my 8-year-old son Ryan (Show Slide #18) came to me and he asked me if he could download a video game to his iPhone. I like to stay involved in what my kids are playing so I always review and look at any game the kids are trying to get into...I also like to know if it is something I can play or not...
- On this occasion I didn't think the game was worth spending 99 cents on and I also knew he had just got some other toys and games for his birthday so I said, "No, not now."
- Ryan went off, he was fine...he is in no way deprived. Later that evening I walked into his room and I see him playing a game on his iPad...the same game that I told him he could NOT buy. How did this happen??? He doesn't have the password so he couldn't download it himself???

- He didn't like the answer I had given him so he looked to another source of authority...his Mom...and she said, "Sure" and got his game. Cindy did not know about the conversation that Ryan and I had already had but Ryan did know. (Show Slide #19)
- I think Christians are kind of just like this with our Bibles...we read things that are plain and clear, black or white, on or off...don't steel...It isn't steeling if it comes from work and they owe it to me anyways... Don't lie...Well sure, what I said wasn't true but the end justifies the means...
- Honestly, if we read it and gave it the ultimate authority in our life then we wouldn't always be trying to circumvent the authority that the Bible has.
- I am no exception to this. To be honest with you sometimes I find it really hard to pick up my Bible and read it because I know that I am going to have to do what God says and not what I want.

#### The Bible is Old and Culturally Irrelevant

- Frankly other times I am confused by what I read. I have hard time understanding what is going on...I don't understand the geography, the culture, and why in the world did Paul just not send a bunch of emails?
- Probably the most common reason people give for the reason they think the bible does not have any authority in their lives is that the Bible is really old. The stories of the Bible happened a long time ago in a culture that I don't understand and so there is no reason why we should spend any more time on it...we need something new!
- I thought this way for a long time in my life...and then I picked up a Bible and read it...I found a group of people that are struggling with similar issues as we are today.
- I see a people that really need a savior...and then Jesus shows up...and I see a savior that does the unthinkable so that his people can no longer be separated from Him. That is really good news.
- You see, even though the stories in this book are really old...they are still really relevant because let's face it...people just don't change...not by themselves. We as a people love to think that somehow when put in the same situation of other people from the past we would somehow make a better decision because we are better people because we have HD TV's and iPhones.

- If you look at the Bible as just an old book about people who are old and live in a different culture...then I warn you that you one day really soon...you will be an old irrelevant person living in a culture that your kids don't understand.
- I am 36...I don't consider myself that old. (Show Slide #20) But sometimes I tell my kids about a time before the internet and before smart phones...before cell phones...a time when people drove "banana-boats" ...gas was only 99 cents a gallon...and despite not having PokemonGo we were pretty happy.
- My kids laugh at this sort of stuff but I always warn them that when they tell their kids about the stuff from their time growing up they will be laughed at too. (Show Slide #21)
- You see the time has changed but it does not mean that the past did not happen...and it also means that if the past happened with you in it you would probably be doing the same things as the people in the stories you read.
- People look at stories like Peter walking on the water with Jesus and sinking and they say things like, we just have to keep our eyes on Jesus and then you won't sink...be more like me.
- But here is the brutally honest truth...if I was out on the water with Jesus I would be looking to make sure someone was taking a video for my Facebook page so I could share it with all my friends. You know you would too.

#### Culture

- What about culture. I don't really understand the culture that the people lived in. Honestly I agree...I don't always understand that either...but it doesn't make the culture wrong just because you don't understand it.
- When my wife and I got married we came from two way different cultures that we needed to learn how to respect before we could really learn from them.
- Once we admit the fact that our cultures were really different we actually had a chance to learn from the differences.
- We learned more about what we wanted to become from it.

- We saw what we wanted our kids to be raised like...we saw what church we wanted to belong to...I saw that I only wanted Mexican food.
- You see, if we would have just stared each other down we would have never of had a chance to grow from our cultural backgrounds. Because of what we know about our two distinct cultural backgrounds we are better for it.
- So here is the deal, when we read the Bible and see cultural difference it does not mean that we should instantly dismiss the content because of its differences.
- Maybe...just maybe there is something to learn from a culture that is not exactly like yours.

#### Our Own Sins

- Sometimes I think we avoid the authority of the Bible because we really want to avoid our own sins. We want to point at everyone else's sins and really avoid our own. It is easier that way.
- The people in Thessalonica are upset about Paul's message. A message the is turning their world upside down.
- This is disturbing to everyone. So their response to this is to turn the city upside down. Their response is nested so deeply in hypocrisy that they don't even notice it. The people are covering up their own sins.
- They are keeping the law and utterly failing at it...instead of admitting it they quickly draw the attention away from themselves by starting a riot. So deep is their conviction to not allow their sins to be set on parade they make the (Show Slide #22) 47-mile journey down the road to Berea to stir up trouble in that city. 47 miles...I am guessing they didn't round up the posse in a couple of pickup trucks...they walked...47 miles...that is some commitment.
- (Show Slide #23) This happens more times still today then I think we would really like to admit. We get on the next sin wagon and go to war. We ignore our own sins and travel great lengths to find other people's sins.
- So bad is this that many people know and understand not what it is that the Christian church stands for but rather what it stands against. We don't like Homosexuals! Hollywood only makes garbage. We don't like other churches, and we are not so keen on liberals.

- Here is the truth...we have never been called to hate anyone...we have been called to be like Jesus. The word Christian actually means “little Christ”. You know, the guy who ate with sinners. The guy who loved people. The guy who laid down his life for sinners like me and you.

#### Not Scientific

- Some people dismiss the authority of the Bible because it is just not scientific. To that I say, “Yep.” Here is the deal...**(Show Slide #24)** the Bible was never intended to be a science text book...it was meant to be a message from God with what you needed to know about how God wants to relate with you.
- Besides for the fact that true scientific reasoning won’t take off until the 16<sup>th</sup> century...people of the time period of the Bible do not necessarily think like we think today.
- What was good for them is not necessarily good enough for any 5<sup>th</sup> grader who has done a science fair project. What it doesn’t mean is that it is wrong.
- I think a lot of people get turned off by the Bible because it doesn’t tell them every detail of the how and the what and the when questions we have burning in our hearts but it will tell you ever why that you need to know.

#### Offensive

- The last thing I want to talk about is something that anyone who has read it will understand. The book is offensive.
- I read through the stories and I am just offended. In fact, I am offended by most things...our culture loves to be offended for some reason. I read the following Facebook post that pretty much sums it up. **(Show Slide #26)**

“I’m just about convinced that we now live in a society where if I said something like, “the sky is blue”, 8 people would argue that the color blue offends them, 4 people would agree but then go on a tangent talking about how stupid people who think that the sky isn’t blue are, 2 people would unfriend me for having an opinion about the color of the sky at all, and 1 person would say something about my grammar in my statement. I’d probably also be lucky if only one person called me a ‘skyist’. 2 people would post articles on how the sky isn’t actually blue. 1

person would talk about a blue sky conspiracy. And a dozen or so absolute stick in the muds would warn me that I shouldn't go outside to view the sky because it's too dangerous. Probably one person would try to sue me because "blue skies" are a trigger word not to be used in their safe space." – Lindsey Hitchenson

**(Worship Piano Make your way up to the stage.)**

- Let's face it...we are a culture that is very easily offended. (Show Slide #27) The problem is that instead of accepting things as different and trying to understand people and their differences we are upset that everyone does not agree with us.
- This is a huge problem when we read the Bible because I guarantee you that you are not going to be validated by every scripture that you find. However, you may be validated by every scripture you read on Facebook...but I promise you that if you read this book you will not always feel warm and fuzzy.
- As great as it is that every third post is some sort of scripture we as a group have sanitized the message of the bible. The Bible has no authority in our lives because God is simply a magical genie we can rub out of his lamp and make wishes on...
- The Bible I read puts God in charge and me as a servant...not the other way around.
- Being offended is probably one of the most important feelings there could be. That uneasy feeling that you get when you know that there is something wrong in your life and you need to change it can be a very good feeling while you are reading this book.
- You may have noticed that from Paul's preaching there are many people who accepted the message that Paul was preaching...they accepted Jesus as the Messiah...they accepted that Jesus was the way, and their own attempts at righteousness were just dirty rags...while the other people...kept on being offended at a guy who was turning the world upside down.
- Let me say this again...your ways our filthy rags. What you do is plain out...not today, not yesterday, and not tomorrow every going to be good enough for your God. Never... but are you ready for the good news of the day?

- Jesus is good enough. God's Word is good enough and the only authority in your life that you will ever need to answer to. The only authority that you can always go back to for an anchor in your life on the really stormy seas of life.

## Conclusion

- Can I be really honest with you this morning? Would that be OK? I had a really hard time writing this message. All throughout it I was convicted by the Holy Spirit. I was reminded of the reason and plain out excuses that I did not pick up this Bible and read it and apply it to my life.
- All of these things are just excuses. Excuses for the fact that I did not know how or even where to start. My fear is that there are others who just don't know what to do with this big book.
- They don't know how important the words are in this book because this book is different from any other book you will ever read because this book is God's Word to you.
- **Note that even though this book is for you...it is not about you. It is about Jesus. If you twist the script and you make this book about you, I promise you will see a bunch of old people running around in a distant world who offend you to no end.**

## Not Simple

- I keep seeing these advertisements that read a lot like this. "One simple trick to..." You can fill in any blank.
  - Go back to school.
  - Speed read.
  - Get out of traffic tickets.
  - Make more money.
  - Pay off all of your bills...on and on and on they go.
- I saw this one the other day that said, "Learn a new language the simple way."
- I don't buy any of that nonsense for one minute...I am pretty sure if you learn to speak Spanish it is not going to be simple, and if it really was simple we would all speak 6 different languages just for fun.

- If you are going to pay off your bill and make more money...you are probably going to have to put in some extra hours at the office. I say this to you because I don't want anyone to leave here and say something like, "Reading the bible is so simple."
- If you want me to stand here and tell you that reading the bible is easy then you will need to go and find another person to do that. Here is what I will say...it is going to be hard.
- There are going to be times you don't want to, things you don't understand, and stuff that really offends you. It is going to be difficult but highly rewarding.