

# The Way Prepared for Christ

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Well, I invite you to turn to the book of Romans for a text that will set the foundation for all that we want to say today. In Romans 1, we read in the opening four verses the following.

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Jesus Christ, our Lord. The question that is before us in the series that we are currently doing is, how do we know that Jesus is Lord? And that is a question that has a very rich biblical answer and there's a couple of things that I would just want to lay out at the start for you to kind of build the infrastructure around which to see how the Bible addresses this question. There is the method by which the apostles made the Lordship of Christ known, and that's what we're looking at right now. There is a particular method that they used that I will show you very shortly. And then as they use that method of instruction, there is the content of what they said about the Lord Jesus Christ that we need to know also. We need to know their method in order to be able to follow it, and we need to know the content of what they said and what they taught as they represented Christ in the first century.

And what we could say by way of simple overview is that the Spirit of God uses the word of God to exalt the Son of God. The Spirit uses the word to exalt the Son. And what I particularly want to call your attention to in that passage I just read, is verse 2, actually the end of verse 1 and then into verse 2. Paul makes this statement at the end of verse 1 that he is set apart for the gospel of God. He is set apart to proclaim the glad tidings, the good news that God has given through his Son Jesus Christ. Then he goes on immediately in verse 2 and he describes this gospel. He makes a fundamental statement about the gospel of God which at its core has the Lord Jesus Christ as its feature. Notice what he says in verse 2. He says, "I'm set apart for the gospel of God which," he's going to expand on something about the gospel of God, "which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scripture." Paul appealed as he presented the gospel, he appealed to the Scripture that had preceded him over the preceding 1,500 years and said,

"The Christ that I am proclaiming to you is the One that was anticipated by the ministry of Moses and the prophets for 1,500 years. God had promised it beforehand." In that short little phrase, "promised beforehand," we see a power-packed indication of what we look to to know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is no isolated statement even in the book of Romans. Look at Romans 3:21. The gospel was promised beforehand through his prophets. Paul, as soon as he completed his condemnation of Jews and Gentiles alike in 1:18 through 3:20, and you see the universal condemnation of man in that section of this epistle, Paul now pivots to explain the gospel and deliverance from the wrath of God and he makes this opening statement in Romans 3:21, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law," then notice that statement again, "although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it." The Law and the Prophets bear witness to it. Promised beforehand, chapter 1. Chapter 3, the Law and Prophets bear witness to this. And skipping over another example of it just for the sake of time, go to the very end of Romans in chapter 16, verses 25 and 26. Romans 16:25 and 26 we read this. As Paul closes the letter, he ends where he began. He says, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel," gospel at the start, gospel at the end, "and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God."

Do you see it beloved? Paul, as he makes this systematic exposition of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is very careful at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end to say, "I'm telling you nothing other than what the prophet said was going to happen." There was a 1,500 year period of prophetic writings that was in place and established before the apostles began explaining and expounding Jesus Christ to the world. That was their method. They would go back to the law, back to the prophets and say, "This is what the prophets taught us to expect. Now in Christ you see the fulfillment of it." That is the method, beloved, and it is profoundly powerful and I encourage you to think on these things and let them set into your mind because there is more than just a casual glance at this would perhaps indicate to your souls. Think about it. For 1,500 years God was laying a foundation, 1,500 years which takes us from our day would take us back to before the start of the Roman Catholic Church for example, long before the establishment of the nation of England. In that kind of time period, God had consistently been laying a foundation of what to expect when his Christ would come and then when Christ came it was all evident.

Now down the road in a week or so, we will consider what exactly the prophets said and how the prophets laid the foundation for the life and death and the suffering of the Christ who would come. We'll look at the content of that. All I want you to see for now is how important the prophetic foundation was and how it permeated everything that the apostles had to say about their message. In other words, Jesus Christ appeared in the world not as an afterthought of the plan of God, not suddenly in a vacuum, just suddenly appeared. God had established his eternal purpose before creation and then was working it out and providing prophetic clues on what to look for even beginning at Genesis 3:15 providing prophetic clues of who it was that we were to look for, and the apostles had the enormous responsibility and privilege to be able to stand up before people who were trained in

those Scriptures from their infancy and say, "Everything that you've learned from the law and the prophets, I'm now telling you Christ who was so recently on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth is the one of whom the law and the prophets spoke." 1,500 years of writing being fulfilled as they spoke. This ministry of the prophetic writings, its centrality cannot be overestimated.

Now as you come to the time of Jesus Christ you'll find, and this is all review from what we talked about on Tuesday, I'm going through it really rapidly here, as you read the gospels and you read about the contemporaries of Christ, you'll see that they were making the same kind of appeal and making the same references to the law and the prophets. So you see Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist referring to the law and the prophets in the Old Testament writings. In the gospel of John, you read how Philip went to Nathaniel and in what must have been an absolutely stunning moment in an exchange between two friends, Philip tells Nathaniel, "We have found the One of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. It's Jesus of Nazareth." Nathaniel is stunned by the news and he goes and he has doubts at the first but then he meets Christ and Christ said, "Before you saw me, I saw you under the fig tree. I knew you in advance." Nathaniel recognizing that that kind of omniscience could only belong to one who was of God said, "Rabbi, you are the King of Israel. You are the Messiah." And as we look at these things, you could start to say in your own mind here today, you could say, "Okay, I'm starting to see a pattern here. I see this emphasized in the book of Romans. I see this emphasized in the gospels of the contemporaries of Christ."

Well, what I want to take you to now is how much Jesus Christ himself emphasized and appealed to the Old Testament writings in order to verify his claim to be the Christ, and so our first point for today is Jesus Christ, promises made and promises kept. Jesus Christ, promises made and promises kept. If you wanted to tie it to your notes from Tuesday, point number 1 would have been Romans, promises made promises kept. Point number 2 would be the time of Jesus Christ, promises made promises kept. Here today we come to the third in this series of points looking to Jesus Christ himself and what did our Lord himself say about it? That's what we're going to look at here this morning at the start anyway and, beloved, I want to remind you of something that we've said often in this series about building a Christian mind. Jesus said, "You call me teacher and Lord and you are right for I am," and the purpose of calling Jesus "Lord" is more than just wanting someone to save us from sin, we place ourselves under his spiritual authority. What Jesus Christ teaches to us is absolute law with which we are not free to disagree and the redeemed heart doesn't even want to disagree with it. We sit in willing bonds, willing chains, as it were, at the feet of Christ and gladly own him as our Master and as our Lord, and if Christ is your Lord, then he is also implicitly by definition also your teacher so that you study Christ, you look to Christ, you see what he said and you learn to think his thoughts after him and that goes to all things comprehensively.

Well, what did Christ say about his own ministry? How did he establish to that first century Jewish audience that he was the Messiah? I want to show you at least a half dozen passages here in varying degrees of detail. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5:17. Matthew 5:17. These really are precious days for us to be able to look at such

fundamental things without being in a hurry, gathered together in like precious faith around the precious word of God, and to think through these things deeply.

Beloved, there's a sense in which and it's only an apparent sense, when you do studies like these it might seem for a moment to be somewhat disconnected from daily life; it's not but I sympathize with those who might think that it is. Beloved, understanding the foundation of your faith, understanding the method by which everything that you cling to is established is not something incidental. It is central to to being a Christian to know and to understand these things and what happens is this over the course of time, I promise you if you will but stay with us throughout this series, is that as you study these things you develop a Christian mind and you begin to think differently and you think according to eternal biblical principles rather than simply responding to life according to the emotions or the challenges of day-by-day living. All of you know, all of you know that good times and bad times come and go and if we are simply tying our spiritual lives to our day-by-day experience, we are simply people who are canoes on the ocean being tossed about by every wind of doctrine and every wind of circumstance that comes to us.

How is it that throughout the centuries there were men and women who were so anchored in the word of God that they could withstand the storms of persecution? That their faith was unwavering, thinking of Sarah Edwards when her husband Jonathan died prematurely at the age of 57 from a smallpox vaccine or a polio vaccine. I think it was smallpox. Anyway a vaccine went wrong. He died quickly, far too early. Sarah Edwards responds, "The Lord has done it. We've lost him but my heart belongs," I'm paraphrasing, "but my heart belongs to Christ. There I am and there I love to be." How is it that a woman freshly minted as a widow could write such words to her daughter of such triumphant transcendent faith? It comes from knowing the word of God. It comes from knowing it deeply. It comes from knowing who Christ is and how we know that he is Lord.

Well, how did Jesus establish that fact for us? Well, Christ repeatedly appealed to the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:17, we read Jesus saying this, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Christ tells his Jewish audience, "Don't think wrongly about the writings that have come before me. I am not coming to annul them, to set them aside, or to contradict them. They are the foundation of everything. In fact I come to fulfill them." He came to fulfill all of the sacrifices that prefigured his coming. He came to fulfill all of the prophecies that had been made about him. He came to atone for sin as prefigured in Isaiah 53.

Jesus, as it were, laid out the foundation of the law and the prophets and then he stepped up and stood on that foundation and proclaimed himself as the fulfillment of them all. This is stunning. This is stunning. And beloved, one of the reasons that this is so critical is that it gives you an ability to distinguish every other claimed prophet throughout the course of history as false and Christ as the one true one, because there is no prophet, there is no Joseph Smith, there is no Muhammad, there is no Mary Baker Eddy. There is no other purveyor of false religion. There is no Pope anywhere. Though they make the false

claim of being the head of the church on earth, beloved, understand, understand that Christ alone fulfills the Old Testament and stands as the fulfillment of it all.

No one else is even infinitely remotely close to Christ. Christ fulfills it all to the letter. That's how you know. Look, you want assurance of salvation? You want to know that you are in the truth? You need to know the word of God. You need to know these things that are being laid out before you and to understand them and think and meditate on them deeply so that you are convinced of something that is outside of your inner man, outside of your introspective reflections, and looking out to Christ and looking forward and looking deeply at Scripture and seeing how he is the fulfillment of everything that God had been proclaiming for 1,500 years. And when those truths sink into your heart and you are convinced of Christ, then you are establishing the basis upon which you yourself can stand. These things are of great surpassing fundamental importance.

Look at Matthew 13. Matthew 13. I would have you, beloved, not be one of those to whom Jesus refers in the preceding verses. Matthew 13:14. Actually in verse 13, Jesus says, "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.' For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them." Beloved, Scripture tells us that there will be tares among the wheat. Scripture warns us that it is so critical for us to pay close attention to what we've heard lest we should drift away from it, that there will be wolves among the sheep, there will be those who outwardly appear as though they are believers and yet their hearts are actually cold. Beloved, my prayer and my desire for you here this morning is that you would not be numbered among those like that but that your heart would be stirred up by the word of God for your own sake, for your own soul, that whereas perhaps you have been marked by indifference to the word of God, only a casual acquaintance with Christ, only seeking him when you needed something, only superficially interested in his person and his work, with a sluggish heart and dull plugged up ears with the word of God not penetrating. Beloved, I don't want that for you.

That's why we do these things is for the sake of your eternal soul and when you realize what is at stake, you realize that the wrath of God is real, when you realize that hell itself is real and it is eternal and it is painful, beloved, the only clear thinking, right thinking, godly, humble response would be to know and to understand that to be persuaded of Christ and to know that he belongs to you and you belong to him is the only thing on earth that matters and everything else that occupies your mind is something of secondary concern because this Christ secures your eternal blessedness forever. To know that you are in him is the greatest blessing your heart could know, and I long for that for you. I pray for that for you. I teach for that for you. But in the end you have to stir up your own heart to believe. You have to stir up your own heart to respond. You have to examine yourself to say, "Am I in this Christ or not? Do these things matter to me or not? What is it in my life that would indicate that these things matter to me?" You know, Jesus said

seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, seek that first as your highest priority. Man cannot love mammon and God simultaneously.

How are you to know then that this is the Christ who is worthy of staking your entire life and your eternal soul and resting everything that is precious to you upon him and upon him alone? Trusting not in your works, trusting not in a system of religion, trusting not in the false teaching of men but rooted and deeply grounded in the word of God, how are you to know these things? Matthew 13:16. Jesus distinguishes those who are dull from those that are in front of him and he says, "blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you," here it is again, "many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." Jesus says to his first century audience, he says, "There are better people than you from the past who wanted desperately to see and to know the things that you are experiencing before your eyes." The Apostle Peter made that exact same point, you don't need to turn there, but in 1 Peter 1:10 and through 12, Peter said, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." They wanted to know! These holy men of God wanted to know for themselves. They could see it in shadows but they couldn't see it clearly.

What Peter says goes on to say, he says, "It was revealed to them," 1 Peter 1:12 for your later notes, "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." Beloved, I beg you, I plead with you to recognize the great precious pearl of great price that is set before you from the word of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to recognize that others in the past saw its value but didn't have the benefit of the clarity which is given to us today. They longed for it. They would have exchanged anything to have the moment of clarity that we are able to enjoy with the completed New Testament Canon and yet it was withheld from them. Why? Because God was using them to serve us.

This is just immensely humbling and embarrassing, in one sense. I'm speaking autobiographically here, you know, to just think of how carelessly we view these things, what casual importance they are to our lives, how easily other things crowd out our views, and yet we have the benefit of things that were denied to better men than ourselves. How can that be? By what principle of justice does this operate? Jesus said many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you hear and did not hear it. Beloved, I say it to you gently, carefully, prayerfully, but you and I, we have a great great great accountability. We will give a great great account to God for all of the revelation that has been given to us and the opportunities over the course of a lifetime in a free nation to be able to seek it out and to pursue it for our own and to respond to it. I'm grateful that many of you see that, pursue it, want it, desire it. It shows in your reading habits. It shows as you gather around the word of God but, beloved, understand that just mere association with a group of people who love the word of God is not enough. It has to be true in your own heart. It has to be true in your life and I would not be a faithful pastor if I didn't encourage you to examine

yourselves and say, "Do these things really matter to me? Are these things precious to me? Are these things precious to me above even human relationships? Would I leave behind loved ones and accept separation from loved ones if only I could be closer to this word and closer to Christ?" These are the things that matter. This is what Christ calls for. He said, "Follow me. Follow me." And we understand that at times that comes at a price of division. Jesus said, "I came to set a father against his son, mother against her daughter," etc., etc. No one has left father, mother, farms for my sake and the kingdom's sake, but will inherit many times as much in this life and in the age to come eternal life.

But beloved, what is your heart set upon? What is most precious to you in your affections of affections? Christ laid the foundation of authority to make that claim on you by showing that his coming, his person, his mission, his work was in complete detailed fulfillment of what God had been establishing for 1,500 years. He didn't just show up and start setting off fireworks and making a display and spectacle of himself. He was careful to show the connection between himself and what the unfolding eternal purpose revealed by God was over the preceding 1,500 years of revelatory history.

Look at Matthew 26. Matthew 26:55 and 56. Jesus is on trial. He is so close to his humanly unjust execution and the soldiers were gathered around to take him prisoner and in verse 51 we read, "behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?' Then look at what he says. He says, "I have authority at my immediate disposal to bring about supernatural angelic deliverance of myself from this moment. I could do that like this." But there was something more important than legions of angels. There was something more important than deliverance from suffering. There was something more important than victory over the enemies that were immediately in front of him. There was something more critical than all of that. And what does Jesus say in verse 54? What was so critical? What was so massively important that angels had to hold their place, waiting for a command from their Master that never came? What was so important? Verse 54, "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" Jesus says, "It's more important for Scripture to be fulfilled than for angels to come to my rescue." That's how precious the word of God is. That's how essential it was to establishing the Lordship of Christ. And in verse 55 and 56, he reiterates that point when he says, "At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?'" He said, "Think about what you're doing. This is insanity. You've come out with clubs and swords as though I was some dangerous threat to you. I've been teaching daily in the temple and you did not seize me." Christ was no threat to them except to their authority, but he was no physical threat. Verse 56, but what's happening? Jesus said, "'But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples left him and fled."

The Scriptures have to be fulfilled. This is a principle of the universe that cannot be violated. Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words," Jesus said, "shall not pass away." It's critical. It's essential. This is absolutely fundamental. Everything that you read in the four gospels, everything you read about the early church

in the book of Acts, everything you read about the interpretation of the life and person and work of Christ in the epistles, everything that you read about the prophetic end of time in the book of Revelation, all of that New Testament revelation is built on the foundation that was established in the Old Testament.

You see the same principle in other gospels as well. Turn to the gospel of Luke 16. It may not seem like it, but I have left out so much. Metaphorically speaking, there's a big pile of clippings beside my desk in my study of things that I had to cut out for the sake of time and leave behind that won't be presented in this series, but just that you know that there are dozens and dozens of things of which I'm only giving you a sample.

Luke 16 in verses 19 through 31, you're familiar with the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man had his blessing in this life. Lazarus was a poor man in this life, wanted to just eat the crumbs off the rich man's table. But then when they died and were carried off, the situation was reversed. The rich man was in Hades being in torment, it says in verse 23. Lazarus was at the side of Abraham in the place of blessing. And the rich man, the rich man suddenly becomes an unconverted evangelist, you might say. He's begging for even a drop of water to ease the torment on his tongue, verse 24. He said, "Send Lazarus over to me. I know I didn't minister to him in my earthly life, but send him in this afterlife to minister to me. I plead with you, have mercy on me," verse 24, "I am in anguish in this flame! The wrath and judgment of God is upon me and all of my earthly wealth does me no good now. Father Abraham, have mercy on me." But Abraham said, "Child," verse 25, "remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish." My rich friend, you made a bad exchange. Verse 26, "besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us." This is fixed. It cannot be changed. You're asking for something that is impossible now and always will be.

So the rich man pivots. "If I can't help myself," he thinks, "maybe I can help my brothers left behind." And he says in verse 27, "Then I beg you, father, to send Lazarus to my father's house--I have five brothers—send Lazarus so that he can warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham, have mercy on my family if you can't have mercy on me. Send Lazarus. Let Lazarus warn them. Look at what Abraham says. "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." He says, "They don't need Lazarus. They don't need anything else. Moses and the prophets are enough to warn them away from the place of torment that you are now experiencing." And this despicable rich man, don't have false sympathy on him, the rebellious nature of his heart is still very much on display even in torment. Here he is under the judgment of God. Abraham is speaking to him and he's defying Abraham even in that miserable condition and contradicting Abraham and what he had just said.

Verse 30, he said, "No, father Abraham." Can you imagine? Can you imagine? The wicked will not be repentant when they are under judgment. They will just grow more hard. "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." Like he is someone who knows spiritual reality better than Abraham does. Look at what Abraham says, all of that to make this point. Abraham said to him, "If they don't hear



Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." He said, "You're asking for something that is utterly fruitless and useless. It's not the presence of a resurrected man that will change their hearts. They have the written word of God. That is enough. And they're responsible for the revelation that they have in their own possession. If they're not interested, if they won't read, if they won't heed, if they won't repent before the word of God, the highest authority of them all, what on earth, what in Hades makes you think that they would repent just because a resurrected man went?"

You see today, beloved, the significance of what he's saying, especially in this so-called Christian evangelical movement that has fascination with signs and wonders and all of that other nonsense, fabricated stuff? Do you see how useless that is? They can't do anything to produce a resurrection, but even if they could, we have it on the word of God that that would make no difference in the hearts of men if they're not willing to receive the word of God for themselves. And they have it. How important is Old Testament revelation to the foundation of everything that we believe? Abraham says it's more vital, it's more important, it's more powerful, it's more persuasive than if a known resurrected man were standing in front of you. That's just show. That's just external. The key is how you respond to the word of God. Moses and the prophets being enough to convert the soul. That's what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:15. He said to Timothy, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation in Jesus Christ." Beloved, we don't need shows. We don't need lights. We don't need fog. We don't need kickball tournaments. We need the word of God and each one of us has to make a decision as to the earnestness with which we will pursue and read it and learn from it and see Christ proclaimed in it.

Look at Luke chapter 24, beginning at verse 27. After the resurrection, after the resurrection, you remember the two disciples were on the road to Emmaus. Jesus comes alongside them. They didn't recognize him. They were supernaturally kept from recognizing him. Jesus engages them in conversation. Verse 19, they were speaking about what had just so recently happened, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." All of our hopes were up and they were crushed. They crucified him. Everything that we thought was true has been contradicted, it seemed to them at the moment.

And it's now the third day since these things happened, verse 21. In verse 22, there were some women that talked about him being raised from the dead, that he was alive, some of us went to the tomb, found it, but him they didn't see and they're just in this mix of confusion and disappointment in the immediate presence of Christ. And Jesus said to them in verse 25, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe," look at it there, "all that the prophets have spoken!" You're so slow to believe everything the prophets said. What? It's a problem in your heart. Verse 26, "'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Over and over again, beloved, Christ says, "I'm here to fulfill the law and the prophets. The Scriptures must be fulfilled. If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen to a man who's come back from the dead." Jesus says, Jesus explains in the Scriptures and says it's necessary that what the prophets said would be fulfilled.

I skipped over one. Turn back to Luke 18 because I want to call this to your attention as well. Luke 18:31. Jesus calls the twelve aside to him and gives them private instruction and in verse 31 of chapter 18, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." Everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets. Do you get the point, beloved? This was central. This method of verifying the Christ was central. This method is of vital importance that you and I should pay careful attention to it. The establishment and the recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord is built on the foundation of what was prophesied ahead of time by the spokesman of God. His authority is directly related and substantiated by the Old Testament Scriptures. You and I must know that argument. We must know and understand and realize the centrality of it to everything that we believe. Beloved, the writers of Scripture point to a prior foundation of established revelation to prove that Jesus is Lord and King and as they proved his Lordship, they established that his death was the basis of redemption.

Now, next time we'll go through other things in Acts and in the epistles. I almost have to laugh at myself as I'm glancing at my notes here. I got through like six passages here that I had in my notes, and I'm laughing at myself because I had like 15 others that I thought I was going to get through as well in the same message. That was silly. But let me say this by way of personal, practical application for you, beloved. There is a direct connection to your understanding of life, your understanding of your trials, your understanding of how God unfolds his purposes. Let me ask you sympathetically: are you struggling spiritually? Do you maybe lack assurance of your salvation? Is the person and work of Christ not clear in your mind?

Let me ask you this question as a friend. Think about it this way, a little tangent here. You go to a medical professional. You want him to be straight with you. You want someone who's sympathetic to your suffering to help you find the cure and maybe that medical professional has to ask some probing questions. What are you eating? What are you doing? What are you exercising? And those kinds of questions. And he's asking to help diagnose and to bring to the surface the things that need to be known and done. He asks you those things to help you, not to criticize or shame you. Well, in the same way, sometimes a pastor asks questions from the pulpit to help you, even when he knows that it might make you uncomfortable in the moment. Are you struggling spiritually? Do you lack assurance?

Well, let me encourage you to face this next question honestly: have you ever sat down for an extended season in your life to earnestly, deeply read your Bible so that you would know the revelation of God about his Son? Christ and the apostles made the knowledge of revelation essential to being able to understand the gospel. Everything was based on

that. How do you and I expect to have spiritual confidence if we don't know the most basic things about that foundation for ourselves? Maybe you've only looked for Bible texts that you thought could help you in your earthly life or help you in a moment, Favorite Psalm, Romans 8, but never really given yourself to an expansive, deep reading and study of the word of God. Beloved, let me tell you, if you are struggling spiritually and you lack assurance and that's true of you, there you go. There's a direct connection even if you don't see it.

When it comes to church life, beloved, Jesus is Lord and he is the center of the gospel. The gospel is not a message about your self-righteousness. It's not a message about how you can do better. It's not even primarily a message about finding comfort in life as you go through difficulties. The message of the gospel is independent of all of those things and it is a proclamation that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father and that he laid down his life for sinners like you, and God raised him from the dead to show that he is Lord over all and able to save forever those who come to him. Beloved, we must not tailor that message to felt needs, to the pressures of the moment. We must be faithful to Christ. We must be faithful to his gospel because, beloved, it's only as we are faithful to Christ and faithful to the gospel that we are faithful to men as well. If we betray Christ and hide Christ from men for the sake of, you know, inflating numbers and making people feel good, we are wicked people who deserve whatever judgment God would bring upon us. We can't do that. We can't do that. We have to let the message speak for itself.

And so, beloved, in a positive sense, think about it this way, that those of us that have entrusted our souls to Christ and we are resting in him, we know whom we have believed and we're persuaded that he's able to keep that which we've entrusted him until that day, understand how well-grounded your hope is. It's just glorious to contemplate that what God has put in his word – watch this, watch how this develops. Abraham, the man Abraham, lived 4,000 years ago and the writings of Moses, which were the introduction to written revelation 3,500 years ago, and following Moses, prophets came and Ezra came and the Old Testament was finished, and then Christ came and fulfilled it all, and then his appointed spokesmen, the apostles, explained it and taught it and proclaimed it and we believe through their word. Understand what we're saying, beloved, that the faith that we have in Christ is rooted in something that is reflective of the transcendent, eternal purpose of God that he has been working out since creation. Thousands and thousands of years of consistent testimony by his spokesmen undergird the things that we profess and that we believe and if your trust is in Christ, that is how broadly established it is.

We haven't believed in passing fables. God's truth is revealed and it is reliable, and when you understand this method of how the Scripture writers established the Lordship of God, this is what has happened, this is what happens, that method points you to Jesus Christ and him alone. That method shows you the sovereign will of God is being worked out over decades and centuries and millennia regardless of the fluctuating occurrences of men. And when you see that, then you know that what God has promised he will provide. God will do what he has said even if it seems delayed for decades.

The purpose of God stands forever. It cannot be thwarted by man and his loyal love for us will never fail. Old Testament saints waited centuries for the first coming of Christ. New

Testament saints have waited centuries for his still future Second Coming. But beloved, look at the whole picture and understand that no one who waits on Christ will ever be disappointed. Is your hope in him? I trust that it is.

Let's pray together.

*Gracious Father, even as we speak to you, Father, we're just mindful of the fact that we're speaking to the eternal God who works out his purposes over ages without fail, to whom the nations are but a drop in the bucket. Your sovereign majesty, O God, who could not fear, your sovereign love, your sovereign Son, who could not trust. We look to you and we pray, Father, that you would build these things deeply in our hearts, help us to grasp ever more the significance of them, that we might stand firmly rooted and established in Christ, that we might grow to be mature men and women in Christ, Father, with a measure of fullness, a measure of reflection that is worthy of the one who loved us and gave himself up for us. O God, God, God, God, God, please, please keep us from error. Please keep us from a superficial thinking about Scripture, a superficial thinking about Christ where we would be easily led astray. Spare us all of that, God, and graciously by your Spirit lead us to your word written, for it will lead us to your Word incarnate and in your Word incarnate we will be established in a love from which heaven and hell and demons and angels and nothing else could ever separate us from him. Grant that, O God, for each one under the sound of my voice now and into the future. Do that mighty, mighty work of your Spirit through your Word to your eternal glory and to our eternal good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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