

**John 1: 43-51; “Jesus Reading Nathanael’s Heart”, Sermon # 7 in
the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on January 20th, 2012,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

One of the great reasons that the Holy Scriptures are given to us is so that God might tell us about Himself; what He is, in His Being and His attributes. These truths, being shown to us, are not given so that we might make up our own mind about them, as to whether we will receive their testimony. They are given to us so that they would be believed; so that we might better know our God and trust that He really does hold all things in His hands in relation to our salvation. The salvation of the soul of any person is initiated by God the Father who is calling them to “Come and See” what they shall find in Christ the Son. This calling, the Bible tells us, is based upon the doctrine of God’s Predestination; His eternal purpose in salvation. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified,” it says in Romans 8: 29 and 30. Notice that the words that I just spoke to you convey this important truth, that your salvation from beginning to end is all of God. But notice also that the purpose for which that chosen person is predestined, continues to be fulfilled in time and space, for the rest of their life. God causes that person to be born again in His time, which is an essential part of the effectual call. Then, after this initial act of saving grace is wrought upon their heart, the Christian then learns to respond to Christ Himself during the whole time of the rest of their life. They respond first to the word of the gospel; they believe, and they are justified by faith in Christ’s finished work of righteousness and His blood shed for them at the cross. Then, by Christ’s sending His Holy Spirit into their heart, they become involved in the process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the exercise of their faith. Give glory to God, all you who know the Lord, that your salvation and your progress in sanctification rest entirely upon the working of God.

In this passage we see that it is Christ who seeks and finds the one whom He would have to be His disciple. He opens Nathanael’s eyes to His greatness and His glory. Christ does the same thing for each and every believer in Him. For as we look at this passage we see that the Lord Jesus would have Nathanael understand, and He would have you to understand, that there are 3 ways in which He builds faith in the life of those whom He has called to Himself. 1st, He builds faith by the witness of the Scriptures and the friendship of others who have believed. (Verses 41-46) Then 2nd – He builds faith by letting you come to see His Omniscience, His knowledge, of all of your thoughts and hopes and dreams. (Verses 47-49) And

then 3rd – He builds faith by His declaration that He intends to show you greater things as you proceed to live your Christian life. We will look at the first two of these ways in which Christ builds faith in the life of disciples this morning. And then the 3rd way, we will look at next Sunday. In order for your life as a Christian to be more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, your faith must be built and perfected by Christ Himself. Let's examine these things more closely.

1st – Christ builds faith by the witness of the Scriptures and the friendship of others who have believed.

This was what is being related here concerning Nathanael. Nathanael had already come to believe in God, and he had most likely been baptized with the baptism of John. But he had never personally met Jesus Christ Himself. And yet Jesus already knew him. Jesus had a great purpose for Nathanael to fulfill as one of His twelve Apostles. But His greater purpose was first to establish, and then to develop His relationship with Nathanael as His Savior, His Lord, and His friend. This is the basis for all true discipleship. The call of Jesus to Nathanael to follow Him and to become His disciple had its earthly beginning in the witness of Philip to him. Jesus, it says in verse 43, wanted to go to Galilee, and “He found Philip, and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’” Philip was a friend of Nathaniel’s, and he knew that Nathanael was a very sincere seeker of spiritual truth; one of the most earnest seekers that he had ever seen. And so Philip went and found Nathanael in order to tell him of Christ’s having sought him out, and His having told him to follow Him. Let us always remember that God’s calling us to salvation is also a call to follow Christ. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost. But the call is also a call to follow Christ. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Now this statement of Philip’s was certainly accurate in a human sense. He was trying to tell Nathanael that he had found a man who he was convinced was the promised Messiah in accordance with the Scriptures. When Philip mentions Moses writing of Christ, he was probably referring to the passage of Scripture which is found in Deuteronomy 18, verse 15. Turn over there with me. “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren.” “Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’” “And the Lord said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good.’” “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” “And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” Now this is exactly what Jesus came into the world to do; to speak the words of God in the Father’s name; to speak to the people of Israel all that God the Father commanded Him to speak. God the Father put His

words in Jesus' mouth and all those who heard these words were expected by God to heed them; that is, to listen and to believe and to obey His words.

This is the way that Christ builds faith in all of His disciples; He spoke the very words of God, the words which the Father wanted Him to speak. These words, the words of eternal life, were believed by the Apostles and they were written down by them by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now turn over to John Chapter 12, and verse 47, and I will make application of this point that we are studying. Jesus says here: "And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak." "And I know that His command is everlasting life." "Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak." This is no doubt the kind of words that Philip heard when he first met Jesus, and it made an impression upon him so much, that he thought that he just had to tell Nathanael that he had found the Christ. Let me ask you this morning if you, who have believed in Jesus Christ continue to receive His words as the very words of God to your soul? For that is one of the ways that you know that you are a Christian, and come to have that sweet assurance which only the Holy Spirit can bring. And you who do not know God as of yet; you should know that this is how you come to know God and have eternal life, if you believe in Jesus' words to you concerning God and concerning Himself. The Father's command is everlasting life. Jesus speaks the very words of God. Therefore believe in those words, and live according to those words, for "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10: 17) Also John 5: 24 – "He who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

If you would come to Christ, or if you would see your friends come to Christ, understand that it is the word of God concerning Christ that both you and they need to hear and to believe. Jesus was called "the friend of sinners", and the reason that He was called that was not that He chose them as his closest friends and confidants. He was the friend of sinners because He knew that they were sick from sin and that they needed a spiritual Physician. It is not those who are well who need a physician. It is those who are sick. So sinners need a friend who will tell them about God's great grace in Christ, to heal their sin-sick soul. They need the grace that will pardon their guilty soul. They need to know that in Christ there is grace to cleanse the conscience from all guilt, and free that person from reproach and fear, and the dread of eternal judgment. Are you willing to be that kind of a friend to sinners? Are you willing to be that kind of a friend to other Christians around you; not only those Christians who are faltering in unbelief in

some particular way, but those Christians who, just like you, need to grow stronger in their faith and persevere in their faith.

This is how Christ builds faith. He uses the testimony of the Scriptures and the friendship of other Christians to help you to grow. Oh, what a wonderful a thing it is when Christians know how to share the Bible with one another! How faith grows when this is done! You will notice that Philip did not know all that much of the Bible, and yet he enthusiastically shared what he did know. Even the Scripture information that Philip shared was not very convincing to Nathanael that Jesus was the Christ. This was because Philip attempted to back up what he was saying about Christ's being the fulfillment of the statements of Moses and the Prophets by stating that Jesus was from Nazareth and his father was Joseph. This was neither convincing or helpful to Nathanael's believing in Jesus. Actually Philip would have done better to have said that Jesus was born at Bethlehem and His father was not Joseph as many people had supposed; that actually He was God's Son who was born of the virgin Mary. But Philip does not appear to have known all that information yet. And therefore, Nathanael has his doubts, especially when he heard that Jesus was from Nazareth. He knew that the reputation of Nazareth. He knew that it was not generally a place where the word of God was looked into carefully, or highly revered. (See Luke 4: 16-30 for how Jesus was treated by the religious people there.) Therefore he says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And so Philip, realizing that he was not convincing Nathanael by his own knowledge, answers with, "Come and see." This is what you and I must do as well, when we do not have all the knowledge and information that is required to really convince someone else that Jesus is the Christ. Have them come and see Jesus for themselves. In other words, have them read the Scriptures for themselves. Exhort them to pray for wisdom and grace from the Lord Jesus. And they will find that indeed He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Now 2ndly – The Lord Jesus Christ builds our faith by letting us come to see His Omniscience of all of our thoughts and hopes and dreams.

(Verses 47-49)

So Nathanael goes to meet Jesus. If Philip his friend has found someone who he thinks may be the Christ, Nathanael will go and investigate for himself. Oh, I hope that you, too, have a spirit of investigation which will lead you to come and see for yourself that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and that your investigation will lead you to follow Him. Let's see what happened when Nathanael came with Philip to see Jesus. Verse 47. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!' (no guile, it reads in the KJV) Jesus is saying that there is no attempt on Nathanael's part to trick others concerning spiritual things. He was not out to convince other people that he was something that he was not. He was not a pretender when it came to his religion. His religion was not merely an outward performance on the Sabbath. He did not try to impress people around him with

how spiritual he was. He feared God. He feared misrepresenting God to others; he was a perfectly sincere man in his heart. Jesus knew that Nathanael had no guile even before He met him. He commends this good quality in because Nathanael's sincerity of heart had come to him by the grace which had been given to him. In another place when talking to the rich young ruler, Jesus said to him, "No one is good but God". All goodness in men, we need to see, originates with God and is given to men. Sometimes, it is true that people who are religious have a sincerity of heart because they have been given a natural disposition by common grace, to desire to find the truth of the meaning of life. This desire to seek and to find the truth and not to misrepresent it, is from God Himself. To have no guile means that you are not guilty of artful deception. You are not guilty of being double-minded, treacherous, or cunning. You are straight-forward and honest; not artful and crafty. Here Jesus commends this quality in Nathanael which He had seen very little of in all of Israel. Nathanael was a man in whom there was no deceit.

You need to understand that Jesus commends this quality in Nathanael because He clearly saw that Nathanael was a man who had received more than common grace. It was on this basis, of living up to the light from the Scriptures that he had, that God had helped him by His grace given to him already, to develop good moral behavior in his life. Jesus commends Nathanael because He knew that Nathanael had already received saving grace, his having believed that the Messiah was coming. Nathanael, Jesus knew, was a good man whose faith He was intending to build. Jesus will always commend what is truly good in men; what has been given by the Father in natural ability to see, and then further developed by grace; working to build character in a man. This man Nathanael had improved all the common grace and saving grace that he had been given thus far. That is extremely commendable. Let me ask you whether you have done the same, dear one who is listening to me? God has given you common grace or you would not be here listening to me this morning. But has He given you saving grace so that you seek Jesus for the best of things and the greatest of blessings? The best of things is your storing up truth in your heart; laying up treasure in heaven; being changed and transformed into Christ's blessed image so that you love righteousness and hate lawlessness; so that you love God pre-eminently, and long to keep His commandments in everything. Do you realize that Jesus knows everything that goes on in your heart and mind? He knows your thoughts and your desires and can, and will, help you on to the glory of knowing Him better. He knows if you are a sincere seeker, or a person of guile. He knows if you are sincere, and are seeking Him for the saving wisdom and grace that He alone can give so that your heart will be changed to lead a godly life. If you will begin to ask Him, He will build your faith. He will build all those good qualities of sincerity, of steadfastness of heart and purpose, to live for God's glory; to by faith learn to do what is right and hold fast to His truth, so that you will become a holy man or woman of God. Even if you

are a great sinner now, and not a Nathanael by nature, you too can become a man in whom is no guile by coming to Him.

And so, even though Nathanael and Jesus had not met each other until this time, yet Jesus says this of him, that he is an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit, because He wants Nathanael to know that He knows all that is in his heart. He knows all of Nathanael's thoughts and hope and dreams, and He is able to review them at will. Dear Christian, whoever you are, the same is true of you. Sometimes I fear that many Christians do not sufficiently consider this truth as they go about to live their Christian life. When Christ saved you He saved you right where you were; in all your sinfulness. He saw very clearly where you were in your experience, and He gave you grace to repent, to change your mind about your course of living. You may have been close to where He would have you in your obedience, or you may have been far from it. Still you needed much grace. But Jesus, even now, has all power and authority in heaven and earth, and by faith in His power, all shall be made right in your soul. "How do you know me?" Nathanael says to Him. Because – "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." O, this is very precious indeed! Before they ever met, when Philip called to Nathanael while he was having his private devotions under the fig tree, Christ saw Philip in his devotions. We are not told the secret things that Nathanael was praying for, or the secret things that he might have been vowing before God. But we do know that Nathanael knew that Jesus knew all that was in his heart when He made this statement to him. Dear one, whoever you are, will you not remember that the Lord Jesus knows all the inner workings of your mind and heart, and reads them like you would read a book? Jesus was reading Nathanael's heart. Jesus reads your heart, and takes notice of all of your holy desires to know Him better. He ever lives to make intercession for you, dear believer. Is the book that you have been writing, of your life, a bad book? Christ reads it as well. He knows whether you have received the common grace of hearing the gospel. He knows every line of what you have written in sinful rebellion or in self-righteous compliance. You thought that you would write your own book. But in saving you, He would re-write your book so that His grace would be found in it. He would re-write it so that it would be a good book for God and men to read.

Romans 8: 26 – "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses." "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered." "Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The One who searches the hearts in that verse is your Lord Jesus Christ. He makes intercession for you according to the will of the Father, that all of your prayers may be answered. Matthew 6: 5 – "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites." "For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that

they may be seen by men.” “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” What about fasting? Should the Christian fast? Jesus says in Matthew 6: 16 – “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance.” “For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.” “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” “But you when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Let me ask you this question in closing. Do you pray in secret? Do you secretly fast when you want to know God’s will or need His help, or want to know His leading in your life? Jesus knows all that is in your heart, and the Father sees in secret, and the Spirit is there to take your groanings and bring them all, through the merits of the Lord Jesus’ life, death, and intercession, to God. You say to me, “But why should I do this?” Why should I deny myself and follow Christ in this way?” And I would answer you, and this text answers you as well: It is because if you choose to live a life of sincerity, seeking the blessing of God on your following Christ, He will be glorified in you, and you will not only be eternally happy and blessed, but you will find that true joy which no one can take away from you.