


The Church: The Glorious Possession of the Church 
By Ty Blackburn

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Providence Church
2146 Buford Hwy
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website: www.providenceduluth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3. We appreciate so much Scott Rouse preaching two weeks ago and Dalton last Sunday. They did a wonderful job, both of them, Scott from 2 Peter 1 and Dalton from Luke 14, and I'm entering this morning into a series, a topical series on the church. I really, I want to say I know, I've heard rumblings, well, not rumblings, I've heard, that sounds, there's no negative connotation here. I didn't mean for a negative connotation but I've heard people, some people speculating, "Now where is he going to go next? What book are we going to?" And I've heard from some of you recommendations and I really want to be in a book, I really prefer so much being in a book that it's really unsettling for me not to have the next, I know where I'm going the next Sunday. There it is, next passage. But the Lord has constrained me just with burdens and other things that we need some topical messages. So I'm again today doing a topical message and it's really a topical series on the church, the doctrine of the church is what the series is going to be, sometimes called ecclesiology, that's the fancy theological term. Ekklesia, the Greek word for church, doctrine of the church, and today we're looking at the glorious possession of the church which is the Bible. The glorious possession of the church and we're going to be looking in subsequent weeks at the importance of leadership and other things that we're called to as a body as we enter into 2022, and spend some time dealing with these things that I think are really important.

And this third chapter of 2 Timothy is very encouraging. It's going to resonate a lot with what was preached from 2 Peter 1 two weeks ago in that it's the other passage, the other major New Testament passage on the sufficiency and glory of the word of God. But I love the context of this because it's just so incredibly relevant. I've had conversations with a number of you recently, we talked about how distressing the times are and, you know, the concerns of our hearts and the burdens as we see what's happening in our culture, in our country, around the world, and then wondering, you know, what's ahead? Well, this passage really speaks to that in a very powerful way and we're going to be focusing on the last few verses, verses 14 to 17, but I want to read the context because it's going to encourage us as we see that, where it comes in the flow of Paul's thought in this second letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:1,

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers,

disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

And here comes the instruction, how do you live and bear up in times like this. Look what he says to Timothy,

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Paul tells us in dark and distressing days, in turbulent times in the midst of cultural chaos and confusion, the church has all it needs. The church has more than it can imagine in its hand in the word of God. The word of God is all that we need. It is above and beyond all we can imagine. So that's what he tells Timothy, "You continue in these things. Continue in the Scriptures because they will enable you to stand up and bear up."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we come to You this morning, Lord, praising You and worshiping You because You are the King of kings and Lord of lords, You reign over all. We also come, Lord, aware of our great need. We come confessing our sinfulness, our hardness of heart, slowness of mind, the ease with which we can be distracted from that which is most important by so many things. We come asking that You by Your Spirit through Your word would revive us. Lord, draw us into Your presence. Help us to see the glory of our Savior, to love Him more and to treasure this precious book which makes Him known to us which is everything that we need for life and godliness. We pray that You would be glorified in each heart, in each life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the glorious possession of the church, the thing that God has given us in the word. In dark and distressing times, it's so important for us to see this and we tend to take things that really matter for granted and this is one of the things we take for granted. I say that myself as a pastor, I take the word for granted and it's convicting and distressing but we want the Lord to help us this morning to see the beauty of his word.

So there's three points that we're going to look at this morning as we unpack this passage and it's going to serve as kind of a launching point to go back through some other passages and look at some key themes that run through the Bible but we are going to start here in this passage and draw our three main points from it and then we'll, third point we'll really camp out for a while on.

The first point is the inspiration of Scripture. The inspiration of Scripture. Verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Many of you have heard that that word "inspired" and you may notice if you have a translation that may have a footnote there and if you look at the footnote it says that "inspired" literally in the Greek reads "God-breathed." That's right, it reads God-breathed. The word "theos" for God is combined with the word "pneustos" or breathed and so it literally says "all Scripture is God-breathed," breathed out by God. The source of Scripture is clearly God. God is the one. As we saw in that passage a couple of weeks ago, 2 Peter 1, men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. That word "carried along" could mean "to be blown along by like a sailboat blown along by the wind." The Lord uses a human author but he ordains things so that what comes out onto the page is God-breathed. In fact, it's important to understand the word "Scripture" in this passage. When it says "all Scripture is inspired by God," the word "Scripture" is the word "graphe," which refers not to just the concepts, you could say, you know, all the Bible is God-breathed and there have been people who have maintained an erroneous doctrine of inspiration that have said this, that God inspires the thoughts of the Bible. And they'll say, "Yeah, the Bible is inspired," but they'll say it's not inerrant. This is a false teaching that has been prevalent throughout church history. The Bible is inspired but it's not inerrant because God inspires the thoughts of the people but God's perfect truth is coming through an imperfect vessel therefore it's tainted. It sounds logical, really, doesn't it? But it's just wrong. It's not biblical. The Bible says that though God uses a crooked stick in a human being he strikes a straight blow because what the text literally says, all that which is written on the page is breathed out by God. It's not that the thoughts between the thoughts and the pen there is no distortion. God is breathing out what is written by the author of Scripture on the page in the ink. That's how perfect is the inspiration of Scripture and not just Scripture is God-breathed, all Scripture. You have verbal plenary inspiration. The words of the Bible are breathed out by God and all the words of the Bible are breathed out by God. Every single one. That's why Jesus and Jesus' view of the Bible is it was inerrant. He said not a single jot or tittle shall pass away from the law until all is fulfilled. This is clearly the teaching of Scripture about itself. It is inspired. We have in the midst of this dark world, we have a revelation from God. It's not mostly from God, it's all from God, perfectly from God.

The inspiration of Scripture, this passage teaches that. The second thing that it teaches, second point, so the first points we're going to go kind of fast on and we're going to really slow down on the third point. The second point is the sufficiency of Scripture. This is a wonderful passage that teaches not just the inerrancy or the inspiration of Scripture but the sufficiency of Scripture. This is in verses 16 and 17, the end of verse 16 moving into verse 17. He says it's God-breathed and it's profitable for four things: teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness. The Bible, God's word breathed out by him is profitable to train and instruct the mind, it is profitable for pointing out error, it is profitable for correcting the error, showing you how to do it right, and it's profitable for then training you and teaching you to walk in that new way.

Verse 17 says, "so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." We have a gift from God, every word inspired by God which is able to make us – I love this – adequate, equipped for every good work. Actually, the NASB "adequate" is just too weak a word here in English. The ESV says "complete." The King James says "perfect." The idea is to be fully completed and finished. It pictures a process in which you've been preparing something and now everything is ready. You might think in preparation of a Thanksgiving meal. You know, I like to cook and I will cook, I never cook a Thanksgiving meal though because Patty wouldn't let me. But I cook things and when I cook things I usually cook and she never thinks I'm complete because I'll like make something and then there will be, if I'm doing the whole dinner, there's like one or two things total. Do you know what I'm saying? Like there's not a pretty green over here and something else. The presentation is lacking. I'm still pretty happy with it but that's just me.

But anyway so you think about a meal that's perfectly laid out, the presentation is complete. Think about a Thanksgiving dinner. If your family really values the Thanksgiving meal, you may have in your mind, I know many of you do, certain things that you want to have at Thanksgiving dinner and it's not complete if the sweet potatoes aren't there or the macaroni and cheese isn't there, or somebody who normally makes the fried turkey didn't show up because they're sick, or you know, and COVID played havoc with this last couple of years probably for many families, right? And so we've been wrestling with that and appreciating it in a new way, what a blessing it is to have the whole thing furnished. But when everybody is there and everybody's brought their dish and every dish is ready now to move through the line, it's thoroughly furnished. All of the work that went into that with all of the different people that bring that together, and that's the idea of this word, artios, to be thoroughly completed.

And it's wonderful because the word "adequate" or "perfect" or "complete" in the other translations and the word "equipped," it's the same root word. To be equipped is the verb form of this, ex artidzo. Artidzo is the verb form of artios and so the idea is you are perfect and complete having been perfected and completed. It's like a double emphatic way of saying, "Man, the word of God, it brings everything that you need to the moment." And I love this too, the word "artios" is actually from a preposition originally, the etymology which means "to be at the moment; in the now; at the very moment." So the idea of this word of "artios," the thought was "to be ready for the moment you find

yourself in, the challenge at that moment," that's what artios is. You are prepared perfectly for this moment.

Now think about what we read in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Difficult times will come. Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, skipping down, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious, treacherous, reckless, all of this, verse 13, evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, but you have that which makes you perfectly adequate for this moment in the word of God. You lack nothing if you have your Bible and you are letting the Bible do its work in you. God has left you, there's nothing short, there's no one that's not here that needs to be here. Everything that you need is in this book. Isn't that good news? The Lord knows that we were going to be born in the day we are, every single person that's ever lived that belongs to him, he's planned it out and this book is perfectly sufficient to make them perfectly sufficient for the moment. That's the wonder of the word of God. It is sufficient. It's all we need.

2 Peter 1, the first part of that chapter he says God has given us everything necessary for life and godliness. Everything you need. It's in Christ and Christ is revealed to you in the word and the Bible, this treasure, this is what God has chosen to use this. In fact, what we're going to see is God has chosen to put his power, his equipping power is made known through this book. God has chosen to do it that way. In fact, that brings us to the third point, not just the inspiration of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture, but this is where we're going to camp out: the power of Scripture. You know, the inspiration of Scripture, we have something directly from God, the sufficiency of Scripture says it is all that we need. It's all that we need. This third point, though, it's more than we can imagine. It's more than we have begun to imagine we have in the book. Even though you've been walking with the Lord, you're knowing more every day, you're experiencing from time to time as you have breakthroughs in your life, you're seeing anew in a different, deeper way the sufficiency of the Bible, there's a sense in which you haven't seen anything yet. This book is all we need.

It's the power of Scripture. The power of Scripture is seen in verse 14 when he says, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them," then into verse 15, "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation." These sacred writings, again, that which is written in the holy Scripture, it is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation. It has the capability, the power. In fact, that word "able" is the word "dunamai," it means "accomplishing power"; it means "the power to achieve its end."

God has chosen and I can't emphasize this enough because this is something that we just have to understand more and more and more and ask God to help us see, God has chosen to make known his power through his word. So to the degree that you need the power of God in your life, you're going to find it in and through the Bible. You're not going to find it anywhere else because God has willed and chosen to reveal himself through the book. Yes, you must pray, of course, but you pray and you use the means and the means are the word of God. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Why? Why is he not ashamed

of the gospel? The gospel is the message in this book, the message of salvation. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God." The greatest access that we have to any power in the world is in this book. Greater than nuclear power is in this book. Nuclear power can devastate the world physically, this book will devastate the world spiritually or it will remake you in incredible ways spiritually.

The power of Scripture. It's interesting how the Lord has chosen to do this. I've been meditating on this, this week. You know, God chose to create the world, how? Through his spoken word. I mean, think about that. He didn't have to do that. We know the story, we don't think about it. Seven times in Genesis 1 it says "Then God said." The first thing he said, "Let there be light and there was light." He said, "Let the waters above be separated from the waters below." He separated the sky and the oceans, then let the waters be separated from the dry land, the dry land appeared. He speaks and it happens. In Genesis 1 he's not telling us about what he's doing with his hands, I mean, I don't think God has hands but he could have manifested himself in that way and talked about what he did. He blew on, no, he spoke. He said, "Let there be," and it was. His power is unleashed through his word. He said, "Let the dry land appear." Then he says, "Let the lights be gathered and the sun and the moon and the stars be formed," and they are. Basically the formula is, "Then God said...and it was so." That's the repetition. "Then God said and it was so," and then it says this, "And God saw what he had made and behold it was good." That's the formula over and over day 1 through day 6. God said. It was so. God saw it was good. But all he had to do was say and he chose to create that way.

He speaks and the seas suddenly teem with fish and ocean beasts. He speaks and the skies are filled with birds. Incredible variety of these things and he just speaks and says, "Let there be," and think about it, all the power that goes into making, I mean, we can't make one bird. We can't make a living thing. You know, good technology tries to copy some of the things that God has done but God said it all at once and it happened. All of this. He creates the animals and creeping things and the beasts of the earth. He just says, "Let there be" and they are. Power is unleashed through God's spoken word and what he's telling us is that that's the way he's going to do things from then on. His power is unleashed through his spoken word and we're going to see that his power is unleashed through his spoken word through the prophets. He's going to speak through prophets who are then going to write down God's spoken word. Then we have the written word and he's basically going to be telling us, "This is where you go for everything that you need. My written word. That's where My power is."

I want to turn to Exodus 4 as God continues to unveil, you know, you read the Bible from the beginning through it, this is one of the great things about reading the Bible, all of the Scriptures, you begin to see themes that jump out at you, and what we're going to see is the giving of the Bible is accompanied in an extraordinary way by God's visible power. Now I'm going to tell you, I'm going to try to lay this out for you at the beginning so that you can follow the logic of what we're going to go through. I'm going to show you that what God does is when he speaks he confirms that he's the one speaking by doing miracles, okay? We're going to see this in Exodus 4. God, because Moses has been told to

go to the people of Israel and say, "Hey, I have a word for you from God," and Moses is a pretty smart guy. He knows that when God tells him to go, he's like, "They're going to want to know how, they're not going to believe me. How will they know that I'm speaking from You?" And God gives him some signs, some miracles to do, and then what we're going to see is this is actually how the Bible is given to us the rest of the way through, but what I want you to see is you're going to see that signs are given to authenticate the word, the signs are glorious, and then the signs successively fade away, less and less miracles, why? Because God is saying, "The real miracle is in My word. I'm only getting your attention with the miracles. The miracle place that you find miracles is in My book." That's what he's doing in the word.

Look with me at Exodus 4:1. Here's Moses, he's been told in chapter 3, God said, "Go to Pharaoh, go to the people of Israel and tell them that I've sent you. Tell them you've heard a word from Me." Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'" The Lord hasn't spoken to you, go away, Moses. You're deluded. But the Lord answers, "The LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' Then He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. But the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail' so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand." Threw down his staff, it became a snake. Moses did the smart thing and he ran; since he didn't have a staff anymore, he couldn't kill it. The staff was the snake. But the Lord said, "Stretch out your hand." He picks it up. Now it's his staff again and look what it says, verse 4, "'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail' so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand 'that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'" He said, "I gave you this sign so that they will believe your word." The sign is a testimony to the word. It basically points you to the word.

But he goes on, verse 6, "The LORD furthermore said to him," because he knows that the people are going to be hardhearted, "'Now put your hand into your bosom.' So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow." Put his hand in his jacket, pulled it out, it's leprous. Then God said to him, "'Put your hand into your bosom again.' So he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign." You see, these are both signs. They're pointing to something else. That's what a sign does. A sign is not the reality, it points to the reality.

Verse 9, "But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." So he gives them a third sign and, sure enough, Moses goes to Israel and he has to show them the signs and then they know that the signs aren't the end in themselves, the signs testify and point to the word.

This is exactly what we see in the rest of Scripture. It is fascinating. I think as you read through the rest of your Bible what you're going to find is Moses is going to continue to show a bunch of signs. Now think about this, at the time Moses comes to minister there is no Bible. You understand that, there is not one word of written Scripture. Nothing. All they have is spoken oral traditions. They have the remembrances of people who passed things down but they're uninspired remembrances, they're just the remembrances passed down through the generations. But God is about to give his word through Moses. God is about to deliver them and bring them to himself and to bring them into his presence and he's about to give them his law. He's about to give them the first five books of the Bible called the Torah and he wants them to know, "This is how you live, My word."

So what he does through Moses is you have Moses do some amazing miracles. After this there are going to be the 10 plagues upon Egypt. I mean, Moses speaks and, you know, there are flies, and then there are frogs, and he speaks again and then they're removed. God's power demonstrated mightily in Moses. The plague of the firstborn, all of the firstborn of Egypt die in a night. That's the Passover. Then Moses parts the Red Sea, get manna from heaven, water from a rock. All of this and then you have some miracles under Joshua and these are extraordinary miracles.

Now think about that and then think about the fact that after Joshua you have a major reduction in the magnificence and grandeur of miracles. They still happen but they're radically different. As you read on through your Bible, 1 and 2 Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, you have some occasional, well, actually 1 and 2 Samuel, stop there, you have some occasional miracles but there's hundreds of years going on and there is reduced numbers of miracles. Why is that? Some people say it's because they didn't have faith. Well, you have people like David, Samuel, there's people with faith but God's just not doing miracles the same way because what the Lord has done is he's used these miracles to get their attention on the word and the function of the miracle is miraculous power which attests to the word, gives way, now miraculous power alongside the word attesting to the word. That's the miracle, miraculous power alongside the word attesting to the word fades away and gives way to the miraculous power inherent in the word. That's the reason they diminish because the place of power is really the word.

You see a second cluster of miracles under Elijah and Elisha. These guys ministered around 870 BC to 800 BC, Elijah then Elisha. Their story is in 1 and 2 Kings. Elijah does 14 extraordinary miracles, some people will dispute quite the number, it depends on if you call this a miracle or not but we're talking about what's in the Bible, basically 14. Elisha asks for a double portion of God's Spirit and he does 28. They both do extraordinary things. Elijah has fire fall from heaven and it's, again, it's more like Moses' miracles. It's not like the little miracles that you see. I mean, Samson defeats the Philistine army with the jawbone of an ass but you see he's using actual physical implements and he's actually fighting. He's just like an incredible Arnold Schwarzenegger on steroids, God is blessing him and he's using him and he's doing a miracle but it's not like the same thing as the Red Sea parting and collapsing on the

Egyptian army. Do you see what I'm talking about? The character of the miracles are different.

The same thing with David's life, Samuel's life. It's not until Elijah and Elisha come that you see again this outpouring of extraordinary signs from heaven. Elijah raises a man from the dead, a young man from the dead. Elisha does the same. Elisha heals Naaman the leper. They both do extraordinary miracles. What's going on? Why is that? And then it fades off again. What's happening is this: in the first cluster of miracles around Moses and Joshua you have God saying, "Here is My law. Here is My Torah. Here are My prophets." And he's saying by the miracles, "Listen to them." And the law and the historical books are given to us, and then when Elijah and Elisha come, they inaugurate, they are the beginning of the ministry of the prophets. You know no writing prophet writes until after Elijah and Elisha's ministry. I mean, I'm talking about Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, those major prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, all of those all the way to Malachi, they write after Elijah and Elisha. Elijah and Elisha inaugurate the ministry of the prophet and so what you see is God authenticating in Moses the miracles, "This is the law, listen to it, cling to it." And then the miracles die down because God doesn't want his people looking for miracles, he wants them clinging to his word. And then he's going to give another installment of his word and so he sends miracles again with Elijah and Elisha, and the miracles are saying, "Listen to these men." And you have those, I said there are 12 minor prophets, four major prophets, 16 prophets that come and give us the major portion of our Old Testament. Then you have again the dying out of it. Like when we were at Ezra-Nehemiah, there aren't any real cool miracles in Ezra-Nehemiah either. The miracle is they build the wall in 52 days. They're actually using a trowel, they're slathering on the stuff, they're putting the rocks on there, they're doing it and God's blessing it, he's at work but there's not signs anymore because the message is, "Listen to My prophets."

Then the third cluster is around Jesus and the apostles. After 400 years of silence, God breaks the silence with the preaching of John the Baptist. He doesn't do any miracles but he points to the one who will and Jesus does all of those miracles and the apostles do all those miracles in the early church, and as you read through, listen as you read through the gospels even notice this, the miracles at the beginning of the gospels are more and more and more and they begin to diminish as you read through the gospels. It's not that Jesus quits doing them but the focus is on his preaching. In fact, he says in Mark 1, there's a verse in Mark 1, well, let's turn over there. The emphasis here is on his teaching. Jesus came to teach. Look at Mark 1:21, "They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority." You see the power of God is made known through the teaching and preaching of the word. Now what's going to happen after that, there's a man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit. Jesus drives out the demon, rebukes him. Verse 27, "They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'" The teaching with authority is confirmed by the miracle. Verse 28, "Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. And immediately after they came out of the synagogue,

they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John." He's going to heal Simon's mother. Verse 32, "When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was." Verse 35, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and his companions searched for Him," verse 37, "they found Him, and said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.'" Listen, there are more people that want to be healed. I mean, they brought probably the neighboring villages have come to this house. They want to be healed. Look what Jesus says, verse 38, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." He came to preach. He came to speak the word of God. That is his purpose.

So the miracles of Jesus, the same way, and like what you'll do is you'll see as you read through the gospels he's more and more teaching as it goes on and less and less healing because, again, the miracles about framing the way for the message. Now he's going to rise from the dead which is the ultimate miracle, of course, and that is what the preaching is about, the cross and the resurrection. The gospel, it's all about Christ and his finished work but the way that God makes that known in your life is not through you experiencing a miracle, it is through you hearing the word expounded and explained, hearing the word of God preached to you. That is the way that transformation happens. God has willed, the same God who spoke and made the world, came into being through his word says, "Listen," and Paul says and makes this connection in 2 Corinthians 4:6, the God who spoke and said, "Let light come out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to make know the light of the gospel. God looks into our dead hearts and says, "Let there be light," and he does it through his Bible, this book.

So that's the way that Scripture is unveiled and so that the people in the old covenant when they had received the Torah, they received it with miracles so that they would then cling to the word, not looking for more miracles. In fact, you see this spirit so beautifully in Psalm 119. Turn to Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, 176 verses. This is a celebration of God's law, the beauty and glory of the law of God. This is written before the prophets are given probably; we don't know 100% sure, we don't know who the author is for sure but the idea is clearly they don't yet have, Christ has not yet come but what they have they're clinging to. That's what the psalmist is modeling for us, that the way of faithfulness to God, the way to know God is through his word. What we need is his word. This is what is made over and over so clear in this Psalm.

One of the phrases I love is the word "revive" that occurs over and over again in this Psalm. It means "to make alive again; to return to your right state; to make you alive again." So when you are in need, what you need to do is be revived. Where do you find revival? The psalmist says, look how many times he says this, Psalm 119:25, "My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word." Look at verse 50, "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me." Verse 93, "I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have revived me." Verse 107, "I am exceedingly

afflicted; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word." Verse 149, "Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances." Another way of saying the word. Your commandments. Your specific instructions, ordinances. Verse 154, "Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word." Verse 156, "Great are Your mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Your ordinances."

The psalmist has learned that where I focus all of my hope is in the word of God. This is how we live the life of faith. This is how the Old Testament saints lived the life of faith and this is how New Testament saints are to live the life of faith, we cling to the word of God. In fact, it's beautiful how this, I want to show you in John's gospel how this is made clear, the perfection of the word. A key phrase in John's gospel, our keyword is the word "sign" again echoing what we saw in Exodus 4. The way John organizes his gospel is he only presents seven miracles of Jesus but he calls them signs and he says at the end of his gospel, "I could have told you a whole lot more things that Jesus did. In fact, if I told you everything He did, I couldn't even write it down, it's too big for the world to even hold all the volumes of what He did because every moment of every day He was doing incredible things, saying incredible things. But these things are written that you may believe that He is, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

But he tells seven miracles and he calls them seven signs. They are miracles and the sign, the word in the New Testament is the same in the idea that it points to something outside of itself. The sign is a type that points to a reality. It's an outward and visible sign that points to an inward and spiritual reality. The seven signs. Jesus turns water into wine. He heals a nobleman's son in John 4. He heals a lame man, lame for 30 some odd years in chapter 5. He feeds 5,000 people with seven loaves and two fish in John 6. He walks on the water in John 6 as well. He heals a man born blind. He raises the man Lazarus from the dead. But what's neat about John's gospel is in several places he does this, look with me at John 6, what he does is he connects the miracle, the sign, directly to the reality to which it points.

In John 6 Jesus has just healed 5,000, I mean he's just fed 5,000 men plus women and children, probably 15,000 people total, something like that, 10-15,000 with seven loaves and two fish. He walks on water overnight, the next day the crowds find him again and they want more bread and Jesus realizing they want more bread, they want to see signs, they just want the miracles, he doesn't do a miracle but what he does is better, he says this, "You don't understand about the bread." He said in verse 35 of John 6, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." "What you need is not to be satisfied with your earthly hunger, you don't need a miracle that feeds you a really good meal again and satisfies you for a few hours. You need the spiritual reality of feeding on Me and having Me be so connected to you that you then have eternal life. Your real problem is not physical hunger, your real problem is that you are spiritually dead and destitute and you need salvation, and the reason I did the miracle with the bread was to point to this reality."

The same thing happens in John 8 and 9. Jesus in John 8:12 says, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." He makes that statement. Here the preaching of the message is followed by the miracle that testifies to it. "I am the Light of the world. You don't have to walk in darkness if you have Me." The next day he runs into a guy who's born blind and he says in verse 5 of chapter 9, "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." And he heals this blind man who was born blind and the man sees and what he's saying is, "Listen, don't be so enamored by the fact that the guy who was blind sees. Be amazed that you all are blind spiritually, born blind spiritually, and if you die without coming to know Me you will spend eternity in outer darkness forever separated from God." And the miracle is a small thing pointing to something much more glorious and value the thing that is more glorious. Don't miss the point and get enamored with the frame. Look at the artwork, the artwork is Jesus, who he is and what he's done.

So, "I am the resurrection and the life." He raises Lazarus from the dead right after he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." He raises a man from the dead. Isn't that incredible? It is but listen to this: Lazarus died again. It was pointing to a spiritual reality. Yeah, he did it but to show, "I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in Me though he dies yet shall he live." What you and I need is to be spiritually resurrected. We're spiritually dead and we need Jesus to speak into our world, to hear the word speak into us and say, "Come to life."

So the miracle only serves to lift up the person and work of Christ and that's why over time they fade away because the faithful have understood what's glorious is not the physical miracle, what's glorious is the spiritual reality. This explains, turn with me to John 14, this makes sense of this verse, and I don't think it makes sense of this verse if you still are looking for signs and miracles in this world. Jesus says in John 14:12, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father." He's saying, "Look at all the works I've done and I'm telling you when I go to the Father, the one who believes in Me will do the works I do and greater works." How is that? We're not greater than Jesus. No, not at all. We are human beings. He is God. But he also is the God-man and he came down to live a perfect life and to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He bore our sins in his body on the cross. In that he made a way for sinners to be made right because he took our wrath, our punishment, he took it out of the way, he finished with it and then he gives us his righteousness. And because he's done that, when he goes to the Father what he says, "They will be able to do these because I go to the Father." When the man, Christ Jesus, walks into the presence of God with his head held high because he is alone is worthy to enter into the throne room of God because he is perfectly righteous, he has brought humanity back to God and therefore now sinners like you and me can have the Spirit of God come to live in us. And so people who believe in Jesus now when we speak the word of God, the Spirit of God when the Lord wills it goes into other people and changes them from the inside out which was greater than any miracle Jesus did while he was on the earth. Do you hear that? That's what he's saying. He saved people, yes, but they were saved with a sense kind of like a small package of salvation. That's why when the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost everything changes.

So we are privy and have the opportunity of greater miracles than what Jesus did but they're spiritual miracles. They are the only miracles that really matter. They're the only ones that are eternal. Like I said, Lazarus died again. They buried him again and they wept at his tomb again. Mary and Martha would have been burying him again, crying on another day, maybe it was 20 or 30 years later. Praise God, he got 30 years extra. I don't know how many years he got, of course. But if you haven't been born again, what does that matter? What does it matter? I mean, I'm not saying it's not, certainly it's important and it's wonderful and people that are suffering and we pray for healing, we're right to do that, it is important, but relatively speaking it's a small thing compared to the spiritual reality that this word makes happen.

That's what he's saying. That's what we're called to. So in the midst of this dark world that is confused, chaotic, increasing in misery and anger and rage, division, we feel like we'd rather be somewhere else, those of us that are old enough to remember a different time, we'd like to go back but the Lord has us in this time and the Lord says, "This is all you need. I planned to have you in this time and I've given you everything that you need," and what you have is so much more than you or I can imagine. You know, when somebody, think about the difference between a miracle of, you know, healing a lame man, that's pretty awesome, that is, that would be incredible, but to heal a person who is bound up in, you know, in bondage to lust, sexual lust, homosexual lust, whatever, or is bound up in, you know, drunkenness, drug use, to see a person who is given over to anger and wrath and rage become gentle and loving and kind, to see a man wrapped up in lust become pure and thankful and giving, that is what it looks like to move mountains and that's what you and I have the opportunity to do. Isn't that amazing? People like you and me speaking this precious mighty word in faith, trusting the Lord, when his Spirit chooses mountains move. Then sometimes mountains move slowly, most of the time in Christian life. Once somebody gets saved, you've still got mountains to move, don't you? But you know, if you use this mighty book because God has chosen not to make us holy instantly. I wish he had. I mean, I really don't, he knows what's best but don't you sometimes just get fatigued with the battle, war with the flesh? But God knows what he's doing. He is more glorified by your faithfulness to keep clinging to his word knowing that somehow this is beginning to move that mountain and you apply the word and you believe the word and you get up the next day and you try some more, and then you forget for a few days, and you get at it again and you try some more, and over time, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." It's continuing in this mighty work.

God is so good. What an opportune time to be a follower of Jesus Christ. We have exactly what the world needs and exactly what we need so let's get to work.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for Your precious word. Lord, how amazed we are at Your kindness to us, Your patience with us. Help us, Lord, to not squander the time but to make the most. The days are evil. Help us to cling to the word, revive us according to

Your word. Revive us in Your ordinances. Lord, teach us to read it and to study it and to memorize it, meditate on it. Help us to discipline ourselves to these things. Wherever we are in our walk, may we become more faithful, more diligent, and may Your word do its mighty work in us. Thank You that You call us just to keep waiting on You and Your word. For those that are here who don't believe they're saved and know they need to be saved, help them to understand they need to just wait on You in the word, keep looking to Christ, keep crying out to You and to believe that You save those who call upon You because that's what You say You do and You cannot lie. For those of us who are weary with trying to speak the truth to people who haven't been listening, give us wisdom to know how to love and to care for those around us so that they will want to hear, but then give us wisdom to speak the truth clearly and plainly and boldly. And Lord, send forth Your mighty word. Thank You that You tell us in Psalm 107 there were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in misery and chains because they had rebelled against the word of God, but You sent forth Your word and You healed them. When they cried out to You, You sent forth Your word. Lord, send forth Your word and heal us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.