

# Jesus Christ and NT Authority

*Building a Christian Mind*

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To begin our time in God's word here this morning, I want to take you for a short little devotional by way of an introduction to the full text to the book of Romans 1, and I just want to encourage the believers among us with just a brief reminder of the very essence of what it means to be a Christian, what is a Christian and who is a Christian and what is the mark of a Christian. One of the good things, I suppose, about living in a decadent world like we do, is that we can see and there are less and less people that are interested in an outward show of religion for the sake of maintaining an appearance of righteousness when the world gives itself up to a pursuit of sin, then it's not as easy and comfortable to just maintain an outward facade of righteousness, holding to a form of godliness but denying its power and having no interest in it. But today I speak, and at this moment I speak to brothers and sisters in Christ trusting the Lord to sort out and apply that rightly to each heart as need be. There's a little phrase that's a couple of clauses that's tucked away in an introductory statement in the book of Romans that I just want to point you to and it does have a carryover effect toward the fullness of what I want to say today.

After Paul has introduced himself and made general statements about the gospel in the first six verses, he turns and identifies the recipients of the letter for to whom it is that he is writing, and he makes a statement that is true not only of the Christians that were in the city of Rome at that time, but he identifies them by unique, distinctive marks that are true of every Christian of all time and I just want to ever so quickly point these things out to you in Romans 1:7 where he says this, "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints." In that brief little introduction there, that formula that by which he speaks to them, are stated profound things that would be easy to miss if you just read through the text really quickly. What is a Christian? Well, first of all, a Christian is someone who is loved by God. Loved by God. Look at it there, "To all those in Rome who are," number 1, "loved by God." To be a Christian is to be someone that God has set his love upon for his own purpose. God brings people into his kingdom, brings us into his family not on account of our works, not on account of any religious rituals that we might have done because we are sinners and there is nothing that we could do, no tears of repentance are adequate to reconcile us to God, there are no rituals that, like baptism or communion or things like that, that you can do and automatically be transferred from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. If you are in Christ today, beloved, it's because God loved you and he loved you from the foundation of the world. He set his love on you. Think about that. And all of your effort and your strivings to please God to realize

that before you were even born, God set his love on you for his own purpose 1 John 4:19 says that we love because he first loved us. He first loved us. It's because God set his love on us, and to be a Christian is to be loved by God and his love is an eternal love by his eternal choice from his eternal purpose, that does not rise and fall as human love does depending upon your conduct and behavior and whether you're worthy of it or not. From the very start you are not worthy of it. We could never be worthy of eternal love.

So to be a Christian is someone that God has set his love upon. Secondly, Paul says there, "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called," well, there's another aspect of being a Christian. It's that God called you and there's two kinds of call that we understand from Scripture. Paul here is not talking about the general call that goes out to all men everywhere through the proclamation of the gospel. All men are called that way and invited freely to come to Christ for salvation from their sins, to enter into the love of God, enter into the purpose of God, enter into the fellowship of God, enter into the service of God. Every man everywhere is called to that but not all respond, do they? You didn't respond the first time you heard the gospel, did you? Well, what made the difference? What distinguishes a true Christian from those who hear outwardly with the ear but remain dead in their hearts? Well, it's that God performs an effective work inside the heart. He makes an effectual call, an effective call. Whereas all men are invited to Christ through a general call that goes out, God works in a particular, specific manner by name with power to create a new heart in that person to draw them to Christ. Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father draw him," the Father calls him. It is, as it were, that he he calls us with – and this is a terrible analogy but it hopefully will communicate – he calls us with an authoritative whistle that says, "You, come to me." And in response to that life-giving command, in response to the work of the Spirit, we come to Christ and we are saved not because we thought this up, not because we decided it was a good idea, but God by a prior work in our hearts powerfully, inwardly, effectively, certainly called us to ensure that we would be saved.

And beloved, the call flows out of his love. When God loved you with an everlasting love, I want you to see that one of the wonderful things about the nature of that love is that he made certain that you would be saved. None of this nonsense about God respecting the free will of man, and he won't, you know, he won't force anyone to be saved. Well, God doesn't force us against our will. He changes our will so that we will come. God loves us enough to make sure that his power and his choice has the operative final say on when you come to Christ and that you will come to Christ. He doesn't leave you to your sinful enmity against God to decide for him. No, he calls you and does a work in your heart to ensure that you would come. I hope you understand the greatness and the wonder of that. That's not something to be resisted because it's contrary to the arminian tendencies that you were taught from your earlier days and from the tendencies of your own carnal heart. That's not something to be resisted and objected to, that's something to be lovingly worshipfully embraced. God loved me with an everlasting love, and at the time of my conversion he effectively called me to be his, and left no room for any other outcome in my heart except that I would most certainly be saved in the end.

That's what it means to be a Christian and the outcome of that, what is the goal of the call? It's that you would be a saint. Now the Catholics have done a horrible disservice to us in creating an idea that a saint was a a super-achiever in the spiritual life and someone that needed to be posthumously recognized as someone that could have had attainment and could be an example and the rest of us yokels can look to that saint and only wish that we were a saint too. Out on all of that falsehood, beloved. Every Christian is a saint because what a saint is, what it means to be a saint is that you have been separated, you have been set apart by God, for God. God takes a sinner, saves him, and in doing so has set him apart for his purposes so that every true Christian is a saint in the sense that he is set apart for the purposes of God and that's true no matter his level of maturity, no matter how long he has been a Christian, no matter the occasional struggles with sin that he comes along with; in our weakness, in our carnality and our occasional lukewarmness, throughout all of that we're constantly, always a saint in the sense that God has set us apart, God is at work in us, and we are set apart for the purpose to exist to advance his purpose and to exalt and advance his praise. That is the purpose of every true Christian. You have been set apart by God for his purpose whether you fully recognize that or live it out or not.

So we're loved by God as a Christian, eternally loved, loved with everlasting love. led by grace that love to know, loved by God, called to be set apart. That's who we are in Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian. And we are loved by God and called saints, we are in this position, we are by very nature of identity because our Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross for us and he redeemed us with his own blood. He reconciled us to God with his once-for-all sacrifice, never to be repeated or extended. There was a reason why Christ cried out on the cross, "It's finished." It's because the sacrifice was done and all had been accomplished that was necessary to secure you for all of eternity into the family of God.

Now having received this wonderful gift, this wonderful position from God, beloved, Scripture tells us that we are to be transformed. Look at Romans 12:2. Romans 12:2. The reality of conversion, the reality of true salvation, belonging to Christ, has a very practical effect on everything about the remainder of our lives. Because we've been loved by God, called by God, that we are saints by nature, set apart for him, set apart by him for him, the outcome, the outworking of this, Paul says in Romans 12:1 is, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Now notice this, this is the pivot point, this is the transition, this is the hinge to the rest of the message. He says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Having been loved by God, having been called by God, having been set apart by God for his purpose, then we have a responsibility to give ourselves and to give our mind over to him, not to dawdle and play around with error and false teaching but to devote ourselves to the truth and to understand the authority by which we receive the revelation of God, and to live in light of it with Jesus as Lord and confident that God is ruling over all and accomplishing his purposes, and that we shut the door, we close the back door and say the only way forward in my life is to move forward in Christ according to his word. We gladly, we voluntarily, we resolutely close off all other options. "Jesus, you are the

way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through you. Jesus, there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved."

And beloved, here in the words of the apostles at the end of John 6, "Lord, where would we go? You and you alone have words of eternal life." Having gone from desperately lost, dominated by Satan, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, dead in our trespasses and sins, to now be loved, called and set apart for God. Don't you see, beloved, that this has a revolutionary impact on every aspect of life and the way that you think and respond to everything else? This isn't checking a box on a card at an evangelism campaign saying, "I've decided to accept Christ as my Savior." No, this is a massive revolution of purpose and thought that changes the entire man for the remainder of his existence and so it's our responsibility once we understand that we've been loved, called and that we are a saint by nature, to give our minds over, to be transformed in the renewal of our minds that we might be what God saved us to be.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this in a somewhat different context, he said, "The whole of the Christian life is the result of what we believe." In other words, how we think is going to determine how we live as Christians. Elsewhere, the great doctor says this. He says and listen to this, I read this and it just exploded off the page in my mind and it's such consistent purpose with everything that we've been trying to do since I came back from my study leave. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "We should not really be able to think at all except in terms of these articles of faith to which we subscribe and which we most sincerely and profoundly believe." We can't think apart from the true faith when we're loved by God, called by him and set apart as a saint. We can't think about anything apart from that whole revolutionary new mindset that we have been born again into; whether we were born again 40 years ago or you were born again 40 days ago everything is new and everything is changed.

And so it is very important for us, therefore, to build a Christian mind. We're in the midst of this long extended series titled "Building a Christian Mind," and showing the biblical way to think, to frame your mind and to think in a right biblical way in response to being a Christian like we have seen from Scripture here today. And what I want you to understand, beloved, this is so very vital, this is not the kind of superficial approach that tells you how to think about the particular political issues of the day. This isn't how to think about what, you know, what the latest spiritual controversy is on social media. That's in so many ways such a waste of time and it is so narrow. Here's the problem with that, whether it's something political which I know that some of you are still wrapped up and captivated by political issues, the political issues of our day or being caught up in whatever the latest controversy is among Christian thinkers or, you know, the latest gossip from people in the Christian church and trying to help you think about how to think like on those kinds of things, beloved, I say those things not to be critical but simply to clear the deck and say that's not what we're doing here. That's not what we're talking about here in this series at all. We're not talking about how to think about specific issues. We're talking about, we're coming to Scripture to learn how to think. How to think, period, what are the foundational principles that frame the way our mind operates. If your mind operates properly according to transcendent biblical principles, then these

other matters of political issues or the passing controversies of the day will fall into their own place as a natural consequence.

And so we're in this so-called mega-series titled "Building a Christian Mind." We've already finished the first series, how to know that God exists. We're in the middle of a second series, how to know the Bible is true, and we're really only beginning it. Still to come is how to know Jesus as Lord, how to know God rules over all, how to know Christianity is true, how to know truth exists, how to know true salvation. And all of those matters, beloved, are absolutely fundamental to the way that you think, the way that your mind operates going forward from this day for however much time the Lord has appointed for you still to live on this earth. And to be able not only to be edified in your own self but to be able to help others around us, to help those that are under our authority, parents to children, elders to people, friend to friend, neighbor to neighbor, to help others to be able to think about these things. And as I've said so many times, beloved, this is not something that is done in a single message. This is not a three-part sermon with, you know, three points and a poem that can equip us for the satanic, dark, wrathful days in which we live. We need to be thoroughly equipped in all of these matters so that we know how to think and how to approach life and it's not simply for our benefit so that we can go through comfortably on, you know, a path littered with rose petals and have it comfortable for ourselves. We're in the midst of a battle, Ephesians 6 says, and we need to be equipped for the battle to help our spouses, to help our children, to help our church, to help others elsewhere to think through these things. And if these matters are of such great eternal consequence, and they are, and God has given us abundant revelation to know what we believe is true and how to know it, then it seems to me that part of our humble response of faith and obedience is to patiently take the time to go through these things one by one and to the best of our ability grasp them, understand them, and be fortified that we might be able to live for the purpose for which we were sanctified by God, set apart for him to be people of a different mind, a different life, a different conduct.

You know, it's a lofty goal. It's a challenging goal. It's a long-term commitment. I realize all that but I, you know, feel pretty small as I say this, but you know, I think it's a goal worth pursuing. I think it's my responsibility to help you and help others along this way because the duty of the church, the supreme duty of a pastor, is not to be everybody's best friend, but the duty of the church, the duty of a pastor, is to build up the saints. When Jesus commissioned Peter in John, 21, he said, "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Tend my lambs." Well, we do that through the preaching of the word of God, through the preaching of Christ. Paul said in Colossians 1:28, I've quoted this multiple times, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ." And we have to do that, beloved. We have to do it. We have no alternative but to do this because Scripture tells us that there will be weak believers, people easily misled who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Well, where will they find their roots, where will they find their strength if not from a church that would instruct them? Will they find it in podcasts and Facebook to build them up in the deep things of God? We must be certain to the extent that it is within our power that the believers at Truth Community Church are established. The howling winds of false

doctrine and worldly thinking pound against the walls of the church, by which I mean they pound against the citadel of your mind. You are tempted by Satan and so easily deceived by Satan and his wiles to be drawn into false doctrine. We need the truth as the defense against that. For better or for worse, for right or wrong in terms of the way that we're choosing to do it, this is our earnest attempt to build you up and to keep you from being tossed and turned by false philosophies, false religion, and as we saw in our opening pastoral prayer, the difficulties of sin and Satan that are constantly eating at the foundation of the church like termites, undermining the foundation and the wood upon which a house is built.

And so today, we continue our critical theme: how to know the Bible is true. That's a long introduction. Scripture says in 2 Timothy 3:16 that, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God," or the woman of God, "may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The claim and assertion of Scripture, Psalm 19:7, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring," or converting, "the soul." The law of God is perfect, it is complete, and in the teaching of Scripture we have everything that we need for life and godliness. Everything that is needed for the conversion of a soul is found in the 66 books of the Bible, 66 and no more. Everything that is necessary for your sanctification, here meaning your growth in Christ as a Christian, everything is found in the word of God. Everything that is necessary for a full assurance of salvation is found in here, not in some other institution or writing that claims to be from God.

Beloved, Scripture is sufficient, Scripture is final because that's what it claims for itself. If there was something else needed, then Scripture would be lying to us when it said it is perfect. If something else was needed, Paul would have been lying to us when he said that everything is there to make a man complete, equipped for every good work. If there was something else needed for your salvation, the word of God would not be sufficient for you. And so this really is a most fundamental issue to come to grips with, is the finality and the sufficiency and the authority of Scripture and that's what we've been dealing with for the past few messages, and a few more messages to go. Because this is so important, I'm going to dwell on this for, you know, two or three more weeks probably, at least. And so Scripture claims to be the word of God so I think it's like 3,800 times in the Old Testament we read, "The word of the Lord came. The prophet spoke and said." You know, and 3,800 times, I mean, the claim of this book to be the word of God cannot be missed and what it teaches about itself then becomes one of the most crucial things about its overall teaching.

Now we've seen as we've gone along, that the ultimate authority by which we receive the Bible as the word of God, the ultimate authority by which we receive God's word as true is based on the Lord Jesus Christ himself. If, beloved, if you've been loved by God, called by him, you've been made a saint by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, if you belong to Christ in that way, if you don't belong to him that way you're not a Christian, that's true of every Christian, then one of the consequences of that, as we've said multiple times, is that Christ himself is our teacher. Jesus said, "Call no man father. You have one teacher." You know, Christ warned us against those who would claim to be, you know, to

be a father to the church. He warns us against that and he says to his disciples in John 13:13, he said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am." Christ is our teacher. Christ is our Lord. Our first question when it comes to the matter of the word of God is what does Jesus say, and what Jesus says is found in this book. Beloved, the written word testifies to the Incarnate Word and the Incarnate Word testifies to the written word. There is a mutually interdependent authority amongst them.

Now God loved us and called us and set us in this glorious position, and now it is our responsibility to grow in it, and so our question is: what does our Lord, what does Christ think about Scripture because what he says will settle the matter for us because he's Lord, he's our teacher. That's the way we view him, he is our final authority, and for him to be Lord over all means that he's Lord over our minds as well. In other words, we are not free – this is going to trouble some of you – we are not free to think independently and contrary to Christ, to think in terms and to hold beliefs that are contrary and contradict what Christ himself taught is a great sin against him. This is not a matter of academic freedom, this is a matter of loyalty and obedience to Christ. He says this is the way to think and our only responsibility is to study that, understand it, and affirm it as our own and defend it against all enemies and all who would contradict because Christ is Lord over all, and that includes our mind. We are to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, strength and mind. We can't divvy up our mind and give some of it over to sin, give some of it over to worldliness, give some of it over to false philosophy or false religion. Christ owns it all and it's our responsibility to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

And so the teaching of Christ is our final authority and we don't apologize for that. That's the way it really is. Christ really is Lord. He really is right in everything that he says and everything that he teaches. And so our responsibility is to study to make ourselves a diligent workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth, not looking for new revelation, not looking for additions to the word of God. He's given us everything that we need. Our responsibility is to study and apply ourselves to this book, to give our mind to this book, to the four corners of this book. And beloved, I think I've said this before, if not guess it doesn't really matter, because I'm going to say it again and if I haven't said it, you need to hear it for the first time. Listen to me carefully, beloved: if Jesus Christ is not the Lord over your mind, there's no reason to think whatsoever that he is the Savior of your soul because when we receive Christ, we receive him in the fullness of his person. He is Lord. He is Savior. He is prophet, priest and king. We receive him for the fullness of all that he is. We don't get to parcel out what we like, "I'll take him for salvation from sin but I'll keep my own way of thinking, my own way of living. I'll pursue my own worldly pursuits without any thought to Christ." That's not true. That's not Christianity, beloved. And for those of you that have heard it presented differently, I thank God for the opportunity to set it before you plainly to the contrary. I'll say it again: if Jesus Christ is not Lord over every aspect of your thinking, here's what I mean by that, if you're conscious of thinking differently than Scripture, thinking differently than Christ, opposing Christ in your mind and unwilling to submit yourself to him as the Lord over your mind, there's no reason to think he's the Savior of your soul

because true saving faith apprehends and receives Christ for all that he is without, you know, without trying to receive the benefits that we like with one hand while pushing away with the other hand his authority over us. It doesn't work that way. We receive him with both hands. We receive his authority. We receive his Savior-hood gladly, gladly in recognition of his love for us, in recognition of our desperate condition apart from him.

You know, I'm sure that some find this difficult to accept but, beloved, it all boils down to the person of Christ. Do you say that Christ is Lord? Good, I'm glad you do. The implication of that is that he's the Lord over your mind and has authority to tell you how to think and how to believe. This is a working out of New Testament Christianity. Scripture comes to us and commands us. These are not suggestions. These are not, you know, competing papers offered at an academic society. This is not a cafeteria where you take the beef but reject the chicken that you don't like. God makes a comprehensive claim through his word on all of our mind.

Now last time on Tuesday and last Sunday also I guess, I kind of lose track, we've seen that Christ affirms Scripture in general as perfectly true. He said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." A statement of the utter unchangeably of Christ. Matthew 5:17 and 18, not a jot or tittle will pass away from the law until all is accomplished. After his resurrection, Luke 24, he said, you know, "All the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets, they all point to me." So he affirmed Scripture in general. Last time on Tuesday, we saw that he affirmed the Old Testament and we saw that it was very, very powerful the way that Christ used the Old Testament. He affirmed its history in general terms. He affirmed, and we looked at three specific examples of all of these points, he affirmed its history generally. He affirmed the controversial aspects of history like Noah and the flood and Jonah and creation. He affirmed its ethical teaching. And we saw also that in his hour of crises in his humanity, in his temptation, and as he hung on the cross, what was on his mouth except the Old Testament texts. "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit," quoting the Old Testament as he's giving up his life on the cross. Well, all of those things combined show very powerfully that Christ affirmed and received the authority of the Old Testament and affirmed its historical value, not simply its teaching on faith and morals. In fact, the history that he pointed to we saw was he used that to establish and to advance and to assert the revelatory purposes of God and the very nature of his own person. Scripture's teaching on this is very profound and if you've not yet heard that message from Tuesday, you need to read the transcript or listen to it because it is very essential to what we're establishing here, how to know the Bible is true. We look at what Christ did in his humanity, we see how he handled the Old Testament, and we're left with no other conclusion but its absolute reliability, authority, its inerrancy, its infallibility and everything that Christ said about the Old Testament advanced it as an authority in our lives.

Generally speaking, we see it in the Old Testament, now we come to Christ and the authority of the New Testament. The New Testament. Here, beloved, the nature of the argument, the nature of our understanding of how Christ affirms the authority of the New Testament, is different from the Old Testament, and that's to be expected. If you just think about it in the simplest of terms. There was the Old Testament. There were 400



years of silence from the prophet Malachi until Christ came, or until John the Baptist came, you could say. Christ lived and died, rose again. And then after his ascension, the New Testament was written between 45-50 AD and 95 AD with the book of Revelation. And so when Christ lived and died and rose again, the New Testament as we have it now was still future. So he couldn't say, "I affirm these New Testament writings," because they weren't yet in existence. The Old Testament was so he could quote and assert and defend them. The New Testament was future at the time of the ascension of Christ.

And so how do we understand the teaching of Christ to indicate the authority of the New Testament? Well, what we're about to enter into over the next 3 or 4-5 messages or so, beloved, this is some of my favorite biblical teaching of all time. I've taught, you know, a few different things over the years but to teach about this theme on the New Testament and the authority of the apostles is one of the great treasures in Scripture and it's one of the things that is nearest and dearest to my heart, and it's something that's easy to miss. And I say this to help you and to encourage you to build a sense of anticipation, there are many people in the church that have never heard thorough teaching about the authority of the apostles and the difference that that makes in the way that we think about things. Everything about new revelation, whether it's coming through Mormonism or the New Apostolic revelation, or through additions to written authority through the Catholic Church and their tradition and all of the nonsense that they have put out over the centuries on those things, all of those things, beloved, we discern and we are able to decisively and confidently reject when we understand these things that you and I are going to be looking at over the next two or three weeks as we understand and come to grips with the nature of the apostles and how Christ established them for the unique purpose, the non-repeatable purpose that they had in God's revelatory program.

So here's the bottom line summary statement, and then we'll unpack this. When it comes to Jesus Christ and the authority of the New Testament, here's what you need to understand: during his earthly ministry, Jesus pre-authenticated the New Testament. He pre-authenticated the New Testament. I'll say it a different way, he established it in advance. I'll say it a different way, he made provision for it before he ascended into heaven. I'll say it a different way, he laid down the principles upon which it would be built after his departure and in every way he guaranteed that the New Testament would – oh, this is so important – in every way during his earthly ministry, Jesus did everything that was necessary to guarantee that an authoritative New Testament would come into existence through the ministry of the apostles, and you will see this without question by the time we're done in a couple of weeks on this matter. There's so much here. There are several messages. Today what remains is just an introduction to the whole matter. So I did an introduction from Romans 1:7 to an introduction that's going to introduce other things later on.

How did Jesus provide for the New Testament in advance? Well, point number 1 here this morning: he prepared for its writing. He prepared for its writing, and he prepared for it by telling his disciples, telling his inner circle what was going to come soon after his departure. Here we need to look at the gospel of John, and I invite you to turn to John 14, 15 and 16. John 14, 15 and 16. And because there's much more to come in coming weeks,

this is just going to be a little bit of an overview that we'll flesh out in coming messages. Jesus Christ made provision for the New Testament Canon on the eve of his crucifixion. The disciples are gathered around him. He established the Lord's Supper at that time. Judas was identified as the traitor and sent away. And now he's there with the 11 remaining ones and he's preparing them for his coming absence in the flesh and helping them understand what is to come and what their responsibilities will be after he is gone.

It's essential to remember that, by and large, the apostles were ordinary men, you know, and to borrow the language from John MacArthur's book, they were 12 ordinary men. You know, there was a tax collector. There were fishermen there. The apostles were not taken from the rank of the academic elite at the time at all. They were ordinary men like you and me. How, how, how is it possible men of flesh like you and me, how is it possible that these uneducated Gentiles produced writings that revolutionized the world that speak with the power of God and the authority of God? How is it possible that men like fishermen could be so mightily used? Well, Christ made provision for it, and he told them and he told us in advance of how this process was going to work.

Notice John 14:24. I told you earlier that we receive Jesus as our teacher and that that is essential to being an actual true Christian, and that we must receive his word as it is or we do not belong to him. Well, in verse 23, John 14:23, that's exactly what Christ said. He said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." To keep, to have them, to receive them, to protect them, to own them, to take ownership, not in the sense that we own them but that they own us. We keep them. Jesus says, "Examine the way you look at my word and you get a good idea of whether you're a disciple of mine or not."

Now Jesus transitions in verse 25. He says, "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you." So he's anticipating his departure and he looks to the future. Notice the future tense in verse 26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Oh, that changes everything. Jesus tells these apostolic representatives of his, he says, "After I'm gone something is going to happen. The Father is going to send the Holy Spirit, the third member of the blessed Trinity, and that Spirit is going to have a ministry in your life." And he's speaking particularly to the 11. This is not a promise directly made to the whole church or anything like this. He's speaking to the 11 in front of him and he says, "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." In other words, when it came time to write the gospels, when it came time to write the epistles, Jesus provided and sent the Holy Spirit to be with these disciples so that as they taught, as they wrote, the Spirit would guide them. They were not subject to the limitations of human memory like you and I are as they were writing the Scripture. The omniscient Spirit of God was with them and upon them, guiding them so that they would remember exactly what Christ said and record it for us without error.

He pre-authenticated. Jesus prepared for the writing of the New Testament Canon. This is important enough that he goes over it again. Chapter 15 verses 26 and 27. He's still in the Upper Room. He's still speaking to the 11. He says, "when the Helper comes," it's a reference to the Holy Spirit as you'll see, "when the Helper comes whom I will send to you," who's the "you"? The 11 in front of him. "I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth." You see in this one verse the whole Trinity is at work here. The Father. You see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "the Spirit who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." The Holy Spirit will supernaturally testify to your mind, he says to the disciples and as a result of the ministry of the Spirit within them, there will be an outward proclamation that comes from the apostles. Verse 27, "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning." From the beginning of his earthly ministry. Beloved, beloved, none of us today can say that that's true of us. None of us have been with him from the beginning of his earthly ministry like these 11 were. There's no one like that in existence today. That's why there are no more apostles. That's why there is no such thing as apostolic succession. These are promises and authority that were given to those that were in his inner circle at the time and Christ says, "the Spirit will bear witness about me to you," to them.

And then in chapter 16, look across the page or turn the page, chapter 16, verses 12 through 14, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." He says this is not the time and place for all that needs to be said to be said to you. And so there's a future dynamic that Christ promises. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will," notice the future tense, Jesus preparing for what is to come after his resurrection. "When the Spirit of truth comes," I say to you 11 in front of me, "he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." And once again we see the Trinitarian nature of everything that Jesus is saying here. Verse 15, "All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

And so in a triplet form here Jesus has promised to the disciples the work of the Holy Spirit in them after he is gone. It's not simply that he's going to indwell them to comfort them in their problems, he's coming with the power and the purpose and the assignment to assist them in giving forth the revelation of God in the New Testament. One writer says this, and I quote, "This all indicates a special superintending work of the Holy Spirit whereby the disciples would be able to remember and record without error all that Jesus had said."

Now beloved, step back for a moment, think about the fact that you are loved, called by God, you're a saint of God, and realize the magnificent provision that the Lord Jesus Christ has made for you and for us and has made for his people for all time in this blessed book that we know as the 66 and no more books of the Bible. Jesus called men to be his disciples and then he supernaturally through a Triune work of God, he supernaturally provided for them to be able to record for us all that we needed to know about what Jesus said and did and taught. And there's this colossal work and this colossal plan of God in operation that the Spirit of God would come and work in the minds of these men and

through the minds of these men to give us a book that we could know is true and could rely and stake our eternal destiny on. That's what Jesus is talking about and what he equipped the apostles to do, and when you understand then and one of the things that you do is you fall down in grateful worship. "Really? Lord, you did that? You gave us a book that would transcend and that would never pass away? The earth on which we walk and the buildings in which we enter into, they're all going to fall down and be destroyed and consumed with fire at the end but I have in my hand something of eternal endurance, and this is what you provided for us? O Christ, you're far too good. You're far too kind. You're far too gracious. The grace of having a book like this far exceeds anything that I could have asked or thought, certainly is infinitely beyond what I actually deserve from your holy righteous judgment."

And so, yes, beloved, and now I'm speaking to you, not praying, as it were, in the middle of my message. Yeah, beloved, when you understand these things this book becomes the most precious thing of them all. Nothing else matters in comparison to the authority and sufficiency and the finality of this book. When you realize the great purpose, the great work, the great provision that Christ undertook to make sure that we would have it and providentially preserve it through the millennia so that you and I could gather on a Sunday morning in Cincinnati, OH, as one aspect of his overall eternal purpose, you and I could gather in a building on the east side of Cincinnati and read and hear the word of God for ourselves and have the plan of eternal redemption set forth before us in an authoritative, inerrant way that we could base our eternal destiny upon, and that having belonged to him and having been chosen by him and being the object of his saving love and mercy, to be able to know him through his word, yeah, I get animated about that. I feel a great weight of responsibility to teach and defend a book like that. I don't know what else to do. I don't know how over time, year by year, decade by decade, anyone could presume to teach the word and not at some point be so captivated by this in his mind and in his affections that he has to let it out. As Jeremiah said, "There's a fire in my bones and I'm weary from holding it in." It's not just pastors, it's men and women like you who love Christ. It's men and women like you who've been redeemed from darkness of false religion and the word of God changed you, didn't it? The word of God revolutionized your life. The Spirit worked and opened your eyes to the truth of this book and you looked at what you believed in the past and you said, "I now know that is false and now I have the truth and the truth is precious to me." And whereas before wandered in darkness and you feared the coming of death, not knowing what would happen to you, having been threatened with thousands and tens of thousands of years in purgatory to burn off the sins that somehow Jesus' sacrifice wasn't enough to take care of. Now you read the book of Hebrews and you say, "It's once for all and, you know, he did it for all time. One sacrifice is enough." And your heart is filled with joy and peace and confidence. "I am his and he is mine," you say.

Well, there's something in you, those of you that know that, there's something in you that, you know, that takes this book metaphorically, figuratively, if not literally, and just holds it close to your chest and say, "This is the most precious thing of them all. Heaven and earth will pass away, but this word, this word won't. The Lord who saved me, he'll never leave me. I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Well, beloved, how do you know those promises except in this precious word? Of course it's precious. And so how do we know the Bible is true? We've only started. I'm going to stop here for today. I have no idea what time it is. But what we see here is this, is that in a comprehensive manner in what we know as the Old Testament and in the New Testament, we look at the work and ministry and teaching of Christ and we see that he provided for us an inerrant word and he showed us by his teaching, his precept, and his example that we are to follow, that we embrace the Old Testament in that same way and we find the foundation for the revelatory purpose and program of God in its pages and we do not question its authority. We do not question its truthfulness at any point that it asserts and affirms. And now we look at the New Testament and we see that there was this Triune promise, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this great work of the ineffable Godhead saying in advance while Christ was on earth, "There will be a work of the Holy Spirit that will guide you into all that I taught and all that you need to know, and nothing will be missing."

And so we look to Christ as our teacher and Lord. We look and see and understand the process by which he did it. He establishes the apostles as ones uniquely and exclusively authorized to speak on his behalf to give revelation on his behalf. The church that comes later, the faithful church, what we do today, we don't give new revelation. We have no new word from God. We simply come to the Scriptures and teach what it has already said and in that God has given us a great and perfect gift. That's why, beloved, this is why, in part, that we believe that the Bible is true. It's why in the purpose of our heart whether we would rise to the occasion, the challenge if it happened or not, but in principle we realize that if need be, we would lay down our lives for this book, just like so many of our brethren in the centuries that have preceded us have done. Better to die than to deny this book. Better to die than to undermine it. Better to die than to sacrifice and to give up what we have in the treasure of this precious word. Better to die, beloved, than to abandon the Bible.

The Bible is true. We know it by the word of Christ, and as we'll see in future messages, we know it by the internal work and testimony of the Spirit to our hearts. To the believing heart the Spirit gives us an inner assurance that testifies to the magnificence and the authority and the truth of what he himself produced. And there is no higher authority than God himself. There is no higher authority than Christ. Christ authenticates this work and the Spirit now today in believing hearts asserts and affirms its authority in a way that goes beyond anything else that any other argument could do. One writer said this, "God speaks in the words of the Bible in such a manner as to remove all doubt as to its divine origin, character and authority." In the final analysis, only God can be an adequate witness to himself. All other testimony, such as historical evidence or philosophical deduction, can at best possess only secondary value. Scripture doesn't need someone else to tell us that it's true. Scripture is sufficient. Scripture is its own witness to its truthfulness and authority. And here we stand, beloved. We can do no other. God help us. Amen.

Let's pray together. As we bow in prayer in response to the teaching of the word of God, my dear friend, let me just ask you by way of application: are you in the love of God? Has Jesus Christ saved you? Has the Spirit of God set you apart for the praise and purpose of God? Oh, don't take these things for granted. If the majesty of God's word has struck you today with fresh power, cry out to him. Cry out to him like I did some 40 years ago, "God, I always thought I was a Christian but now I'm not sure. I thought I knew the truth but I'm so overwhelmed by the majesty of the testimony of the Spirit to my heart that I just plead with you to make me your own in body soul and spirit. In the fullness of whatever mental faculties you've given me, I give it all to you. Just make me your own. Save me based on the redemptive work of the cross and the resurrection. My friend, seek peace with God alone, in Christ alone, based on the Scripture, the 66 and no more books of the Bible alone.

*O God, may you work this out according to the need of each heart in the blessed name of our risen Lord we pray. Amen.*

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