

Experiencing Christ is Personal

By Shawn Reynolds

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Hosea 6:3
Preached on: Sunday, January 31, 2016

Grace Particular Baptist Church
5725 Imperial Lakes Blvd
Mulberry, FL 33860

Website: www.onefoldoneshepherd.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceparticular

As we begin our morning this morning, once again in reading the text, we have today our text will come from Hosea 6:3. The text reads this way,

3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy and faithful and sovereign, I thank thee, O Lord, for the time that you have given us this day to assemble in thy name. O Lord, I pray for thy presence to be here, thy presence to fill this place. O Lord, not only this place but fill our souls. Testify to us this day of that seed, the seed of thy Son that is resident in all of thy people. O Lord, communicate this grace and this knowledge to us this day that we may know, that we may know, Lord, that you have chosen us before the foundation of the world, that you have set us apart, that you have called us away from this world, that you have called us to a life in thee and, Lord, in doing so, that you will be glorified. You are glorified. Lord, glorify thy name this day. May you be the strength of this message. May you form it, Lord, to go to this very soul, that thou art pleased to reveal thyself to them for thy glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I've said many times from this pulpit that there is a dire need of every hour of our life to experience Christ in our soul. I think that what's been impressed upon me the most is so funny today. We're done with a month already in the year. It seems like just yesterday we were at the end of last year. Time goes by so fast and yet a lot of things don't seem to change. When you are revealed who you are, you see that there is no alteration of your flesh; it doesn't get any better. In fact, as the Lord reveals his holiness, reveals his goodness, reveals his sufficiency, you see your insufficiency. You see that your dire need to experience Christ in your soul every hour, and that's the thing.

We come to a passage like we have set before us today and, sure, I could stand up here and I could tell you all the physical things that went on at the time with Ephraim and Judah and what God meant in this passage on the physical realm, but the child of God, to them that's empty husks. We're not Ephraim. We're not Judah. We stand here in the year

2016 and the child of God needs to hear the Shepherd's voice. He needs to be led by a shepherd. He needs to experience the Shepherd in his soul, not in a mind or a knowledge that's physical, not in a way to know God in the Scriptures by what they say in the letter. Paul reminds us that the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life. John said it this way in 1 John 2:20, he said, "But ye," speaking to the people of God, he said, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And that's a really deep saying.

In fact, I read a sermon this week on that very passage by J. C. Philpot, deep, experiential sermon about what things is it the child of God knows. We're going to talk about that today. And then how is it that we come to this knowledge. In that same sermon, I read for the first time, I've heard Philpot allude to it a lot but in that sermon I heard him talk about his pedigree: where he went to school, who he studied under. It reminded me a lot of what Paul said. Brought up under the feet of Gamaliel. Learned in the synagogues. Taught the Pharisees' way. But yet the Lord brought him to see that in all of that, that was dung. It was empty. It's frivolity. And as Philpot wrote that and he was talking about how much he lamented that in his life, not that those things where he went to school and all those things are bad in and of themselves, but as the Lord revealed his Son in him, he saw in comparison all that his sin was in desiring those things; desiring what the world says, "This is how you get to Christ." There is a theological way. That's man's way and we can reason and find a way to Christ. And Philpot said, "You know, for a long time, I believed that. I even began in preaching it that way, that there was something that man could attain to and do." But then the Lord arrested him, just as he arrested the Apostle Paul.

I, too, can attest to that in my life. I remember a time where I thirsted to find out more and more theology; to find out more and more about what is this systematic way, that it starts with God and then his Son and then the Holy Spirit and then next and next and next, then the Scriptures come in, and then how do all these pieces fit in. And I remember being very intrigued by that and studying that way and starting to look at the Scriptures that way and starting to say, "Well, how does this fit into this compartment? And how does this fit into this one?" And that was fine for a while, but then the Lord saw fit to send an unction and the unction of the Holy One comes and teaches all things. And I'm not talking about biology or geometry or trigonometry, I'm talking about all things and John is talking about all things pertaining to Christ because that's who the Holy Spirit testifies of. He testifies of the finished work of Christ, and for the child of God, he's brought to see that that's what his soul must have. He's brought to cry out for that. The letter truly does kill, but the Spirit truly does give life.

And what does it mean by "kill"? You know, I've read this things many times about dead doctrine or dead thoughts or dead Calvinism or dead... What does all that mean? Where is the life? And that's what I want to talk to you today, where is your life today? Is it in some kind of doctrinal notion? Is it in, "I have my creed"? You know, a couple of weeks ago we heard a sermon from the pastor talking about the true church and that one touched me in a way that transcends, the true church transcends lines of Baptists or Presbyterian. Can you imagine, can you imagine God differentiating people that way? There's one church filled with one people, and the Lord looks and there is no bond or free, nor male

nor female. We're all one in Christ Jesus. That means no Baptist, no Methodist, no Presbyterian. What does that mean?

And that's what the unity of the Spirit teaches the people of God, and when you hear me say the dire need to experience Christ, I'm speaking about when you go to a passage like our text today, does it have a historical meaning to you? Can you see Christ in it? Does the Holy Spirit lead you to the one where all of these pages testify of? Because that's what he does. That's what experiencing Christ in the soul is. It's not just learning something, hearing something and going, "Oh, that's interesting. That's the first time I heard that." But did you hear it? Did your soul have ears to hear? Does it come down to you and the Lord testify to you, "This is who I am. This is how I'm speaking to you this day." And as we look at the words and as we delve into this passage, that's what my hope and prayer is for you today sitting in that seat, that you experience Christ in the words because we've got to figure out how we get here because this verse says, "Then, then shall we know." How is it the Lord brings us along to know him.

That's what my desire is as we read this passage and we see how the Lord did it historically; how he did it with Ephraim; how he did it with the physical Israel. It has a deep experiential meaning to the child of God. My prayer is that as you see how the Lord does this, you testify that, "Yes, that's how the Lord has done it in my soul." Because we don't want to stand and give you theology, but I do want to speak to you the doctrine of Christ. Is there such a thing? Well, John said in 2 John 1:9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." So there is a doctrine of Christ. That's where everything flows from the head that is Christ for the child of God. It's not compartmentalized. It's not looked at and said, "Okay, I have this part of my life, this part of my life." Christ must be all and in all for his children, and he is. That's the way he reveals himself. You can't serve two masters. The Lord makes sure of that. That's what the Holy Spirit does. You'll hear that today. The same Spirit that convinces you of sin, convicts you of sin, is the same Comforter that applies the blood of Christ in his finished work. It's a beautiful thing. It's a needful thing. That's what I want to look at today.

So we're going to back up a little bit just to the last verse at the end of Hosea 5 and this is the Lord speaking, and he speaks in Hosea 5:15 and he says this, this is after the sins of Ephraim, this is after Ephraim and Judah representing the people of God, "I will go and return to my place." The Lord withdraws himself. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence," till they are revealed their sin, till they acknowledge their offence. But how does the Lord do this? He says it in the next phrase, "and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." Listen to that. That's how the Lord has pronounced how he draws his people to him: in their affliction they will seek me early. Do you hear the word of God today? And there's no wavering in it. There is no creature in it. There is no way for you to get to understand Christ or experience Christ any other way.

It's through affliction, but what kind of affliction? We all have bodily afflictions, in fact, I apologize because I can barely turn to my left today, if you've noticed that. I'm a little stiff. I've got a pinched nerve in my neck. I can't hardly turn it. That's an affliction, but is

that going to lead me to Christ? Does it work that way? What is an affliction? What is the design in it that the Lord uses? He uses it to strip his children of the creature dependency that they have. You know, I did all the right things: I took the right medications to make this go away; I rubbed the right stuff on it, but it's still there. It's the thorn the Lord has given me this morning. Okay, what does the Lord teach his people in affliction? He teaches them dependency. He strips them of all their carnal understanding and all their carnal reliance and all their reliance on the ways of man and he brings them to him, then they will seek him, then they will seek him early.

And it's painful. It's painful at times but I'm just not talking physically. The Lord does it like he did with David. He sent a messenger and he said, "Thou art the man," and that went very powerfully to David's soul. And if you don't believe that, read Psalm 51. You'll understand then it brought David to see his Lord's goodness. Paul tells us in Romans 2 that it's the goodness of God who leads us to repentance. That's what we have in these afflictions. That's what we have. It's an affliction of the body but it's an affliction of the soul and it's needful because the Lord must reveal to us that we do have warring nations in us; that we do have that side that continuously sins against him. We're not reminded that until the Lord reveals it. We go along, that's what I meant at the beginning when I said it was just last month we were looking at the end of the year. Now we're already looking to the second month. We go and we live every day and then the next day comes, and the next day comes, and we become indifferent, and we become, "Oh well, that's the way life is." As you get older, what are you waiting on? I mean, I'm serious. What is life? For the child of God, life is experiencing Christ in his soul. And there's not an age limit on that, and that's the thing about the child of God's life, is he continues to grow in it and you're going to see that in this passage. He continues, the Lord continues to grow him and grow him.

You know, I consider the pastor in this room being the most deeply taught one I've ever met in my life of God, but I'll tell you this, he'd tell you he's still learning and I see that in him. It's a spirit that humbles and says there's more to be taught and learned, but they must be taught of him. We must all be taught of him, and he is faithful to do that. When John said those words, you have an unction from the Holy One, that's what we have in us, the Holy Spirit. We have the unction of the Holy One and you know all things. All things that are necessary to live in this life but to prepare for the life to come. That's what he's doing. That's what the Lord does. Do you feel like you still have your clutches so much in this life? If you do and you are a child of God, the Lord has a lot of plowing to do and he will do it. He will wean you from the things of this world and prepare you for that time with him. He will. He's faithful. He's done it for all the saints that we see in the word and he'll do it for all the saints today.

In this passage, like I said, it's powerful and it's needful. It's needful to know that this is what the Lord does, and it's not what we hear in this life that the Christian walk is just a bubbly walk every day. Listen, it's hard. It's hard because of these warring people in us. It's hard because we do have this old man of sin. It's hard because the world is pulling at us every day. Do you testify of that? Don't you see that box in front of you at your house, pulling you? Pulling you to spend time with it? Don't you see the things in this life that

you're so caught up with with your children? With whatever it is? That it pulls at you for your time, for your allegiance, for everything? You don't feel the world that way? And if you don't, I fear for you. Well, what about Satan? What about Satan that tells you, "Yeah, go ahead and rest in your ease. Go ahead. This is really what life is, it's in the riches of the world. It's in the name that you have. It's in this."

Do you experience those enemies that way? And I'm going to tell you something: we don't feel, we don't even attest that they're there until the Lord sends us afflictions. Afflictions of the soul to show us that these enemies are there; to show us that there is one thing needful and that needful thing is to be brought to the feet of Christ to learn of him, how he has defeated those enemies. We're going to get to that. I keep getting ahead of myself.

So now, after you see the affliction, remember, we're trying to see how we get to our text here, "Then shall we know." How is it we know these things? Well, the first thing we see is the Lord brings affliction, and for what reason? In their affliction they will seek me early. But look at verse 1, now here's the fruit of it. Here's the repentance granted. Now Ephraim and Judah are going to speak. Now the child of God speaks.

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn." Have you ever been revealed the Lord that way? He hath torn. Look up in 14, "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away." I will tear them. Tear them, what? Tear their clutches out of this world. I'll tear their clutches away from Satan. I'll tear it away from that old nature that they want to follow every day. I will tear them. "I will take away, and none shall rescue him." Do you see that? Our hope and our dependency and our healing is not in a man. It's not in a church, physical church. It's not even in the people of God. Our healing and our rescue must come from the great Rescuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who binds up and puts upon his neck and brings the sheep back to the sheepfold; who takes the one that is half dead and pours his oil of the Holy Spirit upon him and puts him on his beast and carries him and nurtures him and grows him in the grace and knowledge of him. That's where the rescuing comes in.

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD." As I said earlier, notice that: it's the same Spirit that tears; it's the same Spirit that convicts; it's the same one who brings healing; the same one who reveals where the fountain is open for the child of God to bathe in daily. Yes, he is faithful. He convinces us of the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness. He does. He's faithful to do that.

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD." That's the gift of repentance. And when I hear things like that, I think of the prodigal. How does he just up and say, "Oh, my father's got bread in his house"? How do you get there? I know that there's so many people in this world who read the Scriptures and try to fit man in there somewhere. We're going to hear that in our text today. He just tries to fit the creature in there and say, "Look what I've done, Lord." Like when I see this, "Come, and let us return," like I've just got some kind of intellectual knowledge that I figured it all out.

Listen, the Lord has afflicted him. The Lord has torn them. They are laying there half dead. Where does life come from? The Rescuer. That's the Spirit who lifts up the child of God and says, "Come." But it's not an invitation, it's a command, because the child of God cannot resist grace. It's irresistible. And when the Lord says, "Come," can you imagine if it was left to us to figure that out? "Oh, I'm inviting you to be healed." "Oh, I don't know. You know, if I start thinking about it, this world, it does offer some things for me and, you know, when I listen to Satan..." That's what we would do if it was left to us. That's what we saw in the garden. That's what we see throughout the word of God when the preacher gets involved. That's why the Lord said, "No way. There is no way. I will perform all things for my children." Hezekiah said, "Lord, undertake for me," because he was emptied of himself. What about you and I today? Have you been emptied of your creature dependency? And your desire to work things out? And your desire to move along in your relationship with God? Are you dependent upon him?

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Do you see that? The same hand. Do you understand that? Has the Lord taught you that? Or are you in this religious school out there that doesn't know anything about the chastening hand of the Lord? Are you in this world that you must make a way for yourself? That you heal yourself? Physician, heal yourself. Do you understand that proper? Have you tried to heal yourself with your own logic? In your own dependency of self?

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." So what do we see? We see the Lord sending affliction. We see the Lord bringing his children to himself, emptying them of self. And then we come to verse 2.

Verse 2, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Do you see it? There's two things to see here. One that we won't talk about much: there's a process, that the Lord's process in healing, it always doesn't come just like that. The Lord in his own time, in his own way, he'll pour the Spirit in. He'll heal in his own time. He makes you stronger in him and he sees fit to reveal that grace, but the deeper understanding.

What do you see? "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up." I see the resurrection. What is he referring to? He's referring to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet sees by faith the resurrection of Christ.

What is it? I told you we had to understand. How do we get to our text in 3? How do we get, "Then shall we know"? We get there through the Lord's affliction bringing us to him, stripping us of self, and then him revealing where life is. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the resurrection and the life." That's where our life is. Our life is, all those enemies we just talked about that plague us every day, in the raising of Christ, in him raising from the dead, he defeated all of them. They have no claim on the child of God. They have no victory over the child of God because of the power of the resurrection; because of what Christ has done in raising himself. The Triune Lord raising him from the grave. The

enemies have no victory over us. That's what I see here. "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

I want you to turn with me, first, over to Ephesians 2. We're going to see this shown to us here in the word of God. Two places we're going to go to real quick. Ephesians 2, very familiar passage. Paul writes this in Ephesians 2:5-6, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Quickened us together with Christ in the resurrection. We died with him, we are risen with him. He has quickened us together with Christ, "(by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us." That's resurrection life. "Raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We have for us always revealed for us in the word of God where we're reigning with Christ. That's what the power of the resurrection is. We are reigning with Christ over all of these enemies, all of these that he put down.

And it is necessary for that to be applied to the child of God by the Holy Ghost. We live in a very dead world and we are very dead people in this dead world every day. We're desiring and are very much in need of the Lord to revive and to reveal, but what is it he revives and reveals in? The power of his resurrection because you know where I'm headed now, just turn a little bit over to Philippians 3, because Paul said it this way, and we'll just back right up in 9 and read, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Christ's righteousness which we talked about last time; the importance of it. Listen to this in 10, "That I may know him." Do you know what that "know him" is? That's a personal relationship. That's what I want you to understand today. You can't corporately believe in God. It must be a personal relationship between you and Christ; between you and the Father; between you and the Holy Ghost. It's personal.

Paul says that, "That I may know him," that I may experience what? "And the power of his resurrection." That I may know him and experience the power of his resurrection, "and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Isn't that what we talked about first? We're in the fellowship of his suffering. That's the needfulness for us to be chastened; the needfulness for us to be afflicted. We suffer as he suffered, but why? We're also told that the Lord succors us in that. He went first in everything for the child of God, and it's made provision for our souls in every way in himself.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." That's what that second verse in chapter 6 tells us. I mean, it's an amazing thing when you see, like in this instance, Hosea the prophet, the Lord had revealed the resurrection of Christ to him. He had revealed the healing, and we're not done here. We're going to see. He revealed what Christ is to his people, even as far back before Christ ever walked on this earth, because, you know, they all must be taught. They all must be taught of their salvation being in Christ and Christ alone.

But we don't stop in 10 and the reason we're not going to stop is because we're going to transition down into our text in verse 3 and the best way to do it is here in Philippians. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained." What? Paul, you don't, what do you mean you haven't attained? You don't realize it?

Well, yeah, Paul realizes it but listen to what it says, "either were already perfect." There is no perfection in this life. There is no sinless perfection in this life. Paul, that's what he's telling us. "I'm just as dependent upon my Lord now as the day that he did reveal this power of resurrection. I need it today. I need the Lord to come and refresh and revive me today. I need to live by the power of the resurrection today."

"Either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also," this is the beautiful part, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Oh, I follow after. What is that? That's the way. That's our walk. I told you when we started here how dead it feels sometimes going from the next life. What is life for the child of God? What is life? That's what Paul is explaining to us: we walk on. We walk on every day dependent upon the Lord to reveal himself to us. That's what the life in the child of God is. He's living every day in anticipation of his Lord. What is it the Lord has for me every day? His mercies are new every day. We know that, but even in our deadness, we have to have a power greater than ours. We have to have that strong man kicked out of us by the one who's stronger. To apply Christ. That's so needful in our life every day, the finished work of Christ.

"I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." You see, it all started in Christ. The Lord apprehended me, therefore I can walk in the way. Why? Because I hear the voice of the Shepherd and the Shepherd goes before me, and as the Shepherd walks before me, that's how I walk. We know sheep are stupid; they're dumb. They need that shepherd to walk in front. They hear his voice. They hear his voice as the Lord reveals that power of that voice and they follow him. "His rod and his staff, they comfort me."

So why did we read that? Well, we go back to our text now in Hosea 6. So now we have the stage set for us. We have the power of the resurrection that was revealed to Hosea in 2. We have up in 15:1, we have the afflictions that the Lord brings to strip us of ourselves and to make us dependent upon him. And then in verse 3, we have, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD."

Now, I chuckle when I read that because I think of Robert Hawker. In his commentary on this part, he said, "Do you know what? We've got to throw out that 'if.' That 'if' is in italics. It changes the meaning of it, so get rid of it." And then if you read it, it says, "Then shall we know, we follow on to know the LORD." To me, I understand what he's saying, I understand, but the "if" really doesn't change it for me because the Lord taught me a long time ago I'm not looking for the creature here. I'm not looking for man-centeredness here. I'm not looking for man to come in and go, "Oh, what's my place here?" This is a promise. This is the promise of the Lord.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." If you follow in the way, it's because you know. It's because the Lord has written himself upon your soul. It's because the Lord has gone first before you and led you in the way. It is the fruit of Christ being in the soul. There are no ifs and conditions on anything that Christ has finished. Nothing. I hope the Lord settles you in that today, that what he has finished is perfect for his children, and then he brings the child of God to see it, to realize it, to live it in him.

I know I refer to it every time I'm up here, it's the eternal vital union. It's what Christ has done in eternity. It is what he's done by his seed that lives in us. And the vital part, we can't live without it. We cannot live in this life without Christ being our life. That's what that union is, the union is Christ in me and I am in him. It's a beautiful union and it's the oneness, and it's eternal. It just took me right out of the equation. Praise God that it did because the more I'm revealed of who I am every day and my depravity, the more I thank God that he took me out of anything to do with my salvation. All glory to him.

John said it this way in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal." "Then shall we know." What is it we know? "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." What is it that you know today? Do you know this that John talks about? Do you know this vital union? Do you know that you're in Christ and that that's how you know the Father because of this perfect Mediator? Because of this perfect Intercessor? Has he joined your hand with the Father's hand? Do you feel that? Do you understand that today? Not in a head knowledge. Not in a doctrinal head knowledge. Do you experience it in the soul? Can you sit there today and know that the power of Christ has made it personal to you?

You say, "Well, I don't know if it's personal." Okay, let's go to Matthew 16. We need some guidance on what is personal. How do we know something's personal? How do we know we've experienced Christ in that way? Well, let's look at Matthew 16:15. The Lord Jesus Christ asked Peter, we're going to look at Peter and we're going to look at Paul this morning, and we're going to see what their personal witness is. Look at 15, "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." As you've sat in that chair today, as you've heard the preached word today, as you've heard of everything testifying of Christ, has your soul lept up and said, "That's the Christ! That's the Son of the living God! That's the Christ of my soul! That's the one who has spoken to me! That's the one who has performed all things for me! That's the one who has undertaken for me!" Because that's what Peter said, but was it Peter?

Listen to this, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Do you understand that? Flesh and blood can't reveal it to you. That means yourself. You can't attain to a knowledge in whatever is you do, whatever kind of studying you do, whatever it is, John said, "They have an unction from the Holy One and he teaches them all things," takes man out of it. That's what I was telling you Philpot said at the beginning of that sermon, he said, "That's the thing that hurt the most is all those times in my life I devoted to getting my

knowledge up to learn more about God, and I couldn't. I mean, I did. I learned theological things, but I didn't experience Christ in the soul until that unction came, until the Holy Spirit revealed and said, "This is who Christ is." And it's experiential. You experience Christ that way.

That's the needfulness of the hour, the needfulness for every day in our lives, and that's what he said, "for flesh and blood," not only yourself, you can't reveal it to yourself by any way, but no other man can either. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven." You have an unction from the Holy One and you know all things. That's the dire need of the hour, to know all things through him who is the teacher. The divine teacher is Christ in us, the hope of glory. It's the Holy Spirit that leads us to Christ.

But that's Peter's witness, okay? What about Paul's witness now as we go over to Galatians 1? And we certainly should know this. Paul says basically the same thing in Galatians 1:15. He says, "But when it pleased God," and dear ones, there's no other way. I don't care what you think you're going to attain to, I don't care what you think you can do, I don't care about what you think you could add to your stature, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." That's what grace does, it transforms the child of God. "To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Who? Man. Who? Myself. Paul even said it, "I can't depend upon myself. There is nothing good that dwells within me." Has that been revealed to you? Has that been revealed to you that the only way you're going to learn, the only way you're going to be taught is by Christ when it pleases him.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me." And then the fruit of that, the evidence of that is there is "no conferring with flesh and blood." There is no looking at self going, "Hm, I need to..." It's irresistible grace. That's why I'm saying there's no part in it of us. It's the power greater than our carnal power to subdue that carnal power, and we're in dire need of that. That is the way.

Let's go back to our text now in Hosea 6. "Then shall we know." Then shall we know, and I love that "shall." Do you know what that means? It's written in the heavens. It's done. It's fixed. "Then shall we know." His "shalls" and "wills" are the fixed plan of salvation. No man is going to alter it.

"Then shall we know." Thomas came to him and said, "Lord, how shall we know the way?" Christ said to him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man can cometh unto him unless the Father draws him." Unless the Lord brings you to him. That's the power of grace. That's the power of irresistible grace.

We shall know. We shall know. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 2:12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." You know that little word "freely," what

does that mean? That means grace. There is no obedience. There's no way that you could obey your way to be revealed God in your soul. It doesn't happen. There is nothing you can do to procure it or buy it. There is no way. It is freely given to us of God. It's not earned. It is unmerited favor.

Then, of course, I'll tell you, I guess if I had to say it's probably my life's verse if you can have one of those. I mean, I love the word of God, but Paul in Galatians 2:20, every time I read it, the Holy Spirit speaks so powerfully. Galatians 2:20 says this, "I am crucified with Christ." I tell you, to be able to say that, what does that mean? I am crucified to this world that doesn't have a hold on me. I'm crucified to the flesh that doesn't reign over me. I'm crucified to Satan who is always in my ear. Am I crucified to those things?

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live," then Paul says, I love this, "yet not I." It's not me that's living. I hope that's your testimony today. I hope the Lord subdues your flesh and your carnal nature and shows you that it's not you living if you're living by the faith of the Son of God.

"Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is what we're talking about here. This is that seed. This is the eternal vital union. Vital because that's the only way life is. How can I know the way? The way is in Christ and if you are a child of God, that's in you. It's him who is in you. He is the life.

"Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh," that I live right here looking at you with body and blood and sinews and flesh and everything else up here, "which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." I don't live by my faith. It's worthless to me.

"I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Is that your testimony? He loved you and gave himself for you. I've got to say this: he gave himself. When he give himself, you disappear. That's his design. He must increase, we must decrease. He gave himself to be life for me.

That's what we know. "Then shall we know." And that's how we follow on in the Lord. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life.

But that's not the end of our text. "His going forth is prepared as the morning." Do you hear that? Those words prepared, his going forth? Does that not throw you back to the Shepherd again? His going forth. He goes before me. He performs all things for me.

"His going forth is prepared as the morning." Another metaphor used. Why? What is the one thing we know when we go to bed at night? That if we wake up in the morning, there'll be a morning, right? I mean, we're still alive, right? It was the certainty of the morning. The "shalls" of the Lord are certain.

"His going forth is prepared as the morning." Malachi said it this way in 4:2, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and

ye shall go forth," in the healing of the Lord, in the power of the Lord, in the power of his resurrection, "and grow up as calves of the stall." The Sun of righteousness. I think of that when I think of the morning. I think of the sun coming up. It's certain.

He's faithful that way and that's the first metaphor because then he uses another one at the end and he says, "and he shall come." That "shall" again is just as certain as anything. It's more certain than anything we have in this life. He said it, "he shall come unto us as the rain." Well, that's certain to us. It was certain back in Judea at this time. They had two rains: they had one when they planted the ground; they had to have the rain come first; that was the latter rain; that's when the seed was planted. It was such a barren ground that it was hard. They depended on the two rains and the Lord brought them every year. The first one was the latter rain that came in autumn. It came and softened the ground and they planted their crop. And how beautiful that the prophet here and the Holy Spirit preserves this as what Christ did, came as the latter and the former. The latter comes first, the one in autumn? Why? Because that's the time the seed is given. That's the eternal vital union we have in Christ. But we're not left there because the other rain comes, and what was that for? To bear fruit. To bring forth his righteousness. To reveal to the child of God that he is with him. He doesn't leave us. He doesn't leave us to find our way. This Shepherd has performed all things for us and his love and care for us is to show us the way, but to bring us into the way. To be our path. To be the one who ushers us into that path. It's all of him.

And this rain that's mentioned here, "he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." It's a certainty. That's terminology they certainly understood. They said, "Oh, we know those rains. We depend upon those rains. We won't eat without those rains. We won't have crops without those rains." Absolutely, and you and I won't either. We won't eat without that rain. We won't banquet at his table without him preparing it and setting it forth. It's all of him.

It's a promise of the Lord which reminds me of our final text that I'll read, 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." Do you like that "in him"? I love that "in him." That's that eternal vital union. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." That's what he gives us, the elect children of God. Oh, he has provided everything, everything. May the Lord impress that upon your soul in this hour.

Our text one more time, Hosea 6:3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Dear heavenly Father, how glorious thou art. Add thy power as you would come to thy people now. Speak thy peace and speak, Lord, thy presence in their souls for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.