

The subject that was assigned to me, and I do emphasize just a little bit that it was assigned to me for this lecture, is Pentecost and beyond prophecy and miracles in the modern age. It's fitting for us to consider this subject at First Presbyterian Church because perhaps the most important book written on this subject in the 20th century, B.B. Warfield's Counterfeit Miracles, began here in this church in 1917. He was invited by Columbia Seminary to give a series of lectures, the Smythe Lectures, and David Calhoun's History of the Church, which I'm sure some of you have read, records Dr. Warfield of Princeton gave lectures sponsored by Columbia Seminary and the Church Auditorium, The Church Bulletin announced that the Smythe Lectures were the scholastic event of the year in Columbia and invited everyone to hear this profound and brilliant theologian. That we are here in the same place more than 100 years after Warfield gave those lectures and you can buy the book Counterfeit Miracles, the first chapter is especially good. That we're here in the same place more than 100 years after Warfield gave those lectures addressing the same subject suggests that while the apostolic gifts may have ceased, interest in their contemporary relevance has certainly continued. And so the question before us this morning is whether the gifts of prophecy and miracles continue in the church today. And as we seek to answer this question, we need to keep in mind the broader theme of your summer lecture series, The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life. When we ask about prophecy and miracles, we're really asking about how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians today. Ought a healthy Christian life include the gifts of prophecy and miracles? Does the Holy Spirit give these gifts to Christians today? In this lecture, I will argue from scripture that he does not, rather that scripture teaches us that the gifts of prophecy and miracles have now ceased. I'm confident in a group of this size, there are a number of different experiences with the so-called charismatic gifts. For some of you, this may be a subject of little interest and even less personal experience. Perhaps you've been in Presbyterian your whole life. It's just not really been a pressing issue in your own Christian life. For others of you, Perhaps you grew up in churches where prophecy, as it was called, formed a regular part of your religious experience, and gifts like speaking in tongues were an important or even necessary part of the Christian life, and perhaps for even some of you, a necessary mark of being saved. Where I come from in South Mississippi, there are many Pentecostals for whom prophecy and miracles, it is believed, are just as active today as they were in the time of the apostles. Others of you have not experienced these gifts, but you're sincere Bible readers and you wrestle as someone who wants to know God more closely and live faithfully for Him, how to match your own Christian experience with things that you read, for example, in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 14 or in the book of Acts like we saw in the sermon this morning. And others of you still may wonder if the absence of miracles and prophecy in the church is simply due to a lack of faith. In other words, the reason we don't have miracles and prophecy bursting out of our churches is because we just don't simply believe strong enough in the realities of these things. My own experience is a bit of a mixture between a few of these. I grew up in a liberal mainline congregational church in New Hampshire, and I remember in college years seeing churches of the same denomination hang signs over the front of their churches which read, God is still speaking, comma. And what they meant was that though parts of scripture spoke very clearly concerning marriage and sexual ethics, God was still speaking and now speaking a different word than he had spoken before. And even though these churches had left the bodily resurrection of Christ and the inerrancy of scripture far

behind, They wanted to claim some kind of new revelation to justify their theological innovations. And then I also had a season in my own life shortly after I came to faith in Christ where I yearned to hear the voice of God in an audible way and experience the gift of tongues because I thought that that would signify greater piety or closeness to the Lord. So if that's you, I definitely sympathize with and understand your experience, and this is an issue over which godly Christians have certainly wrestled. Now, while I won't be able to engage every experience that's represented here or every relevant text or theological work, I had to concede at some point a few weeks ago, I have to stop reading and start writing. There's too many things to read. And if you want to read on this subject as an aside, I mentioned Warfield's book, Counterfeit Miracles, especially the first chapter. But a little book, and now I really mean a little book. It's about as thick as my pinky finger. Richard Gaffin, Perspectives on Pentecost. And it's small, you read a chapter a night after the kids go to bed or something like this. A very tightly argued scriptural exposition and that's a helpful place to start. And of course, Sinclair Ferguson's book, you should have him come and preach here sometime. Sinclair Ferguson, he's great. His book on the Holy Spirit is very helpful and I'm sure many of you have read that and he has particular sections on Pentecost and also on the charismatic So I won't be able to touch every author or relevant text. I want to show you, I hope to show you, that the absence of prophecy and miracles in the church today is neither the result of Presbyterian discomfort with the unfamiliar, nor of unbelief in the power of God, but rather the cessation of the charismatic gifts is the purpose of God revealed in scripture. So I won't say everything, but I hope to say that very clearly. It's scripture, that teaches us to expect the end of prophecy and miracles following the ministry of the apostles. So to do that, I'll begin by defining prophecy and miracles. I'll give you four lines of scriptural evidence for the cessation of these gifts, and then conclude with three practical applications for our Christian lives today. Does that sound good so far? So definitions, four lines of biblical reasoning, and three applications. So begin with some definitions. Prophecy and I take both of these definitions from the 17th century javelin thrower better known for his theological writing the Puritan John Owen What is prophecy Owen wrote to prophesy is nothing but to declare hidden and secret things by virtue of immediate revelation hidden and secret things received by immediate revelation from God God describes prophets this way in Deuteronomy 18, 18. He says, I will raise up for them a prophet like you, that is like Moses, from among their brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them what I command him. Deuteronomy 18, 18. The prophet speaks God's words, words which were hidden until God revealed them to him, words he received immediately from God. Notice the phrase there in Deuteronomy 18. I will put my words in his mouth. They come immediately from God. This was Jeremiah's experience in Jeremiah 1.9, the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth and the Lord said to me, behold, I have put my words in your mouth. So hidden and secret things revealed immediately by God. As a brief aside before we get to miracles and especially after a sermon on Pentecost, I wanna say just a word about speaking in tongues and only a paragraph here. The New Testament gift of tongues, when interpreted as the New Testament instructs the church to do in the apostles' time, was essentially the same as prophecy. At various points in the New Testament, like at Pentecost, Christians were enabled to speak in languages they had not learned, speak the gospel to others in languages they had not learned through study. And Peter tells us in Acts chapter two that this was akin to prophecy. He

saw the events of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 as a fulfillment of God's promise through the prophet Joel that when he pours out his Holy Spirit, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. So in the mind of Peter, the gift of tongues and prophecy are parallel. They work together. They're both word gifts associated with revealing mysteries from God. And as such, like prophecy, the biblical gift of tongues has also ceased. And some of you may have many more questions about that, but that's all I'm going to touch on today. Prophecy and tongues, one and the same, parallel in terms of revealing hidden mysteries from God, both of which have now ceased. Prophecy is the direct declaration of something hidden, which God reveals immediately to his prophet. What about miracles? Owen wrote, a miracle is an immediate effect of divine power exceeding all created abilities. You can think of examples like this from scripture. Peter and John saw a man in the book of Acts lame from birth. They spoke in the name of Jesus and he was healed. It was an immediate work of the power of God beyond any created means. Later on in the book of Acts, Peter spoke to Tabitha, this woman who had died and whose corpse was laying down. Peter spoke. She arose. It was a miracle. Christ powerfully worked through Peter without medicine or surgery to heal the sick and raise the dead. These were miracles. So prophecy is a declaration of something hidden, revealed immediately by God. A miracle is an immediate effect of divine power that exceeds created ability. So those are our definitions. Now I want to give four lines of biblical reasoning to show that these gifts have ceased. And the first, and if you're an outliner, there are four of them. The first way we know from scripture that prophecy and miracles have ceased is the way God speaks, the way God speaks. And here we turn to Hebrews chapter one. In Hebrews one, one and two, we read, long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. In these verses, the author distinguishes between the way God revealed himself in the old covenant and the way God revealed himself in the new. If you look in the passage there, in the old covenant, long ago, God spoke by prophets. He did this over long periods of time. You have that phrase at many times, beginning with Adam and he revealed himself to Noah and to Moses and Elijah and so on. And he also did this in many ways, the text tells us. through visions like the one Isaiah had in Isaiah 6, through the Urim and Thummim that were entrusted to the priests, through dreams like the one Abraham had in Genesis 15, and through direct words like Hosea's. In the Old Covenant, God revealed himself through prophets at many times and in many ways. But what does the passage tell us about the New Covenant when Christ comes? In the New Covenant, God spoke differently. The speaker is the same. It's still God who's speaking. But verse two tells us that God spoke in a different way. In the new covenant, he has spoken to us in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the radiance of his glory. He's spoken through his son, which includes, of course, both the words of Christ himself and the words of his spokesman, the apostles who preached in his name. In the Old Covenant God spoke at many times. In the New Covenant God spoke at one time in Christ and in the years immediately surrounding his earthly ministry along with the Apostles. The Old Testament for example was written over hundreds and hundreds of years. You have less than a century in the New Testament where that revelation of Christ was given. He spoke at one time in Christ. In the Old Covenant he spoke in many ways but in the New he has spoken in one way in Christ. Christ is the full and final revelation of God to man. And notice, by the way, in Hebrews 1, that when he speaks about his revelation in Christ, he uses the past

tense. God has spoken to us in Christ. This new covenant revelation is not ongoing or continuing. God has already fully and finally spoken in his Son, and we have that final and full revelation given to us in Scripture. Our Westminster Confession of Faith cites these verses when it says that the former ways of God's revealing his will to his people have now ceased. And it makes that point interestingly in the first paragraph of the first chapter of the Confession. The Confession begins that God has revealed himself in his word and the way he revealed himself in former times has now ceased. The many ways in which God revealed his will by the prophets have ceased. So we know that prophecy has ceased because of the way God speaks. Long ago he spoke it many times in many ways through the prophets, but now he has spoken in his son. So the way God speaks. The second scripture reason we know that prophecy and miracles have ceased is by the foundation God lays. The foundation God lays. And here you can turn with me to Ephesians chapter two. And we'll read verses 19 to 22. So first, the way God speaks, second, the foundation God lays. In Ephesians 2, 19 and following, we read, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, and whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So here Paul describes the church, the saints, you and me, as a house, the household of God, verse 19. The church is a specific kind of house, a holy temple, a dwelling place for God, verse 21. Like any house, the church is built on a foundation. And what is that foundation? Well, Paul answers that question in verse 20. Look there. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone. Christ and the apostles and the New Testament prophets make up one foundation. Elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul describes that invitation in one word. Christ is the foundation because the sum and substance of the apostles' ministry and the New Testament prophets was Christ. They have laid the one foundation upon which the church is built. I would imagine some of you have lived in homes that you had built for you. You were able to be there and observe the process of, you purchased the lot, you saw the land being cleared, the foundation being poured, the house being raised up. You watched the project develop from a vacant lot to a livable home. When the builders were framing the second story, were they still laying the foundation? What about when the roofers came? Was the foundation still in process? Some of you may have, understand the illustration. Some of you may have horror stories that don't help the illustration. In Mississippi, we have a host of foundational issues, but you get the point. Of course not. They built the house on a completed foundation. At the last walkthrough before move-in day, your contractor didn't say, we just have one or two things left to do. We need to get the doorknobs on the cabinets. We need to finish painting the, we need to paint the finished crown molding in the second story, and we need to lay the foundation. The foundation was completed, and then the house was built upon that completed foundation. And the Apostle Paul would have us understand that the same is true for the church. He gave apostles and prophets, Ephesians 4.11, these extraordinary offices in the church. He gave them extraordinary gifts, like prophecy and miracles, to fulfill that office. And through their words and their works, they laid the foundation of the church, the sum and substance of which was Jesus Christ. God preserved this foundation in the holy scriptures. And on this foundation, this completed foundation, Christ builds his church. The

foundation of the church, the apostolic witness recorded in scripture, doesn't grow with the house any more than you keep laying a foundation as you're adding on in the second story. The foundation is complete. It's fixed and the church is built on top of it. We know that prophecy has ceased because of how God builds his church. The prophets and the apostles are the foundation, the completed foundation upon which the church is built. So the way God speaks, Hebrews 1. The foundation God lays, Ephesians 2. And then third, scripture teaches us that miracles have ceased by describing the reason God works. That's our third line of scripture evidence, the reason God works. Scripture records many miracles. Why did so many miracles occur in the scripture? Why did God's servants work miracles? Why did God give miraculous power to his church in certain seasons? Well, the Bible actually answers that question for us, and it does so in Hebrews 2. In Hebrews 2, 3, and 4, we read, How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. So the author begins by telling us, pay attention to the message of salvation. This message was declared verbally by Jesus and by those who heard and saw him, the apostles. And then God added further testimony, further witness, further accreditation to their words by giving them miraculous works. Look in Hebrews 2 verse 4. God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. So the miraculous works testify to the marvelous words of the gospel. The miracles are God's attestation, his signature, that the words the apostles preached and wrote are true, just as your signature would confirm the truthfulness of what you might pledge in a contract. So miracles are God's confirmation that the words of Christ and the apostles come from him. And we see this principle all throughout the Bible. God gave Moses miraculous signs that the Israelites would listen to what he said Peter called Jesus a man attested to you by God with mighty works. So God worked miracles through the apostles to confirm their words. Now if the purpose of miracles is to confirm words, how long would we expect those miracles to continue? Well, as long as the words continued. We would expect the miracles, the works that testify to the words to continue as long as the apostles spoke on behalf of their risen Lord. But as we saw in Ephesians 2, the apostle's speech has ended. Their speech was the foundation of the church. And since their words are complete, the works that confirm those words have also ceased. B.B. Warfield at this church said that these gifts were the authentication of the apostles. Their function confined them distinctively to the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it. So we know that miracles, the gift of miracles, that is God's gift to empower the apostles to work wonders has ceased because of the reason God gave them. He gave them to confirm their words and they've spoken their words and the finished foundation kept for us in scripture. So the way God speaks, the foundation God lays, the reason God works, why he works miracles, to attest the word. And then the fourth scripture teaching that shows us that prophecy and miracles have ceased since the time of the apostles is the direction God gives. The direction God gives. The New Testament is filled with extraordinary offices, apostles and prophets, and extraordinary gifts, prophecy, miracles, tongues, and so on. But when the apostles looked beyond their own time, when they prepared the church for life after the apostles, what direction did they give to the church? The apostles didn't direct the church to call new apostles or to call new prophets, nor did they direct the church to pursue ongoing prophecy or

continued revelation. Rather, they called for the ordination of ordinary officers, elders and deacons. You have them here in your congregation. And ordinary means, word, prayer, and sacraments for the gathering and perfecting of the saints until Christ's return. The pastoral epistles make this especially clear. Rather than instructing Titus, for example, to perpetuate the offices of prophet and apostle, Titus, go into the churches in which you minister and raise up new apostles. That's not what Paul did, rather. In Titus chapter one, and we see the same in first Timothy three, he urges them to appoint elders in every church. Paul did not tell Timothy, Timothy, when you go into a new church, see that gifts of miracles and prophecy are cultivated in that church. Rather, he said, Timothy, first Timothy four two, preach the word. Devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, exhortation, and teaching. Even during the ministry of the apostles, before the canon of scripture was closed, the apostles routinely directed the disciples to the written word. We see this, for example, in John 20, 30 and 31, in 1 Corinthians 14, 37, and in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11. The New Testament does not describe or call the church to cultivate further gifts of prophecy and miracles after the time of the apostles, but when the apostles prepared the church for life after their ministries, they pointed her to the written word of God. That's the direction that God, excuse me, that God gives to the church. So how do we know from scripture that prophecy and miracles have ceased following the time of the apostles? We know that to be true from the way God speaks, the foundation God lays, the reason God works, and the direction God gives. Now so far, before we get to our application, this is the sort of yeah but paragraph here. So far we have observed four lines of Scripture to support the cessation of prophecy and miracles, and I do want you to see that this truth of the cessation of prophecy and miracles really does come from the Bible. It's not just, well, we don't see these things, so they must not be here anymore, but it comes from the Scripture. Before we move on to application, I want to be very clear about what the cessation of prophecy and miracles does not mean. The cessation of these extraordinary gifts in no way implies the cessation of God's extraordinary works. Our confession of faith, the same one that asserts in its first paragraph that these ways of God revealing himself in former times have ceased. Our confession of faith says in chapter five, paragraph three, God in his ordinary providence makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure. Every ordinary cause and effect in the world is from God, and through God, and to God. Photosynthesis is from God, and through God, and to God. And gravity is from God, and through God, and to God. He upholds these ordinary causes. The same is true in the spiritual life. God uses the preaching of his word through prayer to save and sanctify his people. Ordinarily, our confession reminds us God works through means. But it hastens to say that God is always free to work without, above, and against these means at his pleasure. just as free today as he was in the first century. Ordinarily, ordinarily God heals through doctors and medicines. B.B. Warfield, the last sentence in the lectures that he gave here at First Press Columbia was speaking about one of the founders of the Christian science movement who tried through mindfulness and faith healing to cure an unwell tooth. And he said, we can lament with Miss Eddie for the pain of her tooth, but give thanks that she had a dentist. And ordinarily, God uses dentists to fix teeth. You should pray about it and you should go find a dentist. But God is free to heal without means. He's free to do things that doctors never expect and cannot explain. Ordinarily, Ordinarily, God saves through the ministry of the word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. But God is free, for example,

as with John the Baptist and the womb of his mother, as he is with elect infants who die in their infancy, or as he is with dear saints who have mental or cognitive handicaps to bring people securely to Christ apart from the ordinary means. Now this doesn't mean for a second that we set doctors aside or Bibles aside, quite the contrary. But it does mean that we will encounter mysteries in the Christian life that outmatch our understanding. Augustine was absolutely right when he said, if you've comprehended God, it's not God you comprehend. Because he is the one who's greater than our understanding. There are things that you will never be able to explain by cause and effect, by measurement or by observation. So don't confuse the cessation of extraordinary gifts with the cessation of the mysteries of God. He has chosen in our time to savingly reveal himself in his word and in his word alone. But he is always free to do all that he pleases. And when he does, and when explanations fail, and we go as far as our sanctified intelligence will allow us. We need to remember the words of Eli and bow before him and say, it is the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him. So these four lines of biblical reasoning then, and then that caveat that says God is still free, that doesn't lead us away from our doctors and our Bibles, it drives us to them, but God is still God. And then I wanna offer three concluding applications. So three practical applications of the cessation of prophecy and miracles for our Christian lives today. And in each of these, I've tried to stress the connection between the word and the spirit. So your summer theme is how does the Holy Spirit work in the Christian life? And what I hope you'll see in each of these three applications is that the Holy Spirit works through the word. These things go together. They're married, they're joined. First, since prophecy and miracles have ceased, you must devote yourself to the Bible. Devote yourself to the Bible. Devote yourself to scripture because scripture is necessary for salvation. God has revealed a great deal about himself in creation. He's revealed that he exists. He's revealed that he's good. He's revealed that he's wise and powerful. No one has any excuse for unbelief, but you can't look at the majesty of the stars. You can't look and examine by your own conscience the inner recesses of your heart. You can't look at the history of nations merely and come to the conclusion, I need to repent and trust in Jesus Christ to be saved. General revelation won't do that for you. It is insufficient for that purpose. It's sufficient for many things, but not for that purpose. God doesn't reveal Christ in the stars or in the trees as much as he reveals in the stars and in the trees. And God has stopped adding new revelation. There is no more immediate inspired prophecy from God. God's former ways of revealing himself have now ceased. God reveals his saving gospel in one place, in the Bible. This makes the Bible most necessary and means that you should devote yourself to it. The Spirit uses the Word to save and sanctify his people. And since that is the case, brothers and sisters, you need to be, as somebody put it, beavers for the Bible. I learned a song speaking at a youth prison ministry in the town of Learned, Mississippi, L-E-A-R-N-E-D, Learned, Mississippi. And one of the leaders would sing, read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow. And that's really what it is. It's in the Bible, and in the Bible alone, that God reveals his great and gracious salvation. Devote yourself to hearing the Bible preached. and the morning and evening worship services of this church and Sunday school and opportunities as your calling allows for a Bible study and family worship and private devotion. Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word. of Christ. It's the Holy Scriptures, Paul told Timothy, that are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Peter said, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which

you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place. There is no other place for you to go for a saving word from God than the Bible. Don't wait for an audible voice Don't wait for an extraordinary miracle. Open the Bible, sit in the pew, and hear the voice of God about his son and the power of his spirit. Remember this as you evangelize. One of the simplest ways you can evangelize your unbelieving friends and neighbors is by inviting them to church. Why? Because your church, this is true of a lot of churches, it's especially true of your church, they're going to hear the word of God. and God uses his word to save. Ask to meet with them and read through the Gospel of Mark one chapter a week. The Spirit uses the Bible, the necessary, sufficient, saving word of God, and you must devote yourself to it. Second, not only should you devote yourself to the Bible, but the cessation of prophecy and miracles should lead you to expect the Holy Spirit to use the Bible. Expect God to bless the reading and the preaching of his word. The cessation of the charismatic gifts should lead us to expect that God will work through his word with great power. Paul commended the Thessalonians. This is Paul who worked miracles and who talked about speaking in tongues. He told the Thessalonians that our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction. 1 Thessalonians 1:5. The same Holy Spirit who empowered the extraordinary gifts and offices empowers the ordinary and enduring ministry of the word in the church. The power is the same and it comes through the word. The power and might of Pentecost is at work today because the very same Holy Spirit who came down at Pentecost works through the infallible Word of God given to us in Scripture. The very same one. We don't have a second class Holy Spirit because we live in 2024 and not in the pages of the Book of Acts. The same Holy Spirit whose descent we saw in our passage this morning or for others of you will see in just a few moments is at work through the Word today, the very same one. And since that is the case, you should come to the word with prayerful expectation that God is going to bless it. Pray for the Holy Spirit to bless the reading and preaching of scripture. And then wait on the edge of your seat with an expectation that God is going to deal with your soul. Often the Spirit uses the word in ordinary and sometimes even undetectable ways. Just as in New Hampshire, we have a small portion of Atlantic Coast, but it's a beautiful portion of Atlantic Coast, and the waves, not big waves in New Hampshire, crashing over the rocks. And day after day and year after year, the water hits the rocks and those rocks change. They're different. They soften, or their edges soften. Their shape changes. And so often that's the way the Holy Spirit uses the word. Think about your own experience. How the Spirit has used the word to teach you new truths. You come to church one Sunday, a Sunday like any other Sunday, and all of a sudden a passage you've read many times before comes with new light and power, and you're helped. Or think of the times you've come and sat under the ministry of the word in this church, and you have been wondering how it is that you're going to keep going with the need that stands before you on Monday. And then God brings his word to bear you up. or you've come to worship and your heart is heavy with grief and the spirit through the word comes and brings comfort. Oftentimes the spirit works in those wonderful ordinary ways through the ministry of the word and hasn't it been the case for you that you've had Sundays where the Holy Spirit has met you and helped you. And oftentimes you can't even detect it. But you look over the week before and wonder how it was you're unable to be patient with your child on that Wednesday evening when it was really difficult and the day had been hard and you look back and the spirit had used the word to help you live for Christ in your ordinary



life. You should expect the spirit to use the word in your Christian life every time it enters your eyes and your ears and your soul. So the second application is expectancy. When you hear the word of God, you should expect that God is going to bless you and deal with you and help you and sanctify you. And he often does that in ordinary ways, but sometimes he does that in extraordinary ways. Sometimes in a sovereign pleasure, he accompanies the word, the ordinary preaching of the word with special power and overabundant fruit. Such was the case in the late 1850s, about two hours south of here in Charleston, South Carolina, under the ministry of John Lafayette Jurido. Some of you know the name of Jurido. He pastored for a time the Arsenal Hill Church near here. In the last quarter or so of the 19th century, he taught at Columbia Seminary for some years, known as the Spurgeon of the South. But at this time in the 1850s, he was preaching in the Zion Presbyterian Church, a black congregation in South Carolina, he was a white minister. The congregation was black, and he was leading his congregation in a prayer meeting. And his son-in-law recorded, quote, one evening, while leading the people in prayer, he, that is, Gerada, received a sensation as if a bolt of electricity has struck his head and diffused itself through his whole body. For a little while, he stood speechless under the strange physical feeling. Then he said, the Holy Spirit has come. We will begin preaching tomorrow evening. He closed the service with a hymn, dismissed the congregation, and came down from the pulpit. But no one left. The whole congregation had quietly resumed its seat. Instantly he realized the situation. The Holy Spirit had not only come to him, he had also taken possession of the hearts of the people. Immediately he began exhorting them to accept the gospel. They began to sob softly like the falling of the rain, then with deeper emotion to weep bitterly or to rejoice loudly according to their circumstances. It was midnight before he could dismiss the congregation. The meeting went on night and day for eight weeks. Large numbers of both white and black were converted and joined the various churches of the city. His sermons during the meetings, as shown by his notes, were very instructive. He dealt with the great doctrines of sin, regeneration, faith, justification, repentance, and such subjects. None of those who went through those meetings ever forgot the wonderful preaching. It was just preaching. It was just the word. It was just prayer, and dozens came into the kingdom of God. My dear friends, do you expect the Holy Spirit of God to use his word? Do you pray for him to use his word, to change you, to save the lost? The Holy Spirit uses God's holy word, and I want to challenge you under this theme of expectancy to commit to pray every day for the Spirit's powerful working through the word here. Particularly that the Spirit will use the word to bring many unconverted people to faith in Jesus Christ. Prophecy and miracles have ceased. but the same Holy Spirit who empowered the extraordinary gifts empowers the ordinary means, and you should expect him to use the word. So devotion to the Bible, expectancy under the Bible, and then third and finally as we close, treasure the Bible. The gifts of prophecy and miracles have ceased, but that doesn't mean that you have less than first century Christians had. Sometimes my children will ask, Dad, can we have some ice cream? The apple doesn't fall far from the tree in their sweet tooth. Dad, can we have some ice cream? And I'll say, no, son, but you can have an apple. And they'll take it with some resigned disappointment. Okay, thank you. And I wonder if any of you feel that way. about the extraordinary gifts. I'll take the Bible. But man, it would be so much better if we had miracles and prophecy. It's like trading ice cream for an apple. If that's you this morning, you have grossly underestimated what you hold in your hands. In the Bible, you have

God's last, best, saving word about his son. Here today, you have more than Adam had when he heard the first promise of the gospel in Genesis 3.15. You have more than Jacob had when he wrestled with God. You have more than Moses had when he stood before the burning bush. You have more than Isaiah had when he saw the Lord on the throne. You have what the first century churches had when they heard Paul and Peter preach. You have something into which angels long to look. Because in the Bible you have the unveiling, God's unveiling, of the Savior of the world, who is the radiance of his glory. He is scripture's main point, God's best complete word to man. And you have it. You have it in the Bible. We sometimes sing of the Bible, it is the golden casket where gems of truth are stored. It is the heaven drawn picture of Christ the living word. In this book you meet him everywhere. He's the one to which every prophecy and every miracle pointed. Treasure this book. Love this book. Because in this book you see the shining face of the king. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God, please help us as you promised to do. Not to chase after things you have chosen not to give us. On the other hand Lord, not to become naturalists, thinking that the only things that are real are things we can see and taste and touch and measure. O Lord, we pray that you would guard us on the right side of the levy and on the left. And we pray, Father, as a result, that you would make us great lovers of your word, that we would be devoted to the Bible, perhaps giving ourselves to new regular daily reading of the Bible or attending more consistently the preaching of the Bible, evangelizing with the Bible. We pray, Father, that you'd make us expectant, even as we prepare for the worship service in just a few moments. And we pray, oh God, that we would treasure this book, because in it you show us your son. Oh God, do these great things by your Holy Spirit, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.