



Sermon – December 30, 2018
Chris Osborne

Verses Covered

Genesis 1:1

Acts 4:12

2 Corinthians 5:21

2 Peter 1:20 – 21

Matthew 16:17 – 18

Ephesians 1:22 – 23

So I grew up Southern Baptist. It's all I've ever known. I grew up going to church three days a week in a Southern Baptist church from Tennessee and Georgia and Colorado and Louisiana, Alabama, Louisiana, back to Alabama. So we went to a lot of different churches. And when I was growing up it was pretty much a constant; both the service and the theology everywhere we went. So I was excepted at 'Bama. I'm filling out my fraternity letters when on a Sunday night after church the Holy Spirit spoke to me and called me to preach. So I chose to go to a kind of the Baylor of Mississippi; Mississippi College and major in Bible because I realized at that point I had no idea who came first: Moses or Abraham. I knew nothing about scripture. So I knew I needed to go somewhere. And so I went to Mississippi College and majored in Bible.

Southern Baptist school in the middle of the Bible belt. When there, I learned several things that almost, as a matter of fact I came within an eyelash of destroying my faith. I learned two things that I did not know about Southern Baptists; that we have no belief. We really have no creed. If you go to certain other denominations and you sit in the service, they'll recite the Apostle's Creed because they're bound to do that. We have nothing like that. We have absolutely no belief system. We have two things that we believe as Southern Baptists. These are lock-stepped inside Southern Baptist life. There are only two things that drive in what we believe as Southern Baptists. One is the priesthood of the believer. That every believer comes to Jesus Christ on his own, not through someone else. Second thing is that every church is autonomous. In other words, there really is no such thing as a Baptist church. There's a Methodist church because they're controlled top-down. There's a Presbyterian church; they're controlled from top down. But not Baptists. When I was on the Executive Committee and we're dealing with the snap people about clergy and pedophilia, they couldn't understand why we couldn't do certain things. And the reason is because there is no really, a Baptist church. We are voluntarily aligned with the convention that cannot tell us what to do and we can do anything we want to do.

So I began to realize, and that began to concern me because I thought we have no real statement of doctrine. Now we do have the Baptist Faith and Message, '63 and 2000, but that's not binding on a single church in the convention. And so I began to realize we don't have a statement of what we believe anywhere. And you can come to Jesus on your own which is absolutely true. And I love the fact that the church is autonomous. We have no clear belief system. And so my freshman year in college, there were three Bible professors. All three very conservative. All three committed to the scripture. Two of them retired after my freshman year and they brought two new guys in from Southern Seminary. At that point in time, in the '70s, all six seminaries, five of the six were hauntingly liberal. Southwestern that I wound up going to was the only one that was sort of a smidgeon conservative. But they took the conservative professors like Russ Bush and they taught down in the basement at the seminary and the more liberal professors were up in the finer parts of the seminary. So even Southwestern was moving away from the scripture. And we had these two guys come from Southern who said in class that they believed the Bible and yet Dr. Sherdon, one day in class, New Testament prof, said he did not believe in Satan, demons, hell, or angels. And that if 20th century philosophy disagreed with the Bible, you should probably go with 20th century philosophy because it's probably right. Then we have Dr. Davis, our Old Testament prof, who told us one day in class that God did not tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. He thought God told him that because He'd seen the pagan religions sacrificing their children to Molech. And so he thought he should do that. But he never really heard that from God.

Now those were difficult for me, but the real issue for me, even more than those, was when we'd come into class and we'd be working through, majoring in Bible, you'd be working through a book of the Bible. And they would begin to tell us in class, we'd read a passage and they'd give us, literally, what you can do with the commentaries, seven or eight different interpretations of the passage. And then they said to us, "Now gentlemen, you cannot know which of these are right or if there's even another one out there that explains the passage better. You can't know what the true meaning of the scripture is." And so right before my junior year I'm sitting in the library at Mississippi College and I'm looking outside at the quadrangle where students walked back and forth. And I'm, I'm at my wits end. And I actually said this to God and I thought He would be honored by it. But I'm really struggling. As a matter of fact, all of us struggle. I have a good friend today who, after we left seminary, left the ministry for a year to try to recover from the things we've been taught in college. And I'm sitting in the library and I told God, I said, "Look, I know Your word's not true totally. There may be parts that are true. But I don't know where they are. And number two, I obviously can't know what the text says. But I know You've called me to preach. So I'm going to stay the course in Your call even though on Sunday mornings I really have absolutely nothing to say." I thought I would have this overwhelming relief that God would look down and go, "Thank you for honoring Me even though clearly this is worthless." And so I began to feel worse, not better. I mean, I was more troubled than I ever was. So I was going to drive out to a place between Clinton, Mississippi and Vicksburg, Mississippi. I'd found a place in the woods where I'd go pray. And so I was headed out there trying to figure out what was going on in my life. And as I'm driving by my dorm, the cars in Mississippi don't have to have a front license plate, and so on the front license place were the words, "God is love." Obviously a quote from the scripture. And I started laughing. And all of a sudden, I pulled myself up short and I thought, "Why in the world am I laughing at the Bible?" And immediately the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "If you don't believe it, only thing left to do is laugh at it." So I pulled into the

parking lot behind my dorm, began to weep, and finally at that moment when I finished, I said to God, "OK. I'm in your book. I'm locking down that it's true. I'm locking down that I can understand it and I'm going to trust You from here on out." So I was an eyelash from leaving the faith. But the Holy Spirit pulled me back. And so I went on an odyssey of about 12 years. I went from Genesis to Revelation. I studied as hard as I could every day trying to figure out exactly what the Bible said.

So I came to really five things. There are five things that we're going to operate out of here at Central. Every year when we go into the new year, we're going to re-elaborate on those five things. So you understand, and I want the community to be clear where we are on those five things. One of the reasons we don't have Baptist on the front anymore is because there is no continuity in belief anymore in a Baptist church. You go to one Baptist church that believes that infant baptism is legitimate. You go to another Baptist church that believes that God has ordained people before they're born for hell and there's nothing they can do about that. So you can go to any Baptist church you want to, get any kind of doctrine you want to, there is no continuity. But we're going to wrap this church around five things. OK.

Now here's the first one. Genesis chapter 1. Here's the first things we're wrapping around. Chapter 1. First verse. I love the simplicity of the Bible. Never proves God. Here it is.

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

There's the first thing we believe. That He is sovereign. He is the supreme court. He rules. Nothing can prevent Him from ruling. He's ruled from the beginning of time. He's going to rule until there is not time. He is sovereign. He created the heavens and the earth. We did not evolve. Let me tell you, if you evolved, you have no purpose in being in this room. You have no purpose of being in this world. You are a product of time and chance. It always amazes me with our educational system that we tell kids they really have no purpose, and then we try to make them feel good about themselves. You can't do that. You can't give a kid value when you've just told him he came out of the ooze and he has no purpose because he's a product of time and chance. But if you're a product of a sovereign God who created you and there is a design and a purpose for your life, you better believe you have some value. So we're going to believe that. We're absolutely sure in the beginning God created. He's sovereign. Now inside that sovereignty is chapter 3 of Genesis where He gives us free will. You say, "That violates His sovereignty." No it doesn't. He gave it to us out of His sovereignty. So it doesn't violate His sovereignty. He gave it to us. If He gave it to us, it's not a violation of His sovereignty. For right now, you have free will. And what He's going to do, listen, in His sovereignty He's going to chase you down with the truth of the scripture. He's going to chase you down with the truth of Jesus Christ. He's going to say, "You're in rebellion, but I can fix it." He's going to chase you down with that. And what you decide with your free will; when you die, free will's gone. He picks up His sovereignty completely because when you die, He will decide where you go. You either go to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You either go to the dinner or you stand in line waiting for the judgment. Those are the only two options. And when you die, you don't get to pick which one. You don't get to die and go, "You know, God, listen, thanks for the deal, but I think I'm going to the other side." You don't get to do that. He decides in His sovereignty which place you go. But His decision in His sovereignty is based on what you did when you had free will here. And what you

did when He chased you and offered you Jesus and you said yes or no. Whatever you said in that free will from His chasing you, when you die, His sovereignty will pick it up and He will direct you in His sovereignty to the place that you decided to go. I've had people say, "God shouldn't send people to hell." God doesn't send a single person to hell. You put yourself there. So we believe here that He's sovereign and inside that we have a limited free will that determines where His sovereignty will take us when we die. There's the first thing.

Number two. Look at Acts chapter 4, verse 12. This is the second thing we believe. And I'm going to read you, you stay there, I'm going to read you from 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21 because it's the basis of this statement. Peter says,

¹²there is salvation in no one else; there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

And 2 Corinthians 5:21.

²¹For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

The second thing we believe without equivocation is the only hope for mankind is the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross from 9 to 3, buried, resurrected three days later, sitting at the hand of God, coming back. That is the only hope anybody has of being OK when they die. We are sold out to that here. Your kids go into that children's building, Sherry Maggard will make sure they understand as best they can. Chris Gary will make sure they understand that. Jeremy Lewis will make sure they understand that. We'll make sure they understand, the college through Wes. We'll make sure everybody understands from age 0 all the way to 80 that the only chance you have in this world of getting out OK is in the person of Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross. We are committed to the blood being the only hope of redemption. There's nothing else. And it's only in Jesus. And if you think there's another way, then you can't be a Christian. You say, "Well, yes, I can." No you can't. Paul makes a statement in Galatians, if I or an angel preaches anything beyond the gospel of Christ, let him be accursed by God. There isn't anything else except His blood.

Number 3. 2 Peter. He makes a statement about the scripture's creation. 2 Peter 1:21.

²¹for no prophecy

As a matter of fact, we'll go back to 20.

²⁰knowing that first of all, no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but mean spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

This book men didn't write; God used men to write. But He wrote it. Now so this is binding. OK. We're locked down on this. We're going to believe everything we believe out of that book. And I've learned a couple things that what they taught me in college was not right. I don't know how

many times I've had people come to me over the years and say, "Well, Brother Christ, there are a lot of errors in the Bible." I always have the same question. I go, "Give me one." And I get this, "Well, there are a bunch." Give me one. And I never get one. Are there some tough passages? Absolutely. Are there errors? Absolutely not. I just tell you to do one thing. We're not going to do it today. I'll just tell you to do one thing. Go home and Google Archaeology and the Bible. Because you will find that the archaeologists have never found a single thing that contradicts the word of God, and they found a million things that affirm the word of God. One of the coolest things we do when we go to Israel, is we go to the city of Hazor. One of the cities Joshua conquered coming in. Now the really cool thing about the city, it's the only city that the Bible says Joshua burned. Only city. He didn't burn Jericho. He didn't burn any other one except Hazor. And when you go into the building, they've dug down deep enough, you can see burn marks on the wall. Because the Bible is correct. It's true. Geographically. Historically. You say, "Well it's not true scientifically." You know what a verse says in Job? Now think about this. What did people used to think in the old days about the earth? Sat on a turtle. We sat on a cow. I mean it was four corners. You go to the edge, you fall off. I mean there are all these crazy beliefs. You know what Job says? Talks about the earth being a circle hanging in nothing. That is exactly a scientific description. So understand, where science is correct, and that's not always what they think. And where the Bible's interpreted correctly, there's never a contradiction. This book is true. And let me say one other thing here. Are there some passages that are hard? Sure. We're going to debate Calvinism and non-Calvinism until we die. Now listen to me. Because I've read this thing backwards and forwards hard. 99% of this is real easy to understand. One sentence. OK. In marriage, the bed is undefiled. Now what does that mean? If I'm not in marriage, I can't get in the bed. If I'm in marriage, I get in this bed and I stay in this bed. So adultery is out. Sex before marriage is out. The Bible defines marriage between a man and a woman. So it's a, not same-sex marriage, it's out. So the Bible really is simplistic. When the Bible says that you have to forgive people that don't like you. What does that mean? OK. If they don't like me, um, I have to forgive them. Bingo! When the Bible says pray at all times, what does that mean? Um, pray at all times? There you go. Husbands, love your wives. What does that mean? Uhh, love my wife. I'm not going to deal with you ladies because I don't want to get killed before this is over. So, because that's coming later in Ephesians and I'm already praying about that passage. Bible really has incredible clarity. So don't give me this stuff because I hear people say, "That's your interpretation." No. That's what it says. When Acts 4:12 says there is no other name under heaven by which a man can be saved. What does that mean? There's no other name under heaven by which a man can be saved. It's real simple. So the vast bulk of this isn't open to private interpretation. I'll guarantee you, I can take 9/10's of this Bible, I can walk through a third grade room, read them verses, and every one of the third graders will get it. You say, "Well why don't adults get it?" Because we don't like it. So we try to change it. It's clear.

Fourth thing. Why don't you go to Matthew. I want us to be clear about this. Matthew 16 beginning in verse 17.

¹⁷Jesus answered, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Then we have this verse we actually looked at a few weeks ago where Jesus is, in Ephesians 1.

²²He put all things under His feet, He gave Him as head over all things to the church,
²³which is His body, listen, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The fourth thing we believe is that the church, other than the family, is the most important thing God put on this world. You are where He places His fullness. And you are His bride. That's the statement all through the scripture. That why when we get to Ephesians 5 and we talk about the home, it's going to wrap around between church and the home. And he's going to wrap around, it's going to be a difficult passage actually to walk through because he combines the two because the family is the picture of the bride of Christ. You are His bride. He nurtures you. He loves you. He protects you and honors you. You are His bride. The fullness of all in all.

A while back a young man left the ministry, common occurrence unfortunately today. And I called Nathan who preached here a few weeks ago. He's in the CAPS group with us. He came through Central and I said, "What in the world's going on?" Because he and I are doing a CAPS thing for a lot of preachers in Texas in January, we and are wives are going to have a weekend with those kids. But to try to mentor some of these young pastors. And he said, "You know one of the things we've got to talk about with these kids, they've lost their understanding of the importance of the church being the bride of Christ." Whatever God's called you to be, that's great. But I'm telling you, greatest calling anybody has is to serve His bride. And when you leave serving His bride to serve the bridesmaid, that makes no sense. When anything in your family is more important than Jesus and you being His bride, you're killing your kids. I don't mind if they play Little League. I don't care if they play golf. I don't care if they play football. I'm a sports guy. I get that. But your kids better come up understanding that the church is more important than Little League. And the church is more important than football. And the church is more important than Aggie games. And if they ever start playing College games on Sundays, you better not go. Because when you teach your kid that a sporting event is more important than Jesus, you have failed your children miserably. The church is the bride of Christ which brings us to the fifth thing.

He's coming back for His bride. What we're doing here is not the end. He's coming back. In the New Testament days, guys had a unique system. They'd find a young lady, propose, get engaged, she would go back home and she'd start getting all her stuff ready. Because he would go back home and generally at their own house, and he would go back home and he would build a house for him and her. Now she knows she's got a little time because he's not going to get that thing built the first day. But over a period of time she begins to realize because what happens is he doesn't give her any warning. It's not like our day where we set weddings up. Wooh! Got to be on this date. Got to be at this time. We had the kids in for Christmas yesterday. My wife said, "We're doing Christmas Saturday." I said, "It's OK. I got a 4 o'clock wedding and a 7 o'clock game. You better figure out in between those things." Wasn't that way. She had no idea when he was coming. So she had to go home and get everything ready. And then when he finished the building, he'd look at his buddy and say, "Go tell her." This is why you hear in the New Testament, go tell her the bridegroom is coming. And they would walk through the streets and he would walk with them, find her, they would party and dance, and then he would take her home. Which is exactly the description in the Bible. Obviously He wasn't coming back 10 minutes after He died. But we're 2,000 years down the road. He's coming back. John 14, he says, I go to prepare a place for you. Would I have told you that I'm preparing a place for you if I weren't going to bring you

to Myself? So He's coming back. He's preparing the deal. And He's not telling us what date. He's just going to show up. At which point we better be ready. And the only way to be ready is to accept the blood that He chases you down for that's true in the scripture that will fix your condition so that when you lose your free will, His sovereignty will take you home. That's why the Bible says there's a marriage supper of the Lamb. We're going to have a great time.

Those 5 things I've wrapped my life around and we're going to wrap them around here. He's sovereign and He gave me free will until the day He takes me back. Blood of Jesus is the only hope. That book is right. This body of Christ is the most important thing on this planet other than family. And He's coming back for the bride. Now, you go in the new year, if you're part of that, feeling really good. Because no matter what happens this year, when it's over, He'll take you home. And that's not my promise, it's in the book that is absolutely true.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for the pillars You've given us out of Your word. Hold us in this church to those from now until the day You come back for us. And Father when I see Israel home, Jerusalem back, our president declaring it as congress did the capital, You look a whole lot closer than you did 2,000 years ago. So for those in this room that are not going to the supper, let them punch that ticket today as You chase them in Your Spirit. Thank You for what You've done for us that we cannot praise You enough for. In Jesus Christ name.