

Do You Have a Christian Mind?

Building a Christian Mind

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Today in our church life is the culmination of and the final message in a series that we've been doing all year long since mid-January titled "Building a Christian Mind," and we've done, I think, a total of about 55 messages leading up to today in this series, and in this message today, I'm doing a summary of all of it to bring it to a close. So that's kind of a lofty challenge, you know, 55 messages condensed into one. I would encourage you to settle in and get comfortable maybe, but I'll try to respect your time and plans today. But the message today is, "Do You Have a Christian Mind?" Do you have a Christian mind? In light of everything that we've covered over the past 12 months, do you have a Christian mind, and I would want you to understand that I am not asking you if you are a Christian. That's a very important question, and if you're not a Christian then, you know, these things have a different kind of significance to you. But I'm asking you if you have a Christian mind. You see, it's quite possible, in fact, the church is filled with people that perhaps are regenerate, perhaps have been born again but have not grown in Christ to a position where their thinking is governed by certain fundamental biblical principles to inform the worldview of everyone that names the name of Christ, and there's so much that goes into that. You know, if you think about it, I think it's something like 1,189 chapters in the Bible that God has given us a revelation in a very thick book that he intends for all of us to read cover to cover, to know something of its contents and certainly its teaching as we do that. It's not a light and easy thing to obtain a Christian mind. Proverbs 8 talks about that compare the acquisition of biblical wisdom to the digging and the mining of the earth for precious metals. It's a long, it's a deep, it's a prolonged process in order to recover those valuable physical nuggets that the world longs after, and Scripture tells us that the acquisition of a Christian mind is something of far greater worth. You see, we just have to get away from the way that we've been conditioned by superficial churches with superficial pulpits trying to give us a little bit of pabulum week by week to keep us happy, to keep us coming back without really instructing us in the deep doctrines and the profound teaching of the Bible. You do not acquire these things easily. You do not acquire them quickly. This is a lifelong pursuit of wisdom that we've tried to condense even over 12 months. It has been merely a condensation of that.

A friend, I use the word loosely, a friend on social media questioned me, critiqued me, challenged me for criticizing pastors and churches that are satisfied with 20-minute messages and my point is that you can't teach the Bible, you can't teach these doctrines in

quick little messages with personal anecdotes and all of that. It's a completely different idea in my judgment. It's a completely different religion. It's a sub-Christian thing to approach the word of God that way. We're not willing to go with the flow. If it's what everybody else does and what everybody else wants, and not everybody's like that, but if it's what everybody else wants, you know, we're happy to stand apart and do something different. If it's what the age expects, you know, social media, sound bites, quick little things on Instagram, and that's your spiritual food for the day, God bless you, that's not what we do here. It's not what we're after. It's not what we've aimed our lives after. We want to know God. We want to. We want to know his word because, as Scripture says, we treasure his words more than our necessary food. We not only want to read the words, we want to know what they mean. We want to know what they mean by what the author intended and not what it means to us as we sit around in a little group and pool our ignorance. We don't want that kind of Christianity, so-called Christianity. We believe that God is worthy of our devotion. We want to respond to what Jesus said was the greatest commandment of them all, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, and with all of your, what? Your mind. Your mind. We are to give our mind over to loving God and we love him by entering into what he has revealed to us in his word and that's the goal and that's the aspiration to have a Christian mind. It's a lifelong pursuit and it's something that we gladly undertake because his word is precious, because he himself is precious, his Son is precious, our salvation is precious, heaven is precious, the fellowship of the saints is precious, the forgiveness of sins, the imputation of righteous, all of these things are precious. And so to us, it's a joy to be able to give ourselves to this. It's not a burden. The commandments of God are not a burdensome thing, 1 John 5 says. They're the joy and the delight of our hearts because we have been called by his name. And so we ask the question, do you have a Christian mind?

Now, if you've been with us through most of this, hopefully this will bring back echoes and it'll be easy to follow along as I remind you of what we've covered. There's going to be seven primary points this morning, each representing a different section of the mega-series called "Building a Christian Mind." If you're new, if you're visiting, I sympathize. For you, this will be a little bit like trying to use a straw to get a drink out of a fire hydrant that's flowing by. It's not going to be easily done but perhaps it will stimulate you in you a desire to know these things for yourself in a way that you come back and you want to pursue it. This is a summary message that presumes an awfully lot of what we've done so far, and in some ways I think it's for others to decide, not for me I guess, but I really consider this to be perhaps the most important series that I've ever preached in the course of my ministry, because I intended, as I said in one of these messages, it was my intention in this series to commit felonious assault on the way that the modern church thinks, to bring the teaching of Scripture to light and contrast it with the superficiality of what passes for Christian teaching today. I want people to see that there is a collision here and to see that from Scripture there are principles that guide us and that direct us and that we have nothing of which to be ashamed as we follow Christ. Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel," which is his way of saying, "I'm very proud of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and then also to the Greek." Well, we're not ashamed. We're not ashamed of pursuing a Christian mind. We're very glad to be able to do it. We think it is a valuable, the most valuable pursuit of

them all, and so it's with that in mind that I present this summary message and we're just going to go through and deal with it in very few Scripture references, but I would just remind you and help you by remembering that in every section there are hours of teaching behind every point that we make here, and if we do not fully expound it today, it's because we're presupposing what we've already said. If we don't cite every Scripture, and we won't, of what could be said in these things, it's because we've said it all already in the prior 12 months here. This is a summary to pull it all into one place. This is designed to help the people of God, a place where you can just walk through step by step and have it all in one place, these are the principles that I need to know and to cultivate in order to have a Christian mind, and then it expands out from there, depending on how important it is to you, to develop these things and to have a mind that is responsive to the things of God.

So let's get into it with that little bit of explanation and introduction. When we started, we did three messages of introduction on the importance of the topic, and what prompted all of this was going back to a message I preached a year or two ago at a conference, and I just realized that it's just the most important thing to deal with these matters. As you look at the church in its seeker-sensitive manifestations, in its Catholic manifestation, in the charismatic and the health and wealth things, you realize something pretty quickly. It's not complicated to realize that the church, broadly speaking, the professing church that professes to be a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, when it comes to teaching the people of God, it has been a miserable failure for many, many decades now. The broad, popular, evangelical church has been a miserable failure as it's pursued social issues and entertainment and other matters and all to the neglect of the word of God, or just occasionally sprinkling in a verse here and there in order to justify and to hang ornaments on a dead tree to make it look like it's something that it's not. And so the church has been a miserable failure for decades, and that's why it's so important for us to address these things. And when we say the church, we can't just leave it at a corporate institutional level to realize that the church is composed of individuals who have not given themselves over to the study of the word of God. It has not been important to people, especially in the prosperous West, to pursue these more fundamental teachings of Scripture, to be content with being stroked from the pulpit saying you're not so bad, Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. And when we know that there is such substance to the teaching, the system of doctrine presented in the Scripture, we're offended by that. At least I am. We're offended by that superficial approach that's just designed to win the approval and attendance of men. This is not honoring God in his revelation. To honor God in his revelation you say, "What did he really say? What are the implications of this? How do we conform our mind to it? How do we live this way? How do we take biblical thinking and translate it into biblical living?" You can't even begin to live biblically if you don't know how to think biblically. Isn't that obvious? The way that we live is driven by the way that we think and if we can't think rightly, if we don't know how to think according to Scripture, then how are we ever going to live our lives to any kind of successful purpose and outcome if we don't know these fundamental things about the nature and the teaching of Scripture? And my friends, I say this sympathetically, I say it with a burdened and broken heart, but the people of God, broadly speaking, no longer

know how to think. They don't. We don't. And that's why this series has occupied us for the length of time that it has.

Seven different segments of biblical thinking, and they all kind of progress, they start at a foundation and then they build up from there, and so that's important to know. And let me just say this one last thing before we get into it. You'll have to excuse me, you know, I mean there's 12 months and more of things that are percolating in my heart all trying to get out in one event here this morning. But just to realize that what we have done in part here is that we have brought to bear, we have brought to bear presuppositions and helped us to understand the presuppositions which govern our thinking. A presupposition is something that you suppose or that you assume without really thinking about the principles that underlie it. So someone says, "I believe in God," and you respond, "Well, why do you believe in God?" And it's like, you know, they ran into a wall and said, "Well, because I believe in God." Well, we can do better than that. We should do better than that. And so as we lay these things out, we're laying out some of the most basic presuppositions of fundamental human thought, not simply Christian thought, but the way that people were intended to think who were made in the image of God. And so we're going to start there.

Point number one. Do you have a Christian mind? Well, having a Christian mind starts with point number one, the existence of God. The existence of God. We immediately, in this first point, we immediately assault the prevailing mindset of an atheistic evolutionary approach to life that says everything that we see came out of nothing, for no cause, for no reason whatsoever. We recognize the foolishness of that. We assault it. We reject it. We don't care what kind of scientist mocks us or so-called Christian scientists that sticks their tongue out at us as we do this. We don't care about any of that. We are not courting popularity with the world in what we're saying here. That's so impossibly important and cannot be overstated. We're not trying to make men happy. We're not trying to curry favor with the academic world. We're not trying to end up on a television program where people look at us and applaud us. We're not looking for any of that. What we want more than anything from the deepest recesses of our life and our heart is to honor this word of God, this precious word of God that he has given to us and how he has made himself known, and to grow closer to the fulfillment of the goal to give him glory whether we eat, drink, or in whatever we do, and it all starts with a recognition of the existence of God.

So we ask the question, how do we know that God exists? We did a series of six messages on that topic and fundamentally, beloved, this is the point that you want to take away for today anyway, we know that God exists because God has made himself known. We know that God exists because God has made himself known. We don't know that God exists through philosophical speculations. We don't need to know philosophical categories of different things that may have value in their place, but with words that are very long and hard to remember and arguments that are even more difficult to follow. I don't have that kind of philosophical bent to my mind, and most of you don't either but the wonderful thing about the nature of Scripture is, is that we're not approaching him through philosophy, but approaching God through the revelation that he himself has given. And understand that we are not making a probability case here. We are not saying

that God probably exists. You know, that it's more likely than not by the preponderance of evidence you ought to believe in God because really the weight of the case is on that side. I know some people approach it that way; evidential apologists like to approach it that way. I detest that. I reject it. The God who is the full authority and the Creator of heaven and earth, and the God who has made himself known, we're not at liberty to say maybe he exists. He does exist. He has declared his existence, and it is our responsibility to embrace that, to accept it, and to follow accordingly. Not to engage in speculations. Not to deal with speculative questions, "Well, what if? Or what about this?" No. God has spoken, that's how we know, and he's made himself known in many ways.

Turn to Psalm 19 with me. Psalm 19. In some ways we could treat Psalm 19 as a real cornerstone of the entire series, all 55 messages. But in Psalm 19, we see that God has revealed himself and made himself known. Psalm 19 verse 1, we see that he's made himself known in creation, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." You look at creation, God has put his imprint on it in an unmistakable, undeniable way so that there is no excuse for any man anywhere at any time to ever question the existence of God. In the course of the planets above us, in the course of the stars and galaxies above us, in the perfect precision of their movements, God has made himself known. Scripture says so. The sky above declares the existence of God. It declares his glory.

Now, in addition to creation, we see that God has revealed himself in his word, in the Canon of Scripture, you might say. Look at verse 7 where it says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Look at that last clause there again, "the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." The law of God, the word of God comes from God himself. It is reliable. You can count on it. You can read it and by the help of the Holy Spirit find understanding. And the wonder and the glory of all of this about the word of God, look at that last part, it says, it makes wise the simple. You don't need a degree in philosophy to know these things. You don't have to be a person of supreme intelligence. You don't need a college degree to know the existence of God or to know what he said. The word of God is for all people. It's for those who are simple, with uncomplicated minds. Humble people can come to the word of God and know for certain that he exists because he's made himself known in creation and in the Canon of Scripture. But ultimately, I'm going to read to you from the book of Hebrews for the sake of time, God has supremely revealed himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. So in the written word of God, the Canon of Scripture, God has made himself known. Supremely, he has made himself known in the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen as I read from Hebrews chapter 1, the first three verses. "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," God speaks, he has made himself known in the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." When you read about the Lord Jesus Christ in the 66 books and no more of the English Bible, when you read about the Lord Jesus Christ, how he was prophesied, how he came, and the explanation of his work and the culmination of it as we'll see in the book of Revelation next year, you are reading the

revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And so God has spoken. Any time of day or night, you can go outside, look up, and see God making himself known in the creation around you. At any time, day or night, you can pick up a Bible and read the revelation of God. At any time, day or night, you can look to Scripture and read in the four gospels and read about Christ, and you can see God revealed and that's in addition to the way that God has revealed himself in the human conscience, in the conversion of human souls. God's made himself known. That's how we know the existence of God. It's not from reasoning within ourselves. It's not from the way that we feel about things. It's not based on our speculations. No, we start with what God has done and how he's imprinted himself in a macro and in a micro sense throughout all of the universe. The knowledge of God is diffuse throughout the universe. It's diffuse in his word. It's diffuse in Christ. It's diffuse in the testimony of human conscience.

Anywhere you go, God has made himself known. That's how we know that he exists. He's spoken. And the end result of all of that, beloved, is this. Is that man is without excuse. This knowledge of God hovers over the existence of the human race, over the existence of you and any individual who ever lives. This knowledge of him hovers over, and one day there will be an account that is given for what we have done with that knowledge. That's why it's important to have a Christian mind. It's important for us to know. You know, you talk to someone on the street, meet someone at school, at work, things of God come up, people are confused and in darkness, it's so important for you to be able to walk them through this. "Here's how you can know that God exists," and you act as a confident guide to lead them to the knowledge of God. He's spoken in creation, in the Canon, in Christ, in human conscience, in conversion.

People will ask, "Well what about atheists? What about people that deny the existence of God? If this is all so clear, then why are there people that deny this? What about people who believe in other gods and multiple gods and all of that?" Well, we addressed that from Psalm 14; you could look at Psalm 53, Romans 1, for what I'm about to say also. But Scripture declares a judgment against atheists of a particular kind, and it says that they are culpable fools. They are culpable, guilty fools for deliberately suppressing the knowledge of God that is within their heart and is in the world all around them. There is no excuse for that. There is absolutely no excuse for that. It doesn't matter how thick the book is. It doesn't matter how, you know, the bow ties that Bill Nye wears, that doesn't do anything to strengthen the case. It doesn't do anything to excuse them from the culpability of guilt that God pronounces upon them for rejecting the way that he has made himself known in all of these areas that I just described.

So I ask the question, do you have a Christian mind? Is it clear to you why and how you know that God exists? The Christian mind is clear on this and can walk through these things at the drop of a hat and say, "How do you know God? I can tell you how I know God exists: creation, Canon of Scripture, Jesus Christ, human conscience, conversions, or you could say the church, the existence of the church over the past 2,000 years." And here's the thing, beloved, God has spoken in so many different areas that complement and supplement one another. He hasn't limited it to one particular thing. He has used multiple vehicles of self-expression that literally a man could give himself to the study of any one

of these areas for a lifetime and not exhaust one of them, let alone the combined testimony of all five. Scripture says that upon the testimony of two or three witnesses a fact is established. God, in these five ways that we've outlined here, God has spoken conclusively in five different ways. Eventually we just have to realize that those that argue against this are making fools of themselves. They are spiritual donkeys, obtuse, obstinate, and kicking against the things that are most plain for anyone to see.

That's point number one, the existence of God. That's fundamental to having a Christian mind. In some ways, looking at it logically, looking at it from a whole, that's where you begin. Well, there's a second aspect to having a Christian mind, and that is the authority of Scripture. The authority of Scripture. After doing six messages on the existence of God, we taught eight messages to establish biblical authority. Eight of them. And the key principle here, I'm not going to spend that much time today on this, but the key principle for those of you that are writing down the key essential points, we asked how you know the existence of God. We know God exists because he's made himself known. Well, how do you know that the Bible is authoritative, that the Bible is true, it's reliable, it is without error in everything that it affirms? Here's this: the key principle to understand the authority of Scripture is this, we receive the authority of the Bible based on the authority of Jesus Christ himself. We receive the authority of the Bible based on the authority of Jesus Christ himself. This is an incredibly important point. The highest authority in the universe is Jesus Christ. He is the Creator of all things. It is through Christ that God created all things. He is the pre-existent Son of God. He is the Lord of the church. He will be the judge of all mankind at the end. There is no authority above him. It's not like you hear the authority of Christ and you say, "Well, you know, is there a Supreme Court above him that we can appeal to final authority?" There's not. He is the highest authority anywhere. You know, whatever interesting things we might find in testimonies of history or other things like that might interest us for a while, but ultimately Jesus Christ is the highest authority in the universe. That is an objective fact of reality. If you want to know the answer to something, you go to the highest authority in order to find what that authority declares to be the case about it all, and in the person of Jesus Christ, we find this, we find that Jesus Christ repeatedly in detail and in broad principle affirmed the authority of the Old Testament. He spoke about the Old Testament, he quoted it as authority, as a historically reliable document, so that we see in the pattern and in the teaching of Christ that we can receive in the English Bible the 39 books of the Old Testament with complete confidence in their authority, that they can be relied upon because that's what Jesus Christ said. When it comes to the New Testament, the Bible has two parts to it, you could say, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament representing the revelation God gave before the coming of Christ. The New Testament representing the revelation in Christ and the interpretation given to that by the apostles and their close associates. When it comes to the New Testament, Jesus Christ pre-authenticated it. Jesus Christ prepared the way while he was on earth for the New Testament. He appointed apostles to write the Scriptures or to work with those who were working as close associates of the apostles. He sent the Holy Spirit upon them, and so Christ prepared the way for the New Testament by his work through the apostles. And so in the Old Testament, Christ said, "I see that, I affirm it, you do likewise." In the New Testament, Christ equipped the apostles, he authorized them to speak on his behalf, and

he sent them in the world to make disciples of all the nations, Matthew 28. And he prayed in John 17, he prayed that God would bless and keep all those who believed through the testimony of the apostles. So by direct appointment, by prayer, by provision of the Holy Spirit, Christ authorized and laid the groundwork for the New Testament to take place and for the New Testament to be written with complete absolute authority without error in everything that it affirms.

So, how do we know the authority of Scripture? How do we know that the Bible is true? Well, the issue ultimately is settled by asking a prior question, by what standard, who do we look to to tell us the truth about these things? We have the humility, and here I'm thrusting a dagger into the heart of even Christian scholarship in its pride and its arrogance, telling us that it will assume the prerogative of telling us what the Bible means, what parts of the Bible we can believe, what words Jesus really spoke and which ones he really didn't. We reject the arrogance of that scholarship. We ask a different question. We say, who's the final authority in anything? The final authority is Christ. That's clear in my mind. Okay? Then we ask, what did Christ say about the Bible? What did he say about the Old and New Testaments? Affirmed the Old, pre-authenticated the New. That settles it for me. I know that the Bible is authoritative. I still have to do the hard work of studying it. I still have to work through different things and aspects of it, but in terms of its place of authority as a final revelation of God, I know why I accept the authority of this book. It is not based on my opinion, it's not based on a choice I made. I know that this book is authoritative and true because Jesus Christ has certified it to the world through his life and teaching.

And so we ask the question, do you have a Christian mind when it comes to the Bible? Do you understand why it is true? Do you seek to read it and to know it? You see, the Christian mind is clear on who the final authority is and on the basis on which we receive the word of God. Scripture says in John 10 verse 35, the Scriptures cannot be broken. Matthew 5:17, not a jot or tittle will fall away from the law of God until everything is accomplished. There's no aspect of it, there's not a minor, subordinate clause in Scripture that won't be fulfilled. There's not anything that it teaches as true that will ultimately be proved to be false. It's true. It's reliable. We accept the authority of the Bible. And so beloved, what I want you to see is that in these two principles already that we've addressed, the existence of God and the authority of Scripture, there is a railroad track of thought that has been placed across the continent of the human mind to say this is where human thought, these are the tracks that the human mind is to run on. One track, the existence of God. The other track, the authority of Scripture. And if you follow those things, then the train will take you ultimately where you need to go.

Now it brings us to our third point, the authority of Christ. The authority of Christ. And someone might say, "Well, you're engaging in circular reasoning, you know, the Bible's true because you say it's true." That's not what we're saying. We're saying as an objective reality, apart from the thoughts and opinion of men, Jesus Christ is the authority. This is outside of me. This is not a matter of circular logic. This is a matter of what reality is and how God has spoken.

Now, Scripture, we receive the authority of Scripture based on the testimony of Christ. Well, that leads to a question, how do we know the authority of Christ is real? What do we look to to know and to understand that Jesus Christ himself is the final authority, that he is the highest one in the universe? This is a rich area of study. We spent 11 messages on this one theme, 11 messages on this one theme about how do we know that Jesus Christ is Lord and the understanding goes along this path, and I already read from Hebrews how God spoke by the prophets in many ways. Beloved, listen to me, the history of all of these things matters. For 2,000 years before the coming of Christ, God had been giving revelation, God had been working in his people. 2,000 years before the time of Christ, he called Abraham out of pagan idolatry in order to follow him. He established the nation of Israel. He led them through a time of slavery, led them into the Promised Land and the subsequent 1,500 years of history of the Israel people, the Israelite people, was a time where God was speaking to them through prophets, men who were spokesmen for God, men like Elijah and Elisha whose authority was vindicated as they themselves performed miracles that showed that they were the unique spokesman of God. Moses overcoming the Egyptian magicians and things like that with the signs and wonders that God worked through him. God worked through men to show his authority, that these men were his unique spokesmen in ways that no one else was.

And what did those prophets do? Over the cumulative course of many centuries of their ministry, what happened there? Well, I'm using an illustration here, and a weak one at that, but Moses and the spokesmen for God who followed him, it's like they were painting a canvas. They did a little outline at the start on the canvas, and then other prophets would come and fill in details, and over the course of time, the collective contribution of these men of God gave a portrait of what the ultimate Messiah would look like. They prepared the way for Christ. They told in advance what God's Deliverer would look like, who he would be, what he would do, even where he would be born. They said all of these things so that for 2,000 years there was a time of preparation going on leading up to the culmination of the coming of Christ so that, beloved, here's what's so important to realize, by the time that canvas was painted before Christ came, the picture was so precise that there was only one person who could have fulfilled it. No one else could meet all of the criteria and all of the picture that had been painted of who this one would be.

Isaiah 53 is part of that picture and the New Testament writers, we spent four messages looking just at what the New Testament had to say about the way the Old Testament prepared the way for Christ. Well, look at the book of Romans, chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. Again, as with the existence of God, there are multiple streams of argument here. There are multiple things that we build this on. We're only looking at one of them here in the moment but look at the first four verses of Romans chapter 1. This is not a throwaway introduction; the foundation of the Christian mind is set forth for us in these four verses. In Romans chapter 1, verse 1, we read this, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God," here you go, watch what happens now as he goes into these relative clauses, "which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." Paul says, "I am an authorized spokesman for the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of God. I am here to declare to you the good news, the gospel of

God." And he says, "Let me tell you something about this gospel. This gospel, this person of Christ was promised," verse 2, look at it with me, he was promised "beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scripture concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." What I want you to see there is that it was promised beforehand. This isn't something the apostles made up out of thin cloth or out of no cloth. This wasn't something that, you know, Christ didn't appear in a vacuum. No, his appearance was in complete continuity with 2,000 prior years of revelation carefully recorded by the scribes who wrote them, carefully authenticated by the miracles that accompanied the spokesmen of God before the coming of Christ. There were 2,000 years of history that Christ comes and sits as King and in the crown and fulfillment of it all.

Now not only that, we saw that Christ proved his authority in his teaching. You look at the end of Matthew chapter 7, for example, and the crowds were amazed. They were astonished at his teaching because he spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes. His teaching had a unique power, a unique authority that showed him to be separate and apart from all others. And then his miracles. The gospel of John records seven different signs as illustrations of what Christ did as he turned water into wine, as he raised Lazarus from the dead, as he fed thousands of people with tiny bits of food, in all of that, proving his authority over the created realm and his authority over the created realm gives us insight, gives us a window to look through to see his certain authority over things in the spiritual realm. Jesus said in John 14, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Believe in my authority based on what I say, or if you struggle with that, believe on the works that I've done."

Now beloved, one of the things that I mentioned in passing that I didn't emphasize perhaps as much as I could have in the course of this series, is that the ultimate proof of the authority of Christ is found in the cross of Christ. That's where the glory of God, the glory of Christ is supremely revealed. As he exercises authority over sin and Satan and the world and over his accusers and executioners, he exercises authority over them in the cross. In the cross. And they take him down and they bury him. He's certified dead by competent Roman soldiers. And he comes out of the grave. In the cross and the resurrection, we see the authority of Christ fully displayed. You have the testimony of the prophets for 2,000 years. You have his own words and works. You have the cross. You have the resurrection. You have the subsequent ministry of the apostles, also authenticated by signs and wonders by the hand and power of God, all of this teaching us the absolute, unique, non-repeatable, non-delegable authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. And just as, and I'm repeating myself here, but this is so important for you to grasp, just as the existence of God is proven in many different realms, supplementary, complementary, overlapping, so in like manner the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is established by many multiple streams of irrefutable argument. Thousands of years of prophecies. Thousands of words recorded for us in the gospels. Multiple signs and wonders which were only a small selection. The Apostle John says, "If I told you everything, the world wouldn't be big enough to hold all of the books that would be

written about this. I've just given you a few so that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and by believing you might have life in his name," John chapter 20, verse 31.

Now listen, beloved, once again we're at a crucial juncture in building a Christian mind. We proclaim Jesus as Lord and as the only Savior and you must grasp this, what I'm about to say: we do not proclaim the Lordship of Christ based on our human experience or our personal feelings. Those things are irrelevant to the issue at hand. God spoke through prophets and apostles testifying to their ministry by signs and wonders. Christ fulfilled all that they said and he was resurrected and appeared to over 500 witnesses. The Spirit of God certifies all of these truths to our heart. You see, it's not about the way that you feel about it. It's not what you feel about Christ that has anything to do with the truth of whether he's the ultimate final authority or not because what were people to think before you were born? You say, "Well, I think that Jesus is Lord." Well, that's not really important. I'm glad you think that, but that's not the final answer to the question. What were people supposed to do before you were born, and what are people supposed to do after you die? How do we answer the question then? You are not central to the answer to this. The revelation of God that he has made through Christ, the prophets, and the apostles is how we know these things and the Spirit of God certifies all of these things to our heart so that the outcome, my friends, is this, we've looked at the existence of God, the authority of Scripture, the authority of Christ, we know these things with confidence. We know these things with certainty. These are not speculations that we engage in and we like this because we're middle-class white people in Western society. We believe in a Lord and Savior who came through a Jewish race in the Middle East. It has nothing to do with white privilege. It has everything to do with truth that God has established for millennia.

And so, we have confidence, we proclaim it without fear. For 2,000 years, people have gladly shed their blood and yielded their lives rather than to compromise on the central affirmation that Jesus is Lord. Not Caesar. Not anyone else. Jesus is Lord. And because we're convinced of this, because the Spirit has certified it to us, we hold on to that confession no matter what. We hold on to that confession at the price of our own blood. We do not sacrifice that confession to anything or anyone else. You want a Merry Christmas, this is what you latch on to, and as we study these things and come to know them, we have confidence and we proclaim it without fear, without favor to man in the power of the Holy Spirit and, beloved, we can do that no matter who comes and who goes. We can do that. That's what happens when you have a Christian mind. These things are designed to engender conviction and confidence in your soul so that you proclaim them rightly and without apology, without fear, without trembling before man, whether it's a hostile family member around the Christmas dinner table, whether you hold on to these things as loved ones walk away from you and want nothing to do with you, when HR comes and says, "You can choose that or your job, what are you going to choose? Let me know in five minutes."

The Christian mind is settled. This conviction cannot be sacrificed or compromised for anything because we know that God exists. We know the authority of Scripture. We

know the authority of Christ. Well, that leads us to our fourth point here today, the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God. As we progressed through this series, we did seven messages establishing the sovereignty of God, the idea that God rules over everything as Creator, sustainer, and ultimate coming King. In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11, we read that God planned all that would happen before the beginning of time. He works all things after the counsel of his will. This God who exists, who has made his authority known in Scripture and in Christ – oh beloved, I mean, just the magnificence of Christian thought, there is nothing to compare to it anywhere in the world. We are contemplating the highest, holiest, deepest, broadest, greatest things that could ever engage a human mind. Don't begin, don't begin to diminish the greatness of the things that God has revealed and has brought home to our hearts through his word because what Scripture teaches is that God decreed everything that would happen before the beginning of time, then he created all things, and now he sustains all things, and one day still future to us, he will consummate all things. He created all things and directs creation to achieve his purpose that will certainly be displayed and accomplished for all to see at the end. It's amazing.

Well, the Christian mind draws great comfort and stability from that. We don't have to live in fear or anxiety. We have a Rock of refuge that we can go to when the storms of life are assaulting us. We have a refuge that we can go to when we watch loved ones walk away from Christ, when we watch a loved one wasting away on a deathbed, when we read of friends that have passed, said, "I didn't even know that. He was a friend in times gone by." We have a mind that finds comfort, stability. We don't live in fear. We're not afraid of death. We're not anxious over the circumstances of life when these things are controlling us. I mean, look, we go up and down, we struggle. I get that. That's not what we're talking about now. You see, the doctrine of God's sovereignty, the doctrine of divine providence, that God directs all things to accomplish his purpose, that allows us to respond calmly to life. That allows us to look at things with serenity even though we don't understand. We can be settled even when life hurts us, even when the people we love hurt us, even when circumstances and politics and everything associated with this world disappoints us and maybe robs us, we can be settled in all of that because we go back to the refuge that God rules over all. We know, and watch the way this builds with power in the human heart, we know that God exists for many, many reasons. We know that Scripture is true because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that Christ is Lord because of many different lines of authority and reason. And based on those things we see growing up out of that this mighty oak of a doctrine of the sovereignty of God in all things and we take our rightful place as Christians under the shade of that oak and we unpack the lovely picnic dinner of life and we eat of its delicacies even if there are storms that come and go.

We are confident of that reality, beloved, because we have – listen to me. Listen to me. Listen to me. I'm urgently pleading with you to heed what I have to say here. We have that confidence because these other things are proven and settled in our souls. We're confident of the reality of the providence of God and his sovereign direction of everything that happens to us because we have previously established the foundation of our faith found in the existence of God, the authority of Scripture, and the authority of

Christ. These things all go together like a seamless cloth. They're not meant to be ripped apart from each other. And I hope that you're starting to see that the fullness and the richness of this isn't something that you can gather in one 30-minute message.

Then we came to a fifth question, the truth of Christianity. After we had considered the existence of God, the authority of Scripture, the authority of Christ, the sovereignty of God, we met this question, the truth of Christianity. How do we know that Christianity is true? Once you've established these broader principles, now you kind of eagerly embrace the opportunity to go to these other questions because you realize there's just so much behind the force and the basis of the truth that we profess. How do we know that Christianity is true? At this point, we are speaking from a position of unparalleled strength. God exists. Scripture is true. Christ is Lord. God is sovereign. We're speaking from unparalleled strength. We're not guessing at things. And we did three messages here and what we looked at, recognizing there are limitations to this particular aspect of argument, what we saw was the external objective facts of history are staggeringly in support of our assertion that Christianity is true. And I'm not going to rehearse for you the different elements of this, just to remind you of the dates. We go back into the realm of recorded objective history and we see that from AD 200 going back to AD 112 to 64 AD to the time of Christ, there is no gap in time that is sufficient to allow someone to have created all of this as some great fiction, for someone to write a novel that made all of this up, and then dupes along the way believed it, proclaimed it, and we just inherit the testimony of ignorant fools. That's impossible. That's impossible. What we saw was that the apostles showed how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament, and yet the apostles could not have manipulated the Old Testament text in order to fit the facts that they wanted them to be. The text was independent, it was guarded by people that were not sympathetic to Christ even, and so you couldn't go back and manipulate the Old Testament and retrofit it to conform to the life of Christ. It was an independent reality when Christ came.

Now, beloved, watch this, watch this, we boast in the fact, we glory in the fact that as the apostles after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, when they preached him, they were preaching to an audience of contemporary witnesses to the historical realities of which they testified. The apostles could not possibly have made up Christ and his crucifixion and his resurrection and have that spread like wildfire throughout the Roman Empire because too many people would have known and been able to contradict it if it were not true. They would have said, "No, I was there. That's not what happened at all." The whole power, humanly speaking, of the apostles' preaching was that they were able to stand like I'm standing before you and point to them and say, "You yourselves know that I am testifying true facts to you in what I'm saying." And there was no refutation to be had. That's how we know Christianity is true. They couldn't have played with the Old Testament, and the people they preached to knew that it was true.

Look at Acts chapter 2 for just a moment. Acts chapter 2. As you're turning there, these seven principles that we're outlining here, this is like building a strong and mighty fortress in which we take refuge and we know how to think. These things all come together and give us a rock and a refuge for the way that we are to think. They give us

direction. They give us confidence. They give us hope. Acts chapter 2, verse 32, just touching on what I was saying about the importance of eyewitnesses. Peter is preaching to the Jews who crucified Christ and he says, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Now look what he says in verse 36, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain," know for certain, "that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." He had laid out for them earlier in his sermon and reminded them of all of the facts. They were preaching with power. The audience had seen those early disciples speaking in known human languages that they had not previously studied. There was a miracle going on in front of them and Peter is explaining it to them and he says, "You know for certain," and it's a command, not an indicative. He's commanding them, "You know for certain that God made him Lord and Christ." And we inherit the certainty of that. A human myth wouldn't have spread under those circumstances. The apostles, the disciples, Stephen in Acts chapter 7, they didn't die for things that they knew were untrue. They were willing to die because they knew it was true, and the truth of these things was more important than life itself and so we know these things to be true, and ultimately today we believe in addition to all of those things, we believe because the Holy Spirit opened our eyes to know, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6, light of God in the person of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts that we may know the truth of the things that have been spoken to us.

Point number six, the existence of truth. The existence of truth. We realize, we're mindful, we glory in the fact that the things that we're saying here challenges our entire postmodern age. We realize that we're speaking certainties and proclaiming truth for which men will be accountable in the face of an age that doesn't even believe that truth exists. "You have your opinion, I have my opinion, let's not get too worked up about it." And this is an assault, biblical thinking is an assault on that. We did two brief messages to address that problem. How do we know truth exists? Well, you know, without making this, dragging this out any more than is necessary, turn to Acts chapter 17. How do we know that truth exists especially in an age where any public university you go to will assault this and do their level-headed best to rob you of these things? Acts chapter 17, verse 22. If you want a principle to write down here as I see some of you taking notes, we believe that truth exists under the pain of wrath and judgment for failure to do so. We believe that truth exists under the pain of wrath and judgment for failure to do so. And in Acts chapter 17, I'm going to skip over a lot of the context for the sake of time and just begin at verse 30, actually verse 29, because the Bible emphasizes the importance of the way that we think and in verse 29 we read, "Being then God's offspring," Acts 17, verse 29, "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." God has revealed himself in Christ, he raised him from the dead, and now, based

on the truth and the certainty of that matter, God commands all people to repent and to believe in the things that have been spoken by the apostles.

How do we know that truth exists? We said this. The first – oh, it's all important. The question, how do you know the truth exists? Beloved, the first word that comes out of your mouth exposes what your final authority really is. If someone says in response to that question, how do you know truth exists, and they say something like, "Well, I think...", they're already off track. It's not about what you think. How did we know about truth before you were born? How are we going to know after you die? Don't tell me what you think. Tell me what's true. Tell me how we know. And how do we know that truth exists? We circle back to where we've been. We know that truth exists because God has spoken. God and truth in that order. God exists. God has made himself known. Based on his self-revelation, we know that truth exists. "I believe," you say, "I believe in response to what God has made known. I rely on his authority, not my own thinking, his self-revelation, not on the passing images of my mind." And parents of young children, you really need to impress this upon your children so that they know what the authority is. "You need to believe, little one, not because it's what mom and dad says, but it's because what God has said." Point them to an authority beyond themselves so that when you're gone, the authority upon which they believe hasn't changed.

Now, final point, number seven, biblical salvation. Biblical salvation. We wrapped up this series by preaching 13 messages on biblical salvation. Beloved, we approach this topic, "Building a Christian Mind," in one sense, we approach it from a position of weakness and death and separation. All the children of Adam are born into the world under judgment, separated from God, needing the new birth. You must be born again. And so there needs to be a change within us. We need to be delivered from sin and Satan and judgment. We need to be delivered, beloved, we need to be delivered from God himself. Have you ever thought about it that way? You need to be delivered from God because God is a God of wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. You need to be delivered not just from feelings of lack of fulfillment, not just from a difficult human life or human marriage, you need to be delivered from the wrath of God against all your ungodliness and unrighteousness.

And so we've taught on biblical salvation and beloved, we not only stake the existence of truth and authority on Jesus Christ, we stake the very future of our eternal souls on him. On a life I did not live, on a death I did not die, I stake my entire eternity. Scripture says we looked at Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 1 at length, you were dead in trespasses and sins but in his perfect life and in his atoning death, Christ accomplished redemption for everyone who believes. Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "for it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works, lest anyone should boast." You see, the fullness of a Christian mind ultimately comes down to the security of your own soul, of knowing that your sins are forgiven, knowing that the righteousness of Christ has been counted to your benefit in your favor so that you are secure with a holy God and you have bold and confident access to him now and you will most certainly enter into his presence upon death or at the return of Christ. In biblical salvation, beloved, this transcendent, magnificent God who has made himself known,

who is God of truth, God of Scripture, God of sovereignty, in biblical salvation, the God whom we know exists has now acted to save us from sin, and he has done this, Galatians 2:20, I love that verse, "He loved me and gave himself up for me." The God whom we know exists has acted to save us personally, completely, eternally, and by name. This isn't some blob of redemption that Christ threw out there and then left it up to us to believe, take it or leave it. He intervened in time to secure his people for himself with absolute certainty, to do it by name, so that when he died on the cross, he was dying as a perfect, complete substitute for us, taking our sins and punishment on himself with a full awareness of what it is so that you can think about the cross rightly in this way, it's as if the Father looked at Christ and said, "I'm going to treat him like he had lived Rick's life, like he had lived Robin's life with the sin and the guilt. I'm going to treat him, I'm going to treat you, my Son, like you'd lived Madeleine's life. You'd lived Julie's life. You'd lived Andrew's life. You'd lived Jeremy's life. I'm going to treat you like I would have treated them." And the wrath of God thunders down upon him and Christ willingly, voluntarily receives all of that, standing as your substitute in your place, in love, bearing what is necessary, doing what is eternally necessary so that you could be forgiven and reconciled to God in a way that you never could have done for yourself. It's staggering. It's staggering. "I'm going to treat you like you were Don Green." And without flinching, without resentment, without resistance, Christ receives all of that, that that deserved, paid it all so that we could go free, so that we could be reconciled to this God whom we know exists, who's the authority over all the universe, who will consummate all things in the end.

That's a Christian mind and the outcome of all of this we saw on 1 John chapter 3, the outcome of all of this is not even primarily about anything in this life. The ultimate outcome of this is that we one day who are in Christ will see him face to face. We will see him like he is and we'll be made like him. We won't always be in this deplorable, wretched state of fallenness and fleshly things. One day we're going to see Christ face to face and we'll be conformed to his resurrected glory and we will share in his resurrected glory. We will reign with him forever and ever without end. In the meantime, we purify ourselves, 1 John 3:3. That's a Christian mind, from a starting point of how do we know God exists to a culmination that says we will see Christ face to face and we will be like him. We will share in his resurrected glory. We will reign with him forever. Satan will be banished, sin and sorrow will be banished, and there will be nothing but the perfection of the reigning Christ and us reigning with him for all of eternity. And so, our goal, our desire, now in response to this, we seek to know this God who exists. We seek to glorify him. We seek to honor him. He is the God who is there, and he is not silent. By the truth of the word of God, my friends, I commend a Christian mind to you. Will you have it? Will you have it? Will you seek it? Will you give your life to pursuing this while God gives you breath?

Let's pray together.

Father, what can we say? Human words must step aside. We close with your own words through your Apostle Paul, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has

known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him," in other words, to you, O God, to you, O Christ, to you and to you alone, "be glory forever. Amen."

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