

98-10-23b Colossians

We're ready now to resume in Colossians chapter 1, verse 27 and 28. Again, after pointing out the goal of Christ in you, the hope of glory, Paul goes on to say, Him we preach. What does it mean to preach Christ? What is the content? If we had a little quiz and we got a blank piece of paper out and we said, Well, to preach Christ, here are the things to cover.

What would be the content of that preaching? Keeping in mind, of course, that you can't give yourself an easy out by saying, Well, it's the gospel. It's the evangelistic message of Christ as Savior. Because Paul is talking here about his ministry to churches and to believers.

Because he is talking to people that he wants to present perfect in Christ. He warns them and teaches them. And this warning and teaching ministry is to believers, just as he is doing in this letter for the Colossians.

So if you're going to preach Christ to believers, what are you going to talk about? And turning it around, what should we know about Christ because we have heard teaching and preaching about Christ? What are the things that we can come to understand about Him? I'm going to give you 10 or 11 things that Scripture has to say about preaching Christ. You can go back as early as the first generation of the church after Jesus was crucified and rose again and ascended. And you had Peter and James and John and so forth in the beginning part of Acts.

They preached Christ. They fulfilled their commission given by the Lord to proclaim Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the outermost parts of the earth. So if you go to Acts chapter 3 and verse 20, you find Peter preaching Christ.

What does he say? He is talking, first of all, we find out who the audience is in verse 17. He says, Yet now, brethren, I know that when you crucified the Lord, you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Repent, therefore, and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before. Heaven must receive Him until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. So one of the things that we see here is that Christ is preached as the Messiah to Israel.

He was preached to these brethren of Peter before. The prophets bore witness. Jesus Christ, in coming to Israel, fulfilled the prophets, fulfilled the teaching of the Old Testament that these people were possessed of.

As a side note, you might notice in verse 19, what's the first word there? What's His exhortation? He says, Repent, therefore. I've been reading a fascinating series of articles in the Grace

Evangelical Society journal, which is a little short, usually four to six page newsletter that comes out quarterly. But they've been running a series of articles by Zane Hodges on the idea of repentance.

What does it mean to repent? And his contention, if you're not familiar with Zane Hodges, he is one of the foremost Greek scholars in the world and of this century. He was on the committee that translated the New American Standard, I think, and did a commentary on why they made the translational choices that they made and so forth. He's up in the ionosphere of biblical scholars.

He's a really wonderful scholar. He lives right here in Dallas. But his series, he's making the point in this series of articles, and I think making it very well, that repentance, when you find the word repent, I should probably back up and say the whole purpose of the Grace Evangelical Society is to stand up and correct the wrong things that are being said by people who believe in lordship salvation.

It is an anti-lordship salvation group. And what they want to do is be sure that the message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, is preserved and isn't distorted by people who misunderstand and go for lordship salvation. So that was the reason the organization came into being.

Zane Hodges is up in the hierarchy of this. And in the course of it, they publish a lot of scholarly articles. So he's talking against, in this article, lordship salvation that says you've got to acknowledge Christ as Lord.

There's something beyond faith, beyond placing your reliance, that faith incorporates an idea of obedience, incorporates an idea of fruit, like we were talking about last time. So in this article, he's pointing out and substantiating, as only he can do it, that repent, when you find it in the New Testament, always is used of believers. He says, and he is in the process in this series of articles of demonstrating, that there is not a single case in the New Testament and indeed in the entire Bible where the term repent is used of unbelievers.

And this is a wonderful, welcome encouragement to me because a lot of times you go out and you see things in scripture and you teach them and you feel like you're John the Baptist out in the wilderness or something. Of course, not to compare myself to John, but you feel like you're all alone. Maybe I could be Jim Jones in Jonestown or something.

But if you can't find anyone else who has come to the same conclusions or it's difficult to find anyone, it's great because we have understood for a long time that believers are called to change their minds. We don't believe that because you're saved you're automatically going to persevere, that you're automatically going to be on an upward trend just by virtue of the fact that God is at work in you to will and to do his good purpose, that everything's going to be great, that there's a volitional component. We have to choose.

We're responsible. We have to make that decision that we talked about in the last session before the break about not only having an intellectual agreement with what the Bible says, but entrusting ourselves to it, acting on the basis of it, relying upon it in our daily life. This is where our position becomes our experience in Christ.

So this is an exceedingly wonderful thing that this message is being brought out in this series of articles by Zane Hodges. Repentance is for believers. And this is what Peter is saying here in Acts chapter 3, repent therefore and be converted.

Repent therefore and turn around. Probably 999 out of 1,000 believers would tell you, well, he's talking to them as unbelievers telling them get saved, be converted. We use the term conversion for salvation.

But as we studied in the book of Romans, a lot of Israel were composed of Old Testament saints. And for them the issue was acknowledge, recognize Christ as the Messiah and change your mind. Get with the plan of God and the kingdom of God.

Change your mind with regard to Christ. Paul on the road to Damascus didn't go from unbeliever to believer. He went from Old Testament saint to New Testament saint and apostle.

Change your mind. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads, to kick against the sharp needles. Why was it hard for him to kick? Because he had the weight of Old Testament testimony bearing against him.

He had conviction from the Holy Spirit that he wasn't in the right. And Jesus says, you're persecuting me. You know it's been hard to kick against these goads.

What's the matter with you? And it's a change of mind. Saul, when he becomes Paul on the Damascus road, does just what Peter's talking about here. He repents.

He changes his mind. Believers are called to repentance, not unbelievers. It is not necessary.

It is not a component of saving faith for an unbeliever to repent. This is another common mistake that's made when people embark on evangelism. They say, you've got to eschew your sinful ways.

You've got to turn your back on sin. You've got to reform. You've got to be willing to give up your bad habits.

You've got to repent. You've got to change your mind. That is a necessary thing as a believer to leave off with the world, to set your sights on heavenly things and so forth.

But if you slice it finely, it is not a component of salvation. Salvation is trust in Christ. It isn't trust in your Christ and change your mind about sin.

Trust in Christ and get rid of your evil habits. Trust in Christ and anything. It's trust in Christ.

Repentance is something we're called to do as believers. You've got to be a believer to be called to that. So this is another scripture that reinforces our understanding of the generation of Israelites to whom Christ came, to whom he ministered and taught as believers.

Why did he warn? Why did he teach? Why did he preach to his generation? Because they're the people of God and they have a responsibility that they are not fulfilling. He's not trying to evangelize them. He is trying to call them to their responsibility as believers.

So this is what Peter says. Repent and be converted so that your sins may be blotted out. This is confession of sin.

Change your mind. Acknowledge your transgressions. This is a function of believers.

This is not a component of salvation. So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. He's not trying to convince them that the Lord exists.

It's a different... And notice in verse 20, And that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before. Christ was preached to you before. He's the Messiah to Israel.

So number one in the components of preaching Christ, Christ is the Messiah to Israel. In section of Acts chapter 3, Peter says, Look, he is the subject of the Old Testament prophetic utterances. He is the Messiah.

You didn't recognize him when he came. But he's Israel's Messiah. So preaching Christ is to recognize and acknowledge and come to understand his role as the King of Israel.

Have you ever found the phrase in your Bible anywhere in the New Testament, Jesus is the King of the Church? There's a lot of sort of loose references made, especially in Christian music and so forth. Crown him with many crowns and so forth. But talking about the kingship of Christ, Jesus Christ is not our King.

He has a lot of things to us, but he is the King of Israel. He's the Davidic King. He is the Covenant King, the Son of David.

Technically speaking, and obviously we acknowledge, and this is not to just be splitting hairs, but we have to remember what our relationship to Christ is. He is the firstborn among many brethren to the Church. He is the Head of all things to the Church.

He is the Groom to the Bride, which is the Church. But nowhere in the New Testament do you have kingship of Christ applied to the Church. That's not the view that we are to take of the Lord Jesus.

So that's free, no charge. Peter reminds Israel that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. So that's our first aspect of the preaching of Christ, and all of us need to understand his relationship to Israel.

It doesn't apply directly to us, but it is a feature about Christ that we need to understand. You turn the page over to Acts chapter 5 and verse 42, you find once again that daily in the temple and in every house they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Anointed One.

This is his role, his relationship to Israel. If you want to be precise, Jesus is technically not our Messiah. Messiah is the definition of his relationship to Israel.

So that's the first aspect. He is Israel's Messiah. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant promises to Israel.

And through him all of the Old Testament covenant promises, going all the way back to Adam and to Abraham, and extending down through Moses and David and so forth, all of those Old Testament covenant promises are fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. Secondly, again staying in Acts, look at Acts chapter 8 verse 5, as we see the beginnings of the preaching of Christ. Acts chapter 8, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

Now, here's something slightly different. Here are the Samaritans. These are not Israelites.

Philip has gone to the Samaritans. Remember Jesus' words? Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Here's Philip preaching in Samaria Jesus as the Christ.

Who are the Samaritans? They're sort of half and half, aren't they? They're half-caste Israelites. They're a mixture of Israelite and Gentile. And Philip is preaching Christ to them.

The multitudes of one accord, heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles. There's great joy in that city in verse 8. Look down at verse 35. After Philip has done all of this, he's responding to the word of an angel in verse 26 that says, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.

This is desert. So he arose and went, in verse 27, a man of Ethiopia, eunuch of great authority, under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, had charge of her treasury, came to Jerusalem to worship, was returning, sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Now, this story, you remember Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch and so forth.

What must I do? What does this mean? Let's get baptized and so forth. But we typically miss that last phrase in verse 27. Why was the Ethiopian eunuch even there for Philip to meet? Why was he there? He had gone to Jerusalem to worship.

He's got his own personal copy of the book of Isaiah in his lap. Is this man a believer or just sort

of an interested observer? He's made the trip. You know where Ethiopia is down in Africa.

He's made the trip from Ethiopia all the way up, round through Egypt, up into Israel, has gone to Jerusalem for the express purpose of worship. He's got his own copy of the Old Testament scriptures, the book of Isaiah, that he's reading. Nobody made him.

He's got it open, and he's puzzling it out. He's trying to figure it out. This Ethiopian eunuch is already a believer.

He's an Old Testament saint. He worships God. He studies the scriptures.

How much evidence do we need? He's returning from having worshiped God in Jerusalem. He's puzzling over Isaiah. It's a long, hot, dusty ride there.

Sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Nobody sits down and reads Isaiah for fun. It's not one of these easygoing things like 1 Samuel or something where you've got a lively story, Exodus, got miracles and plagues and things.

Go read Isaiah, and we're talking some pretty heavy prophecy and theology in there. The Spirit said to Philip in verse 29, Go near and overtake this chariot. Philip ran to him and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah.

Of course, you've got a little supernatural involvement there for a man to overtake a chariot. He's going to get the Elijah gift and running very fast. He overtakes it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah.

This man is not only reading, he's reading out loud. He's reading it to himself. Now, do they speak Hebrew in Ethiopia? This man has been interested enough in the Word of God that apparently he has learned Hebrew.

He's an Ethiopian, but he knows Hebrew because he's reading this out loud, unless perhaps he's reading it in the Septuagint. But in either case, he has learned a foreign language. Neither Greek nor Hebrew are native to Ethiopia, but this man has learned a biblical language so that he can study the Scripture on his own.

I think it's fairly obvious, if we observe the details here, that this Ethiopian is an Old Testament saint. He cares very deeply about God, travels all the way to Jerusalem, is studying the Scriptures. Philip hears him reading this out loud.

As he overtakes the chariot, he says, Do you understand what you are reading? He said, How can I, unless someone guides me? He asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was thus, and this is from Isaiah 53, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, as a lamb before its shearers is silent. So he opened not his mouth.

In his humiliation, his justice was taken away. And who will declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. That's Isaiah 53, 7 and 8. So the eunuch answered Philip in Acts 8, 34, and said, I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of some other man? Philip opened his mouth and, beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

What is the subject of Isaiah 53? To answer our question, what does it mean to preach Christ? What does it mean to preach Jesus? Isaiah 53 preaches substitutionary atonement. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer. His justice was taken away.

His life was taken from the earth. You go on and read the rest of Isaiah 53, and you find that throughout that chapter, the prophet emphasizes that the one who will come is going to be the substitute. He is going to bear the sins of the people.

He is going to be bruised on their behalf. So to preach Christ, number one, is to recognize his relationship as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises to Israel, the Messiah. Secondly, to preach Christ, is to preach his ministry, his accomplishment of God's plan and purpose in being the substitute.

Substitutionary atonement. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. You find this again if you go over to Acts chapter 17 and verse 3. We probably don't need a whole lot of substantiation.

I think we're probably convinced that this is inherent in understanding Christ. But you find Paul, as his custom was in Acts 17.2, going into Thessalonica where there's a synagogue of the Jews. He goes into them and for three Sabbaths, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

So he's in Thessalonica, which is a Gentile city, a city dominated by Greek culture. But he goes to the synagogue of the Jews and for three Sabbaths, three Saturdays, he reasons with them from the Scriptures. And what does he do in verse 3? Explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.

And saying, this Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ. So he's talking to Jews and he's saying, this is the Christ. This fulfills number one and number two of what we're talking about, doesn't it? He explains to them that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures and he had to suffer and die.

Paul demonstrates this from the Old Testament Scriptures to these Jews in the synagogue in Thessalonica. So to preach Christ, it's to understand first of all his identity as a Messiah of Israel. Secondly, the need for him to suffer and die as our substitute.

Isaiah 53 and so on. Thirdly, again in Acts, going back to chapter 9 and verse 20, you have Paul, after he has gone and visited Ananias and received his sight back from the Damascus Road and so forth. The scales fall from his eyes in Acts 9.18. He received his sight.

He arose and was baptized. When he had received food, by the way, Saul at his conversion from Old Testament to New Testament saint gets baptized. The Ethiopian eunuch after his conversion from Old Testament saint to New Testament saint gets baptized.

So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Then in verse 20, immediately he preached to Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God.

Now here's another aspect of preaching Christ. His identity as the Son of God. This is distinct from the first two things we covered.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I would go into this in more detail, except that in Colossians chapter 1, we have examined that at some length. Remember in verses 14 through 23, Jesus is presented by Paul, standing in heaven as the Creator, the Son of God, fullness of deity and bodily form, looking earthward.

And then in the second half of that section, from earth looking back toward heaven, he's also the firstborn from among the dead. And so this is part of what Paul preaches. Christ is the Son of God.

He is the one who bridges the gap between God and man. He is the Son of man. He is the Son of God.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. So this is a part of preaching Christ. Again, you could go to Colossians 1, 14 through 23 to have that preaching in more detail.

Fourth, if we go to Acts chapter 10, verse 36, part of preaching Christ is recognizing that peace with God comes through Christ. Once again, this is Peter preaching to Cornelius' household. In Acts chapter 10, verse 34, Peter opened his mouth and said, In truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality.

This is partiality between Jews and Gentiles. But in every nation, verse 35, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, that word you know which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached, how God anointed Jesus, and so forth.

So, He is our peace. We have references. We just studied the peace of God a lesson or two ago.

This is a part of preaching Christ, that concept of peace. Christ in you, the hope of glory, is characterized by peace in you. The word in you, as we have just seen.

So this is a part of preaching Christ. Peace with God. This is reconciliation.

Peter says, I've seen that this is true. This was preached in Judea. This idea of peace with God was preached to Israel.

We find that in Acts 10.36. If you go over to chapter 11 and verse 20, Some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene who when they had come to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. So you have the same message of peace that Peter talks about to Cornelius.

He says, you know, this message of peace that was preached to Israel has also been preached to the Gentiles. I see that God is not a respecter of persons. He's not looking at national distinction anymore.

And so then immediately after that, in 11.20, you have men preaching the message of peace. Turn over in Acts 13.38 and we find a fifth element of preaching Christ. Acts 15.38 You can start here in verse 36.

You have the contention about John Mark whether he should stay with the... I'm sorry, I said 15, I mean 13.38. 13.38 of Acts. Once again, you have the preaching of Paul substantiating from the Old Testament Scriptures who Jesus is. And in verse 36, David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.

But he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. And by him, everyone who believes is justified from all things which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Remember, our study in Romans justification is being declared righteous. This is experiential righteousness. Old Testament saints could not be declared righteous by the works of the law.

By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. He's talking here to Israel. He's treating them as Old Testament saints.

He says the law could not make you righteous. You couldn't be declared righteous by the law. You can be declared righteous.

You can have the forgiveness of sins and the declaration of righteousness through Christ. So this is a part of preaching Christ. Forgiveness of sins and justification.

Abraham believed God. It was credited to him for righteousness. It was accounted to him for righteousness.

Forgiveness of sin, imputation of righteousness comes through Christ. This is a part of the preaching of Christ. That's our point there.

In Acts 17-18, we have the idea of resurrection. This is our fifth point. The fourth point was peace

with God, forgiveness of sins, declaration of righteousness.

I could have probably split those out, but I would have made too many points. So peace with God, declaration of righteousness or justification, forgiveness of sins. That's a fourth element.

The fifth element is resurrection, Acts 17-18. Certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered Paul while he was there in Athens. Some of them said, what does this babbling want to say? Others said, he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.

Why did they say that? Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. He said there is life after death. Jesus Christ is the means of eternal life.

Resurrection is a part of the message of Christ. To preach Christ is to come to understand resurrection. You may recall that several of these things are in the list of basic things that we studied over in Hebrews 6. Not laying again the foundation of repentance, change of mind away from dead works, repentance for believers, faith toward God, faith is the means of justification, laying on of hands, resurrection is in that list.

All of these things are a part of preaching Christ. You can find this also, of course, the great chapter on resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. If you remember that 1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter, you should remember 1 Corinthians 15 as the resurrection chapter.

The sixth point about Christ whom we preach has to do with strength for obedience. We hear that these things are so. We intellectually assent to them.

We know that this is our calling, that we want to glorify Christ in our bodies. We want to fulfill that hope of glory. Where do we find the strength for it to happen in our lives? We find this in Romans chapter 16 verse 25.

Romans 16. This is in a passage that is easy to miss if you're reading through the chapter. It's toward the end of the book.

It's right in the benediction of Romans. If you've survived 16 chapters of Romans, you're ready for the benediction and we sometimes don't pay real close attention. But what does Paul say in Acts 16.25? Now unto him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.

According to the preaching of Jesus Christ that Paul does, God is able to establish you, to strengthen you. According to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began. Where does that establishing, where does that strength come from? It comes from faith in that teaching.

The revelation of the mystery. It has been kept secret since the world began, but in verse 26 it has now been made manifest by the prophetic scriptures has been made known to all nations

according to the commandment of the everlasting God and what is the purpose? For obedience of the faith or obedience to the faith depending on how you want to phrase that. Obedience that accompanies faith.

Obedience that is a result of faith. It is not a part of faith. It is not inherent to faith, but it is obedience that should spring from faith.

So how do we get this faith that enables God to declare us righteous? It conforms us to the image of Christ. We have to know the truth. Remember those two components from Warfield.

You have to know the evidence and then having known it and perceived it and agreed to it intellectually, now we have to make that further step of relying upon it. It has to make a difference. In our day-to-day decisions, do we really believe the promises of God? Is it a reality so that we change our course in the light of it, on the basis of it, because we know it to be true? If we agree with it, but it doesn't really make a difference, we are possessed of knowledge, but we are not possessed of faith.

So this is a part of preaching Christ. Strength for the obedience as being established for the obedience of faith. The seventh thing, preaching Christ is preaching the power and wisdom of God.

You find this in 1 Corinthians 1.23. Jews request a sign. Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified.

To the Jews, a stumbling block. To the Greeks, foolishness. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, we preach Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Paul can present this evidence. He can preach the truth. The Holy Spirit can convince, can give us insight into the truth.

But until we rely upon it, place our faith in it, it does not become the power of God and the wisdom of God. But to those who are called, to those who recognize the calling and say, I'm going to seize and lay hold of that calling, it is the power and the wisdom of God. 2 Corinthians 4.5, when you preach Christ, He is preached as Lord.

Here we skirt the territory of the Lordship Salvation people. 2 Corinthians 4.5, Paul clarifies what has been muddled by those who try to make the Lordship of Christ something that must be acknowledged, understood, and assented to as a part of salvation. Paul says, We do not preach ourselves.

We preach Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves, your bondservants, for Jesus' sake. You could make an entire lesson just out of that last phrase. We preach Christ Jesus as the Lord.

We preach ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake. To be a servant to others, to minister

to others, to be a diakonos, to be a blessing and a benefit, to be a servant to others, has to be done for Christ's sake, not for the people's sake, not for opinion's sake, not for perception's sake. To be a servant has to be done from a heart that desires to please the Lord, and do it for the Lord's sake.

Do all things heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. All things includes ministry. A lot of people do ministry watching for that gratitude, watching for that appreciation, for that acknowledgement that you're in a position to do worthy things and that you're making a difference and having an impact.

It's a part of our nature to almost feed on that approbation, to feed on that approval and to need it and require it, to be looking for the payoff at the end of a hard lot of service or a hard lot of self-sacrifice, to feel the need to be appreciated, to be acknowledged, to be recognized. Why do people have plaques? We saw a thing on TV the other night where they gave somebody in the Senate or the Congress the Christian Statesman of the Year Award. Well, not to say anything about the person who received it.

They may have just been putting up the strong bear with the weak, but that's not a part of Christian service. We wait for the reward that comes from the Lord. We do things as unto the Lord.

We don't want to see who we can impress and who's going to give us an award. We don't want to be looking around seeing who we can award to potentially cause others to stumble. It's great to be appreciated.

You can speak the truth in love and there is a healthy knowledge that you have been privileged to be used by God or you have benefited and received a blessing from someone else that God has used. There's a big difference here. Paul says, not only do we preach Christ Jesus as Lord, that means He's the focus.

He is the goal. Pleasing Him, reflecting His glory, that's the goal. Christ Jesus is the Lord.

What does the Lordship of Christ mean? It means He's the focus. He's at the center. He's our motivation, not people.

That's why he balances that and fleshes it out by saying, we preach ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake. That's a part of preaching Christ. Jesus is Lord.

We are servants for His sake. Our ninth observation about preaching Christ is the preaching of Christ elucidates or explains or manifests or puts out there for our understanding the plan of God. Preaching Christ, Christ is the fulfillment.

He is the center. He is the object of the plan of God in human history. Ephesians 3.8 Paul says, To me who am less than the least of all saints, this grace was given that I should preach among

the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

The angels are going to come to understand the wisdom of God when they look at the church. We come to understand Christ. We function and fulfill our calling and this shows something to the angels.

Look at verse 11. According to the eternal purpose which God accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, the manifold wisdom of God is made evident. Paul in verse 9 is making all see the fellowship of the mystery.

This was hidden. How many times have we seen Paul say don't you realize this is a new thing? It wasn't revealed before. It's revealed now.

The tenth, and by the way a parallel passage you can put with that is 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 8 through 10. And let me just stop and ask a question here. Are these things that we have apprehended? If Christ is preached to believers, we are believers.

We are listening to the preaching of Christ. Are these things that we understand? Are these things that we not only understand intellectually, but that we're relying on? Have we in the last day, in the last week, thought about the Lordship of Christ? About what our motivation ought to be for anything that we do? Doing it heartily is unto the Lord. It's easy to get lost in a list.

We're in a list of 10 or 11 things here. But each of these are things that we want to think about in terms of converting our knowledge into faith. Each of these things has application in our daily life if we look for it.

It makes a difference or ought to make a difference in our operation when we do the normal mundane things of life. These aspects. We keep saying, well, I know righteousness comes through faith.

I know God is pleased by faith. Well, where does it come into play? Well, this is it. We can ask ourselves the question, how does the fact that we have peace with God through Christ, this is a part of the preaching of Christ to believers.

What difference does that make? Well, it makes a big difference if we're wrestling with guilt, if we're wrestling with insecurity, if we're wrestling with feeling that we're not acceptable in God's sight. This is the preaching of Christ. Christ is our peace.

Is He sufficient to make peace between us and God? To say that we don't have peace with God or that we're not experiencing peace with God is to say that Christ is insufficient because it all

depends on Him. These things have practical application. They are a practical object of faith if we stop and think.

If we find ourselves troubled, if we find ourselves lacking those things we talked about last time, the peace of God, the Word of God, making a difference in our lives, we can come back and this becomes more than just a list. These are things we can look at and say, am I really thinking about this aspect of Christ as I live my life? What about strength or obedience? I'm having trouble being obedient and doing it with a willing heart and a proper attitude. Where does that come from? It comes through Christ.

I go back to these passages that talk about Christ and being established in Romans 16. We go back and read that benediction again. This is fuel for our soul.

This is where the strength comes from to do what we don't think we can do, what we don't feel like we've got the right attitude or ability to do. Jesus Christ, the preaching of Jesus Christ to believers strengthens us. It gives us peace.

of our Lord. This is the preaching of Christ. He tells Timothy, don't be afraid to preach Christ.

Don't be afraid of talking about me, the Apostle Paul, as his prisoner. Share with me and the sufferings for the Gospel according to the power of God who has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This destiny for us in this age, the calling that we have, being in union with Christ and all the things we've talked about tonight, this was decided by God before the world was ever created.

It has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. And Paul says in verse 11, this is what I was appointed to as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. When we look at that, verse 8 and verse 9, does any of this live and make a difference in our soul? We look at it now, but tomorrow, the next day, are these things that Paul is talking about? And he says, this is so central.

These are things that God thought about and put into place before time began. Are we sensitive at all? Do we think about it at all? We should. The tenth thing, how is Christ preached? Philippians 1.15. This is one of the sort of puzzling passages when you understand the role of motivation in the Christian life.

Paul says, I don't really care why people preach Christ as long as He's preached. He says, I want you to know, brethren, that even the bad things that have happened to me have turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel. Most of the brethren, in verse 14 of Philippians 1, having become confident by my chains, are bold to speak the word without fear.

Some, indeed, preach Christ even from envy and strife, some also from goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains, the latter out of love, knowing that I'm appointed for the defense of the Gospel. Here you have verse 18.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. Paul says the important thing is, even if these people's motivation is not pure, even if they're doing it out of envy, out of strife, if they're preaching Christ, he says, that's a good thing. And you think, well, now, wait a minute.

How can that be a good thing? Well, they're not producing any divine fruit because their motivation is wrong. They're creating wood, hay, and stubble. But the word of God carries its own power.

The word of God carries its own authority. You can write it on the bathroom wall. You can print it in a tract.

The people who printed the tract may be all wet. The people who preach, you may have people on Trinity Broadcasting Network that are as all wet as they could possibly be. But if they do nothing more than read the Scripture, God can use that Scripture in someone's heart and in someone's life because the Scripture carries its own authority.

Paul says, if you just preach Christ, the truth will survive the vessel in which it is placed, in a nutshell. Finally, you have a wonderful summary in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16. Paul summarizes virtually all of these ideas in 1 Timothy 3.16. He says, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.

What's mystery? That's our keyword. This is Church Age truth. God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

This is Christ in a nutshell. You can take each of those phrases and find the ten things that we've just talked about in there. These things ought to make a difference.

Our knowledge has to cross the threshold into faith. And that's where we achieve that hope of glory. So our encouragement from Paul is to meditate on these things.

Go back and think, how does this make a difference? How can I turn this into confidence and reliance rather than just knowledge? When we do that, Christ is in us. Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for the privilege of being the beneficiaries of these things that we've seen in Your Word.