

Series: Exploring Christianity: The Foundations of Our Faith

Title: How can I trust the Bible?

Passage: 2 Peter 1:3-21

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Introduction:

- This morning we're beginning a new sermon series, we're calling Exploring Christianity, the Foundations of our Faith.
 - And we're going to be answering questions like:
 - How we can trust the Bible?
 - What is the Trinity?
 - How can I be sure I'm a Christian?
- If you've been wanting to know more about Jesus, this is a great series for you, to help you understand the Christian faith.
- But this series is also for mature believers, because honestly, we need to remind ourselves of the essentials of our faith.
 - We may all believe the Trinity, but if I gave a pop quiz on the Trinity, I'm guessing all of us could use a little refresher.
 - And so, this will be a great reminder for what we believe.
- And as we begin, we'll learn how the Bible is the awesome word of God, that we need to trust and believe.
 - And we'll see 4 reasons, why need to believe and trust the Bible.

Point 1:

- First, we see that we need to believe the word of God, because it gives new life.
 - Please take a look at 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 3.
 - **His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him...2 Peter 1:3**
- Peter tell us that true life, comes from God's divine power.
 - In other words, it's not by human power.
 - Or by human intellect.
 - Or by human achievement.
 - But only by God's power that we can have life.
- And it's important we remember this.
 - Because when we succeed in life.
 - Or when technology improves our lives.
 - We may think that we are the source of life.
 - And like the people who built the tower of Babel, we begin to rely on ourselves, and not on God.
 - But we need to remember, all that we achieve, is because of God.
 - The only reason we're breathing, is because of God.
 - And so, let's pray for a humble heart.
 - Let's remember that, **"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life..."**
- And notice how God's power is given, through the knowledge of him.
 - We can receive God's power when we pray.
 - We can receive God's power when we worship.

- But here, Peter reminds us, we also receive God's power, by knowing him.
- And the way we can know God, is through his word.
 - The Bible is the revelation of God.
 - And so, the Bible is teaching us, that it's God's word, which brings life.
 - It's by looking at Bible, we can come to know God, and receive life.
- Now, I want you to think about this.
 - Babies are born everyday.
 - There's new life everyday, and I'm pretty sure, none of these babies ever read the Bible.
 - So, what does Peter mean, when he says that the knowledge of God brings life?
- Here, Peter is speaking about our spiritual lives.
 - He's speaking about eternal life and salvation.
 - Our souls are dead in sin, unable to worship.
 - Blind to reality.
 - But it's through God's word, that we're born again, and made spiritually alive.
- Pastor Erwin Lutzer, who taught a preaching course many years ago, at Trinity seminary, would sometimes, take his students to a cemetery.
 - And he would tell them to preach to the tombstones, to make the dead rise to life.
 - And when nothing happened, he would tell his students to preach louder.
 - He'd say, "Preach louder, maybe they can't hear you."

- And then after some time, he would remind his students:
 - “That’s what you’re doing, when you preach.”
 - “You’re speaking to souls that are dead in sin, and it’s only the word of God, that can give them life.”
 - “It’s only the word of God that can resurrect the dead.”
- What dead souls need, isn’t assistance or healing, or a louder voice.
 - What they need is a resurrection.
 - It’s only the power of God, it’s only the word of God, that can resurrect the dead.
- When Jesus began his ministry, many people began to follow him.
 - Honestly, it’s not hard to imagine, just think about all the miracles he performed.
 - Jesus took 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, and fed over 5000 people.
 - If someone took 5 Lou Malnati’s pizzas, and 2 sushi rolls, and fed over 5000 people.
 - I would probably follow that person around too.
 - All you can eat sushi for free?
 - Sign me up!
 - And so, many people followed Jesus.
- But after some time, the excitement died down, and Jesus began to teach the people, what it meant to truly follow him.
 - And instead of giving them physical bread, Jesus told them, to trust in him, because he was the bread of life.
 - And when the emotional high was gone, when following Jesus became difficult, when the physical bread was gone, and only Jesus was left, we’re told that many turned back and no longer walked with him.

- There may be some of you here today, and you may have experienced something of God.
 - You may have experienced God answering your prayer.
 - You may have felt his strength in a difficult time.
 - You may have felt comfort from people in the church.
 - But now, unable to feel what you felt before, you might be wondering if it was all fluke.
 - If it was really true.
 - If that is you, it may be that God is asking you today, if what you want is just the bread, or if what you want, is truly him.
- When many people turned away from Jesus.
 - He also asked his disciples, **“Do you want to go away as well?”** John 6:67
 - And do you remember what Peter said?
 - **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”** John 6:68-69
 - There is no other word, that brings life.
 - And so, this morning, let’s trust God’s word.
 - Let’s believe God’s word.
 - Let’s say with Peter, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...”**

Point 2:

- God’s work gives life, but second, we see from our passage, that we need to believe the word of God, because it forms godliness in us.
 - His divine power, through his word, has granted all things that pertain to life and godliness.

- And what is godliness?
 - It's a life that's looks more like Christ.
 - In other words, by life, Peter is referring to salvation.
 - But by godliness, Peter is referring to an ongoing transformation after salvation.
- Because of sin, people struggle with fear, and anxiety, and bitterness, and lust.
 - And to a certain extent, therapy can be helpful.
 - Therapy can calm fears.
 - Identify wounds.
 - It can help, calm the body.
 - It can identify triggers.
 - And to be clear, these can be good and helpful tools to help people cope, and even change their behavior.
- But do you see what Peter is saying?
 - The Bible doesn't just help us cope with sin.
 - It doesn't just manage our symptoms.
 - Rather, God's word is able to transform our hearts, to be more like Christ.
 - Jesus is able to move us from fear to confidence.
 - From bitterness to forgiveness.
 - From anxiety to peace.
 - From lust to purity.
- Take a look again at verses 3 and 4.
 - **“He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...”** 2 Peter 1:3-4
 - By divine nature, Peter isn't saying we become a god.

- Rather, he's saying we become more like Christ.
- God is able to make us holy, as he is holy.
- To transform us, into the image of his Son.

- The Bible is the lifegiving word, that forms godliness in us.

- Earlier, I spoke about Erwin Lutzer, who use to be the pastor of Moody Church, in downtown Chicago.
 - But before Erwin Lutzer, there was man named Harry Ironside, who use to be the senior pastor at Moody Church.
 - And in one of his books, he shares a story about an agnostic man, who wanted to debate him.
 - This man wanted to show how agnosticism, the belief that you can't know God, is better than Christianity.
 - And Pastor Harry, agreed to the debate, but on two conditions.

- First, he told Mr. Agnostic that he needed to bring a man, who was changed from a life of sin.
 - It didn't matter what the sin was.
 - He just wanted Mr. Agnostic to bring a man who would testify that agnosticism, changed his life of sin, and showed him how to be good, and how to live in righteousness, and transformed him to be a new man.

- Second, he told Mr. Agnostic that he needed to bring a woman, who was an outcast in society.
 - Who was living a wretched life of sin.
 - But after listening to Mr. Agnostic, she began to have hope, and became delivered of her sin.

- And she became a new woman, living a virtuous life in society.
- And Pastor Harry said, that he'd bring 100 people who were transformed by Christianity.
 - People who were living without hope and living in sin, and were now, transformed by the word of God.
- Well, Pastor Harry writes how the man smiled sarcastically, and left without saying anything else.
- Without the knowledge of God, it's possible to cope, it's possible to improve our behavior.
 - But it's only the word of God, that can truly transform our heart.
 - Prideful people have become humble.
 - Dishonest people have become truthful.
 - Weak people have become strong.
 - Bitter people have become forgiving.
 - Why?
 - Because the word of God, is able to form godliness in our hearts, and make us more like Christ.
- You need to believe and trust God words, because it's the only word that can transform your life.

Point 3:

- Third, we see from our passage, that we need to believe the word of God, because it's true.
 - Take a look at verse 16.
 - Peter writes:

- **“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16**
- Peter is making it clear that God’s word isn’t a fairy tale, but rather, historically true.
 - Peter says he was an eyewitness.
 - He lived with Jesus.
 - He saw Jesus.
 - He heard Jesus.
 - And he’s writing down what he heard, and what he saw.
- I don’t have time to look at every detail, but when you look at the names, and titles, and the cities of the Bible, what you learn is that they’re real places, and real people.
 - For example, when you look at the book of Luke, scholars are amazed by how accurately, Luke connects titles to names.
 - Luke names the town clerk, the proconsul of Achaia, the governor of Judea, the magistrates, and tetrarchs.
 - In our modern times, it would be like someone saying, “The Prime Minister of England, and the President of the United States, and the Governor of Indiana, and the Chancellor of Austria.”
- Furthermore, what you see is how archeology continues to confirm that the Bible is true.
 - For many years, many people thought the city of Ninevah, didn’t exist.
 - They thought it was legend and myth.
 - But around the 1800’s, archeologists found the city of Ninevah.

- There are still cities and people that remain a mystery.
 - But as more is discovered, what it shows is how the Bible is a record of true history.
 - There are thousands of books that you can read, on the evidence of the places, and people recorded in the Bible.
- Furthermore, we can be confident the Bible is true, because of the way it describes the followers of Jesus.
 - Jesus' disciples aren't portrayed as great men.
 - Rather, they look very flawed, and often, very confused.
 - When you read the gospels, we're shown how they doubted, how they failed to understand, how they denied Jesus, how they ran away, how they fell asleep at the greatest moment of need, and how one even betrayed Jesus to death.
 - If the disciples were trying to consolidate power, by tricking people, it wouldn't make any sense to show their failures.
 - But why in the world does the Bible show the failures of God's people?
 - Because it's speaking the truth.
- Even more, if you wanted to convince people to follow Jesus, it wouldn't make any sense to show Jesus, alone on the cross.
 - But Jesus was abandoned by his followers.
 - Rejected by his people.
 - Stripped naked on the cross.
 - Treated like a criminal.
 - Forsaken, even by God the Father.
 - Why?
 - Because it's true.
 - Because he truly died for you and me.

- Here we see, how we need to believe the Bible, because it's true.

Point 4:

- Fourth and finally, we see from our passage that we need to believe the word of God, because it's the word of God.
 - **For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21**
- The Bible was written by several people.
 - And so, you can see the differences between how Paul writes, and how Peter writes.
 - You can see the difference between David and John, and between Moses and Daniel.
 - But verse 21 makes it clear that, it was not the will of man, but the will of God the people were writing.
 - They were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.
 - This doesn't mean that God dictated everything they were to write, but God used their experiences, he used their education, and culture, and language, to lead the writers of the Bible to write down his words.
 - The Bible doesn't contain the will of man, but the will of God.
- And even though the Bible was written by several different authors, over a span of hundreds of years.
 - It's clear that the Bible was written by one authors, it's clear there was a master author, because of the unity of the Bible.

- The Bible is one cohesive story, pointing to our redemption in Jesus Christ.
- Speaking of the authors of the Bible, James Montegamary Boice writes:
 - “They produced a volume that is a marvelous unity in its doctrine, historical viewpoints, ethics, and expectations. It is, in short, a single story of divine redemption begun in Israel, centered in Jesus Christ, and culminating at the end of history... What can account for this unity? There is only one way of accounting for it: behind the efforts of the more than forty human authors is the one perfect, sovereign, and guiding mind of God.” (Boice, Foundations, 47-48)
- The Bible isn’t a self-help book.
 - It’s not just a book of rules.
 - It’s not just a historical book.
 - It’s not just a collection of inspiring stories.
 - It’s not just a book filled with wisdom.
 - The Bible is the very word of God.
 - It’s how God speaks to us.
- The Bible is the awesome word of God, that we need to trust and believe.
 - Because it gives new life.
 - Because it forms godliness in us.
 - Because it’s true.
 - And because it’s through the Bible, that God speaks to us.

Conclusion:

- And so:
- Let's obey God's word.
 - If all this is true, that means we need to obey his word.
 - To truly listen to God's word, means that we need to obey.
 - James writes, **"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like."**
James 1:23-24
 - How silly would it be, if all of us agreed that God's word gives life, and forms godliness, and is true, and is God's word to us, and we didn't listen obey and listen.
 - It would be like we forgot how we looked like.
 - And so, let's ask ourselves, "How can I obey God's word today?"
 - How would you answer that question today?
 - Is there a sin that you need to fight against?
 - Is there a command you've been putting off?
 - Let's seek to obey God's word.
- Second, let's hang on to God's promises.
 - There will be times in life, when you won't understand why God is allowing trials in your life.
 - You may be overwhelmed by shame.
 - You may feel a lack of joy.
 - You may doubt God's promise of goodness over your life.
 - But let's remember, God's promise that he's forgiven all our sin.
 - Let's remember that we can rejoice when we face trials, because he's making us more like him.

- Let's remember, that God has promised his goodness and mercy, all the days our lives.
- It may be, that you're facing a difficult time in your life, and you may be tempted to give up hope.
- But hang out to the promises of God.
- Say with the Psalmist in Psalm 103:
- **"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits; I hope in your word."** Psalm 103:5
- Third, let's study God's word.
 - There's a lot of false teaching in our world today.
 - And I think most of us can identify false teaching, that's really out there.
 - But there's teaching that has a taste of truth, when in actuality, it's twisting God's word.
 - That's why we need to take time to study God's word.
 - Listen to what it says in 2 Peter 3 verses 15 and 16.
 - **"Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him...There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved....take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability."**
 - I hope this gives you hope.
 - Even Peter felt that it was difficult to understand parts of the Bible, especially the Apostle Paul.
 - But it also shows us, how we need to take time to study God's word.
 - One of the best purchases I made, was getting an ESV study Bible.
 - It's a really helpful tool.

- And as you study God's word, you can grow in wisdom, and godliness, and maturity, and keep yourself from false teaching.
- Fourth, let's believe God's word.
 - Why?
 - Because it's God's awesome word, that we need to trust.
- Dr. Emile Cailliet was a French philosopher who eventually taught philosophy at Princeton Seminary.
 - But before teaching at Princeton, he was someone who didn't have any interest in the Bible or God.
 - He depended on philosophy to find meaning in life.
 - But he was shaken, after fighting in World War 1.
 - He watched his friend die in front of him, and he felt that philosophy alone couldn't help him find meaning.
 - And in his biography he says, that he longed for a book that would understand him.
 - And so, after the war, he began to collect every quote that was helpful to him, and create a book of helpful sayings.
 - A book that would understand him.
 - Listen to what he writes:
 - "The day came when I put the finishing touch to "the book that would understand me," speak to my condition, and help me through life's happenings. A beautiful, sunny day it was. I went out, sat under a tree, and opened my precious anthology. As I went on reading, however, a growing disappointment came over me. Instead of speaking to my condition, the various passages reminded me of their context, of the circumstances of my labor over their selection. Then I knew that the whole undertaking would not work, simply because it was of my own making. It carried no strength of persuasion. In a dejected

mood, I put the little book back into my pocket.” (Emile, The Long Shadow of Emile Cailliet, 4)

- Just then, it so happened that he ran into his wife in the park, and on the way to the park with her baby, she just happened to walk across a church, where she was given a French Bible.
 - Seeing the Bible in her hand.
 - Emile began to read.
 - And he states:
 - “I opened it and “chanced” upon the Beatitudes! I read, and read, and read—now aloud with an indescribable warmth surging within...I could not find words to express my awe and wonder. And suddenly the realization dawned upon me: This was the Book that would understand me! I needed it so much, yet, unaware, I had attempted to write my own—in vain. I continued to read deeply into the night, mostly from the gospels. And lo and behold, as I looked through them, the One of whom they spoke, the One who spoke and acted in them, became alive to me...The providential circumstances amid which the Book had found me now made it clear that while it seemed absurd to speak of a book understanding a man, this could be said of the Bible because its pages were animated by the Presence of the Living God and the Power of His mighty acts. To this God I prayed that night, and the God who answered was the same God of whom it was spoken in the Book.” (Boice, Foundations of the Christian Faith: 39)
- Let’s obey God’s word.
- Let’s hang on to God’s word.

- Let's study God's word.
- And let's believe God's word, because it's the awesome word of God, that we need to trust.