

I thought she was sleeping, sleeping through my sermon. Her head was down; her eyes were closed. I thought she was sleeping through my sermon. But then she moved; her head came up; her eyes opened up. Why? What had happened? I had mis-spoken. I didn't just fladoober some words; I fladoobered my words into saying something wrong about God. And she noticed. I must have dug my way out because her head went back down, her eyes closed again.

I do that. Pastors do that. Sometimes, we mis-speak. Sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes we do worse than that. Sometimes we teach and preach what is not true, not just in passing - oops. Sometimes we preach and teach what is not true, and we hold to it and insist on it. I know that, and so I say: "Don't just take my word for it," because I know that pastors can make mistakes. And it's not just pastors who make mistakes preaching and teaching what is not true. Congregations and synods, church bodies and denominations can all fall into the trap of preaching and teaching what is not true. I've seen ... we've seen some amazing preachers on TV who twist God's Word all out of shape. We've read best-selling Christian authors who miss the mark. I've even seen some things on the internet that aren't true.

Whose job is it to make sure that I don't do that? Whose job is it too make sure that I don't miss the mark of God's Truth? First, it's my job. It's my job to make sure I know this [Bible] better and better every day. God forgive me for letting stuff get in the way of that. And it's your job. It's your job to make sure I have time to learn this better and better. And it's your job to make sure that I'm preaching and teaching the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.

How do you do that? You do what the Bereans did with Paul. First, they listened. And not just a little bit on a Sunday morning. Day after day they listened. And then, they didn't just take Paul's word for it and they didn't just take the world's word for it. They checked it out for themselves to see if what Paul was saying was true. How? They didn't just check Paul's word against their feelings - "Do Paul's words feel right?" They didn't just check Paul's word against what other preachers were saying - "Which do I like better?" They didn't just check Paul's word against what the world out there was saying. No,

they checked out what Paul was teaching by what the Bible teaches. **“They examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”**

Why did they go through all that work? They weren't just looking for someone to tell them what they wanted to hear. They wanted to hear the truth. So they didn't take the world's word for it. They didn't take their own word for it. They didn't take Paul's word for it. But they went to the Word and took God's word for it.

Why? Peter told us in our first lesson, didn't he? Peter was an eyewitness, there with Jesus when Jesus was transfigured to show off his glory as God. Peter was there. He saw it; he heard it. He could have said: “take my word for it.” But he didn't. Better than his eyewitness testimony, he pointed his people to the Word of God, “the completely reliable” word of God.

What makes this [Bible] so trustworthy, so reliable? It's not the product of human imagination - someone writing what he thought about God. It's not the product of human imagination - someone writing the wisdom of his people. No, what we have here [Bible] comes from God - every word of it. Just as clearly and exactly as God the Father spoke to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration - “Listen to him [Listen to Jesus],” so clearly and exactly did God the Spirit carry, convey, communicate what he wanted the Bible writers to write. What does that mean? In the Bible, you have God's word on it. In here, you have God's Word on today's touchy topics.

So what does God's Word say on today's touchy topics? If we just listen to people and churches around us, it won't be easy to know. We live in a world where people like to twist God's Word to fit what they want it to say, to twist God's Word to fit what the world wants to hear. So how can we know who's twisting God's Word? When it comes to the touchy topics, how can we know who's telling the truth?

Here's one thing to look out for - what do they say about this [Bible]? You heard what Peter says - **“No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”** You've heard what Paul says: **“All Scripture is God-breathed.”** Most people don't believe or teach that any more. For most people, instead of this being

God's Word to man, this is man's word about God ... "and you know how men are ... they're wrong a lot and need to catch up to the times." If that is how someone looks at the Bible, what do you know about their teaching? Don't take their word for it.

In the same way, if someone says that this [Bible] is good, but you need something more, someone more to understand it right, that you can't really come to the Truth with just a Bible without them and their teaching, don't take their word for it - God's Word can stand on its own. And again, if someone says that this [Bible] is good, but it needs something more - it needs your understanding to make sense of it, remember this - when people put "what makes sense to me" over "what God says to me," they twist God's Word around - so don't take their word for it.

Instead we take God's Word as what God says. It won't always make sense to us. Sometimes it will be touchy. Who here likes to be told: "You're wrong"? Or "Your excuses don't cut it"? Or "Who died and made you god"? And yet, when we're being lazy with God's Word, when we're being loopy-goopy with God's Word, when we're blowing off God's Word to fit in with the world, we're not just being lazy with or rejecting a book, we're being lazy with and rejecting God - the God who damns.

And the only Savior we'll ever have. In here [Bible] God gives us Jesus. Not just to teach us right and wrong. Not just to say nice things. In here [Bible] God gives us the Jesus who rights our wrongs. He didn't right our wrong by calling our wrong right. No, he took our wrong as his own and in our place he faced for us the God who damns. That's what this next season of Lent is about. We get to hear the best of God's Word - how Jesus went to the cross carrying our wrong and paid the price once and for all to bring you to God. And not just that, with Easter, we get to hear how Jesus lives and covers us, how he covers you with his right life. Yes, we get to hear the best of God's Word - with Jesus, God sees your wrong forgiven and gone. With Jesus, God sees you as right as he sees Jesus. Yes, now, with Jesus, you get to hear the best of God's Word - "You are my son, my daughter, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased." You don't have to take my word for it. **"Listen to him."** Amen.