

# The Reasons for Christ's Humanity

*Essential Truth*

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Preached on:** Sunday, May 27, 2012

**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

We are in a study of the book of 1 John and I would invite you to turn to 1 John as we begin this morning. I'm very much looking forward to what the Lord has for us in his word here today because I do believe that it is going to enrich your gratitude to Christ for salvation and to enrich your understanding of exactly what it means that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which has been lost.

We understand that in a general sense. People who have any familiarity with Christianity and with the teaching of the Bible would say, "Yes, Christ has come to die from my sins," but the things that we're going to look at today are going to deepen and broaden your understanding of exactly what that means and we're looking at the book of 1 John because this is what we're going to teach through in the months to come, and as we started the study, we have seen that John starts by emphasizing the importance of the humanity of Christ in the first 4 verses. Let's look at those together and we're taking our time in the introduction because it's going to lay the foundation for all that comes in the months that follow. 1 John 1:1 says, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life." And if you haven't been with us over the past couple of 3 weeks, what we've said is that John is emphasizing the reality of the humanity of Christ in that verse. He's saying that, "I, as an apostle, personally saw the Lord Jesus Christ with my own eyes. I heard his teaching with my own ears. I touched his flesh with my own hands." So he's making an appeal to his personal experience with the reality of Christ that he has the authority to speak as an apostle of Christ. "I have seen the resurrected Lord and so I am speaking from that which I know." And we have said that he is combating teachers who were denying that Christ was a real man. They said that he was only a spiritual appearance; he wasn't a real man and that's the teaching that he is going to be rebutting throughout his letter.

Now, last week when we were here, we looked at some of the scriptural evidences and there are so many, that Christ's humanity was real. We saw that he was born into a real ancestral line; he had a real human genealogy through his mother, Mary. We saw that he had real human emotions. He had real human needs and by everyone that saw him, they recognized him as a man. They said, "Who is this man from Nazareth?" One of the reasons that they stumbled over Christ and his profound authoritative teaching that he claimed to speak on behalf of God in a unique way, part of the reason that they stumbled

over that was because he had every appearance as a man just like you and I did, like you and I do, I guess; he still has it but you know what I'm saying. The humanity of Christ was real. The Bible emphasizes this and just as you read through the Gospels, it just bleeds through all over the place: he was fatigued; he was thirsty; he was hungry. At every point except for sin, his humanity was just like ours and we saw that and went through that in great detail last time. I couldn't believe when I looked at my watch and realized just how...I did the math on how long I preached last week and I have been in shock in the intervening 7 days since then. But all of that to say that the reason that you can preach for 80 minutes on the humanity of Christ and not even get started is because there is so much biblical testimony to the reality of his humanity.

Now, the question is: why is that important? Well, let me back up just a minute before I answer that question. We are used to, many of us anyway in some of our circles, we are used to hearing teaching on the deity of Christ because that tends to be more directly confronted in our day and age when cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the reality of his deity, that they make him somewhat less than God, when that is attacked, there has been abundant response to that and there has been a great defense from the church on the deity of Christ. In the process of that, sometimes we, as we're fighting one battle, we lose sight of other things that are going on and one of the benefits and beauties of teaching systematically through the Scriptures is that it forces you and it enables you and it gives you the opportunity to see the full balance of biblical teaching rather than simply focusing on one particular aspect that might interest you. When you teach through systematically, you see the full range of God's revelation to us.

Now, so with all of that introduction, this emphasis that we're making on the humanity of Christ does nothing to diminish his deity. We affirm the full deity of Christ, that he has the same essence as God the Father. We affirm all of that in the midst of what we're teaching here today. What we're doing is we're kind of bringing out another aspect of his nature, his human nature, and so we are focusing on that so that we can get the full benefit of the teaching. We do that because this is where John starts. John makes a huge emphasis on the humanity of Christ as we start and so we just want to understand why he is doing that.

In John 1:14 it says, "The Word became flesh," meaning God became a man. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." That's John 1:14. That is in an emphasis on the incarnation, the reality that God became a man and when we say that God became a man, we say that informed by what we looked at last week: he was a man in every sense. Every sense that we are save for the sin in our experience. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Philippians 2, speaking of Christ, he said, "Although He existed in the form of God," which means by very nature he was God, "Although He existed in the form of God He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

He became a man. Even though he was God from all of eternity, he became a man and in light of all of those things, what we saw last week in just this very brief overview, there is

one question that you can ask that will plunge you into the depths of the mind and the love of God. There is one simple question that you can ask that opens up worlds of understanding about what it means to be a Christian. Why you need to be a Christian and why it is that Christ had to become a man in order to accomplish our salvation. Only one question opens the door into that great garden of truth. It takes you out of the house and into the garden where all of the sweet smelling, blooming flowers of the greatness of salvation are to be found and cherished. One question in light of all of this, the simple question is: why? Why? Why would the eternal Son of God leave the glory of heaven in order to take on human flesh? From human standards, from a human perspective, that makes absolutely no sense. The human race is so selfish and the human race is so self-centered and, particularly in our day and age, so self-promoting. The motto of YouTube is "Broadcast Yourself." We live in an environment where you broadcast yourself; where you accumulate glory to yourself. Why would the eternal Son of God who was dwelling in the perfection of glory with God the Father leave all of that behind and become a man? That makes no human sense. That is contrary to our day and age.

So when we teach and proclaim the humanity of Christ in these weeks, we are preaching and proclaiming things that go directly contrary to the spirit of the age but more than that, beloved, more than that, more than confronting the spirit of the age, that's really not the main point here although it does that indirectly, what I want you to see today for your own spiritual life, this is all directly relevant to you individually, to understand the humanity of Christ is to have a gateway into understanding your own salvation and to understand the reasons that you needed to be saved. The reason that you needed outside intervention from the Son of God because if you think about it, look at it this way: the truth of the matter is that not one of us, you and I on our own, we do not know where to find God. Not only that, we don't know where to find him and we don't have the power to get to him. I mean, he is an invisible God and we are used to visible flesh. We cannot find our way to God and so to understand the humanity of Christ is to have a gateway into understanding your own need for salvation and why Christ became a man. All of these things are going to be unfolded for us as we go through what we have here this morning.

Why did Jesus become a man? We had up on the screen earlier; the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. Well, you're more lost than you realize. You were more in darkness than you realized and what we're going to see today is going to help us understand that and the humanity of Christ is the nexus, it is the pivot point to help you see these things with great clarity.

Why did Jesus become a man? I'll give you 4 points here today. First of all, you need a mediator with God. You need a mediator with God. That's the first point. All men and women, you and I in particular, have a problem. We have a serious problem: we cannot know God and we are under the wrath of God for sin. Our sin, your sin, my sin and there are 2 aspects to that that I want to draw out for you. We don't often think about them both at the same time. There is a gap, an uncrossable chasm between our essence and the essence of God. God is immortal, invisible, God only wise as the hymn writer puts it. God is uncreated. God is eternal and we have none of those attributes. Those are aspects that theologians call the incommunicable attributes of God, those things which are not

transferred from God to humanity and cannot be transferred from God to humanity: his omniscience; his omnipotence; his omnipresence. This great holy majestic God is beyond our reach. He has a different essence. There is different stuff that makes up God than makes us up. He has an entirely different constitution than humanity does and because of that, my friends, my beloved friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, because of that, there is this great gap between the essence of God and you and your essence and you cannot cross over that on your own power.

Exodus 15:11. I'll let you just kind of jot these verse references down and you can look them up later. Exodus 15:11 says, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Who is like the God of the Bible? Not you. Not me. He is exalted and alone supreme over all and there is no one like him and if you and I would desire to have fellowship with this God, we can't get to him on our own. We do not have that spiritual capacity to be able to reach him on our own simply because there is a difference in essence between him and us. And if you're wondering, "Am I getting this? Do I understand this?" Let me help you understand; I'll give you some insight into whether you're getting this or not. As you contemplate this unique essence and this holiness of God, holiness in the sense of his great separateness, there should be a sense of humility that comes over your soul as you realize this. It starts to humble you to realize that he is great and exalted and you are not. You and I are not like him. He is higher and greater and mightier and more holy than we are and if you are starting to feel the weight of that to some extent you're understanding what the Scriptures are teaching on this point. God's surpassing greatness means that we cannot reach him on our own. We do not know our way to him. We cannot find our way to him on our own and those who wander in darkness on the face of the world who don't know the Scriptures, who do not know Christ, who have not heard the Gospel, are hopelessly and miserably lost. There is nothing that they can do to save themselves because of this great difference in essence.

Now, the problem is exacerbated even more. It's worse than a difference in essence because there is a spiritual gap between man and God that is caused by the sin of man. Isaiah 59:2 says that, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." So it's a multiplied problem. It is a complex spiritual problem that man has. There is a gap in essence that would make God unreachable on its own and that is exponentially multiplied and made worse by our sin. Our sins create and multiply that gap with God. We cannot find him on our own. Scripture says even if we could we wouldn't look for him. It says that there is no one who seeks for God, Romans 3.

So you can just see the problem, right? Great difference in essence and infinite difference in essence. There is a spiritual gap of sin and guilt that keeps us from him and then the heart of man is not inclined to seek him anyway. Wow, that's a problem. How is it then that anyone can be saved? How is it that this immense gap between you and God can ever be bridged? You can't do it on your own. This is where the humanity of Christ comes in. We need someone who can intervene on our behalf. We need outside intervention. We need someone to come between God and us in order to bridge that gap because we can't

do it on our own. We need someone to help us. Where is heaven? How do you get there? We are lost in sin. We are lost on our own abilities. Miserably, hopelessly lost.

Now, into that miserable human condition Jesus Christ steps. Jesus Christ takes on humanity. Fully God and yet fully man as we saw last week and now there has been a connection made between God and man. 1 Timothy 2:5, write this down, I'm going to repeat this verse because it's so crucial to our point here this morning. 1 Timothy 2:5 says this, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Let me say that again, 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Now, think with me for a moment: what is it that a mediator does? What does a mediator do? What is the function of one who is a mediator? Well, a mediator intervenes between 2 parties who are separated or 2 parties that are in dispute. Quite often in the legal process, the judge will assign a mediator to try to find a common agreement between the parties that are litigants between each other and a mediator will listen to one side, listen to the other side and try to help find some common ground. We're familiar with the concept of a mediator even in our legal system. Well, Jesus, in light of everything that we were saying earlier about this great gap between us and God, Jesus is the mediator who brings a different essence into contact with the opposite side. Jesus is the mediator who bridges the gap caused by your sin. He is the one who can connect us to God in a way that we could never do on our own.

God had to take the initiative, you understand that, right? It was never going to be the works of your hands that got you from your essence to God's essence. It was never going to be anything that your guilty hands did in order to get you into right relationship with God. It had to be divine initiative or it was never going to happen at all. That's just an impossibility. We can't get there. We can't jump that high. It had to be God coming down instead of us jumping up in order to get there and in the humanity of Christ, you see God becoming the mediator, God himself becoming the mediator with the human race. Jesus has 2 natures: he's fully God and he's fully man and because he has those 2 natures, he is able to make a connection that otherwise would be impossible to make. He can represent us to God because he himself is a man. He can represent God to us because he too is God. All the fullness of deity dwells in him, Colossians 2:9 says.

So understand that in your desperate spiritual condition, the humanity of Christ, here's the point, I don't want you to lose this because our focus here is the humanity of Christ, why is that necessary. Why should you treasure the doctrine of the humanity of Christ? One reason that you should treasure the doctrine of the humanity of Christ, the reality of his humanity is because that doctrine, his humanity makes a bridge of an otherwise impassable gap possible. Jesus became a man so that there could be a mediator between God and men and his mediator capacity is absolutely essential if you are to be saved. If Jesus Christ were not a man, there would still be no connection between God and man and you would be miserably lost in your sins with no hope of deliverance.

So if you are a Christian and you love being saved and you're confident of your salvation, you should rejoice in the humanity of Christ and you should give thanks to God. You

should give thanks to Christ that he stepped down out of ineffable glory to come into humanity for 33 years in order to accomplish your salvation; in order to be your mediator between God and man. We're not talking about abstract theoretical theology here, we're talking about the crux, the crucible of what is necessary to save your eternal soul and when you understand that, then you can understand why John, the Apostle John, is so animated from the start of his letter to defend the humanity against those who would change Christ into some spiritual ghost who had no real contact with humanity. Of course he's animated about it, the whole of the Gospel is at stake.

So, why did God become a man? Why did Christ become a man? 1. You needed a mediator. Secondly, the second reason that we can see from Scripture that Jesus became a man, kind of building on the first point is: that you needed a human sacrifice for your sin. You needed a human sacrifice for your sin. Scriptures are very clear about this. Your own blood would never pay for your own sins because your blood is guilty. You have broken God's law. You are under the guilt and condemnation of the law of God apart from Christ and there must be a sacrifice in order to pay the penalty of that sin. Back in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, you see over and over and over again through all of the sacrifices that were set up that God was teaching that there had to be a blood sacrifice for sin and in Christ, we look and we see the human blood sacrifice for sin. You see, the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. Not just mere physical death but spiritual death. Condemnation. Eternal judgment. And that is the weight of the penalty of the law that was on all of us apart from Christ.

The terrible weight of the judgment of God was upon us and you did not have the capacity to remove that guilt from yourself. There was nothing that you could do. You were the guilty one and the penalty had to be fulfilled and here you are with a different essence from God, guilty in sin, unable to seek God, not even desiring to seek God, how is your soul ever going to be saved? It's impossible, humanly speaking. That's utterly impossible. For redemption to take place, there had to be some manner of human intervention but where were we going to look for a human who could save us? The greatest king in Israel, King David, failed himself. There is no human help. There is no priest, human priest, that can intervene on your behalf. There is no other man because every other man is under the same guilt that you are. We look around at each other horizontally and say, "You can't help me and I can't help you." Where are we going to find deliverance under this most desperate condition?

Something with a different nature couldn't redeem us. Turn to Hebrews 10. I want to show you this. Hebrews 10, which I'm increasingly believing over my years of studying 1 John, I'm increasingly believing that Hebrews really helps us understand the book of 1 John and I'll show you that more when we get into chapter 2 which I'm looking forward to, but we won't get there today. Something with a different nature could not save you. Could not redeem you. Could not pay the price of your sin and you see that through the failure of the Old Testament animal sacrifices to bring a permanent forgiveness.

Look at chapter 10, verse 1. This is a very powerful argument. Chapter 10, verse 1 of Hebrews says, "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and

not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near." He says the sacrifices were repeatedly offered and the fact that they were repeatedly offered was evidence that they were not adequate to take away sin. If a sacrifice had been adequate, they would have stopped offering it but they had to keep offering it anyway. The mere repetition of the sacrifices was a testimony that they were not satisfactory and he goes on and says that in verse 2, "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year." The very fact of the sacrifices showed not only are they not taking away sin, the repetition is simply a reminder of sin, sin, sin. Every time it's a reminder of sin.

Why is that? Look at verse 4, "It is impossible," look at that word again, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." When you step back and think about it, of course that's true. How could an animal with no moral consciousness, the blood of that animal, cleanse the guilt of a morally accountable man? It's impossible. There is no way. There is no way and so those sacrifices were never designed to offer an actual atonement for sin, they were simply pictures that were pointing to a sacrifice that was still yet to come from the perspective of the Old Testament.

Now, flash forward to the cross. Flash forward to the work of Jesus Christ and look at verse 10. Look at the emphasis of humanity here in this passage, actually let's start in verse 9, I guess. Christ here is speaking to the Father saying, "Behold, I have come to do your will. He takes away the first in order to establish the second." He's doing away with the animal sacrifices by the sacrifice of himself and look what it says in verse 10, "By this will we," meaning Christians, "have been sanctified through the offering of the body," there's the humanity, "the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest," verse 11, "stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." He sat down because the work was finished and there was never going to need to be a repetition of sacrifice and this passage is a total refutation of the Roman Catholic Mass. We don't continually re-offer Christ. The Bible says repeatedly he was offered once for all. Once for all. Look at verse 14, "By one offering," by one offering, "He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

Now, let's tie this back into his humanity and bring it out. God's plan for your salvation, God's plan for the salvation of his church, the same plan for all men everywhere, was tied to the sacrifice of Christ. God's plan for salvation meant that there had to be the shedding of innocent human blood for the forgiveness of human sin. Animal blood could not forgive human sin and so there had to be a human sacrifice, but the problem was is it had to be an innocent human sacrifice in order to function as a substitute for you. Jesus became a man, he took on full humanity, and lived in perfect obedient to God's law throughout his 33 years of earthly life, he did all of that in order to become that perfect, innocent human sacrifice that was necessary for the remission of your sins. Had he not done that, you would still be hell bound. God poured out the punishment for human sin on a real human being, our Lord Jesus Christ, and you needed that human sacrifice on

your behalf or you would have been lost forever. Rightfully, righteously judged and damned for the sin of your soul, and yet Christ came as a man and intervened and according to the eternal plan of God, intervened for you at the cross by shedding his innocent, precious life blood so that you could be forgiven.

The Bible emphasizes the humanity of Christ in this way. The Bible talks about the sacrifice of Christ, talks about salvation, in the context of the humanity of Christ and I want you to see this because I think it is missed sometimes and especially where the Bible is not taught systematically and if it's taught topically and you're in a church where they are teaching about relationships all the time and how to live without anxiety or whatever, there are places for that, but if the Bible is not systematically taught, you miss this because this isn't brought out. It's not a topic that your mind is immediately drawn to but what I want you to see here, the reason I'm making that point, is that the Scriptures make this point and therefore it is important for us.

Look at the book of Romans 8. We're kind of bouncing around in the Scriptures today to draw these themes together. Romans 8, if you would turn to Romans 8:3. I want you to see this. Again, we're looking at the connection of the humanity of Christ to these issues. That's what I want you to see today. Next week we'll talk about something else, this week it's the humanity of Christ. Romans 8:3, "What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh," it is not able to save us; the law was never designed to save anyone but instead simply to expose our sin and to show us our need for Christ. "What the Law could not do, God did," look at this, "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." It appeared that his humanity was exactly like ours. It wasn't exactly like ours because Christ was without sin, that was the only point of difference, the big one, but "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us." The law required a curse. The law cursed sinners and that curse had to be satisfied and when Christ was offered on the cross as a sacrifice to God, the curse was satisfied on your behalf. In his earthly life, Jesus obeyed the law perfectly and so he was innocent and when he was offered up on the cross, a human sacrifice effective for the forgiveness of your sins was rendered to God and therein lies the hope of your salvation. And what I want you to see today is a very simple point is that if Christ was not a man, that could not have happened. If he was not a real human in every point like you, he could not have been a substitute for you. It depended on his humanity because you needed a human sacrifice for your human sin.

One last passage for you to look at, Galatians 4. I say last, you realize in context that's not the very last thing. We're just kind of getting warmed up right now but the last one for this point until I get to the next passage, I guess. Galatians 4:4-5 says, "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," there it is again, the humanity of Christ, "born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law," might buy them out of the condemnation of the law, in other words, so, "that we might receive the adoption as sons." The reason that you can be in the family of God, I've never put it this way before, the reason that you and I can be in the family of God is because Jesus Christ was willing to become part of the family of man and absent that



loving, gracious, self-initiated obedience to the Father's plan, absent that intervention of Christ, you and I would be lost but the fact that he intervened and became a man meant that you could become children of God and if you understand that, if you understand that, then your heart will overflow with gratitude and love and worship to Jesus Christ. If someone could hear these things with indifference and shrug their shoulders and walk away unchanged by them, then they are simply testifying that they are not a believer in Christ because if you see and understand this, your heart responds to it with humility and gratitude as a natural consequence of the reality of this truth being planted in your heart. You see, Jesus was born of a woman in order to redeem us from the requirements of the law.

Look at another passage in Colossians. Again, the humanity of Christ. I want you to see this over and over again. I want you to see that this is not an isolated theme in Scripture. This is repeated over and over again and when you see the repetition in Scripture, then it starts to weigh on your mind, "Oh, this is important," and you start to hold that truth as dear in your mind. Colossians 1:21-22 says, "Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds," looking back to the time before these believers in Colossae were Christians, looking back pre-conversion, this is what you were like, you and I, the same application applies. You were formerly alienated and hostile in mind toward God, and yet here you are today, many of you, if not most of you, here you are alive in Christ with a hope of heaven, knowing the forgiveness of sin, a cleansed conscience, having hope and confidence even in this world, you have that even though you were formerly hostile to God.

That's what you were like. How is it that you got from there to here? Verse 22, "He has now reconciled you," look at it, "in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." He reconciled you in his fleshly body. It was in his fleshly body where the weight of sin, the guilt of sin, was punished. Absent that, we're still lost. With that, we are reconciled to God and that will be shown, verse 23, by our perseverance in these things, "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard." Our perseverance in the faith shows that our faith is real.

So, Jesus Christ overcame your alienation to God. It wasn't his alienation, he was in perfect harmony with God the Father. He overcame your alienation by taking on human flesh and going to the cross where sin was punished in his fleshly body. You needed a human sacrifice for sin. You couldn't provide it on your own and Jesus Christ, of his own initiative, did that for you. You see, when you understand these things it makes you love Christ, right? You see that as the only proper response: eternally, profoundly grateful to him for doing that which you could not do. You needed a mediator, you needed a sacrifice for sin and he had to be a man to do that.

Now, there is more. There is more to this. Why did Christ become a man? You needed a mediator. You needed a human sacrifice for your human sin. Thirdly, you needed and still need, you need a pattern for your life. You need a pattern for your life. Because Jesus was a man, his life gives us an example to follow. Now, just follow me here: if what the

false teachers in 1 John, and you can turn back there, we're going to go to a passage in 1 John here. It's nice to when you're teaching through 1 John to sometimes refer to it, I guess. If Jesus Christ as these false teachers had been suggesting was a spiritual manifestation, not a real man, you can't follow anything about his example, right? You're not an angel, you're a man, you're a woman. You can't follow someone who is not sharing in humanity with you. We can't act like angels because they have a different nature than we do. If we're going to have a pattern for life, we have to follow the pattern of another man and Christ, because he is a man, gives us that perfect pattern to follow.

Look at 1 John 2:6. Actually, we'll start in verse 4 just for the sake of context. 1 John 2:4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him," watch this, "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." What is that saying? It says 2,000 years ago Christ walked on this earth and he walked in an obedient way to the word of God.

Now, for those of us that claim to know him, what this passage is saying is that if we claim to know him, we claim to have his Spirit living within us, then our lives ought to reflect the quality of the life that he lived here on earth. We have a pattern in Christ. If we are following him as our head, as our Lord and Master, then our lives must somehow reflect the pattern and quality of his life and the only reason that is possible is because Jesus Christ was fully a man. His humanity was real and therefore it can be emulated. He has an example that we can follow. If he was a disembodied spirit, men in the flesh cannot follow that kind of an example. The mere fact that we are called to follow his example is a testimony to the reality of his humanity.

And beloved, if we were to study the life of Christ in depth, that would be a worthy goal for us at some time in the future of our fellowship to do a long study on the life of Christ, if we were to study the life of Christ in depth, you would find a pattern to follow in every situation that you face in life. Every single one of them. As young children, you find an example to follow in Christ and I appreciate you parents that are bringing your kids in here and listening. I think that's awesome. They should understand. You should teach your children that even in Christ, even at their young age, they have an example to follow because even Christ lived in subjection to his parents. He lived in perfect obedience to his parents. Your children have an example in Christ to follow and how much more us as adults have in Christ an example to follow.

Let me give you a couple of examples here, a couple of illustrations. Turn over to the Gospel of John 13, beginning in verse 12. I'll give you a moment to turn there. John 13:12. You all remember the story, Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples. He washed their feet. The Son of God washed the dirty feet of his disciples. He says in verse 5, chapter 13, verse 5, Jesus "poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand later.'" Peter, of course,

objected. Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." He washed their feet. Verse 12 now, look at this, "So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again," the job was finished, he had undergone this, humanly speaking, humiliating act of washing the dirty feet of his disciples, something that if any of us were asked to do, we would object to. "What do you mean, wash your feet? What do you mean, tie your shoes? Are you kidding me?" The Lord of glory did that. The Lord of glory did that and he says in verse 12, "Do you know what I have done to you?" Verse 13, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then," watch the power of this logic, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example," there it is, he gave us a pattern, "That you also should do as I did to you."

His point is not that we should wash each other's feet as some churches do that, as a third ordinance of the church they have these formal footwashing services. But that's not Jesus' point here at all. It's a much broader, much more profound point that he is making. What he is saying is that. "As a follower of mine, you see me acting as a servant. This was a servant's job that I just did and I did it for you. Now you, as my followers, should act as servants to one another," and in that menial labor in the service of Christ, menial labor within the church is elevated to a great high standard because it is simply a following of the pattern that Christ, the Lord of glory himself set for us. His earthly life, what he did with his earthly life and time, here he showed us he was willing to be a servant. In that, we find an example that gives us no room for objecting to menial acts of service on behalf of those who are around us in the body of Christ. We gladly undertake even the most menial labor for the sake of being able to follow the example of Christ. If you did not have that example, you would not go to it naturally. You would not be naturally inclined to do that. In the example of Christ, you see a call to repent from your pride, a call to serve those around you because that is what Jesus did in his earthly life. It's very powerful.

Likewise, one more example, Jesus shows us how to respond to unjust suffering. Turn to 1 Peter 2 which is just before the book of 1 John. 1 Peter 2:21, in the context of calling servants to submit even to unreasonable masters, Peter says in verse 21, "You have been called for this purpose," watch this, watch this, "since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." You see, you're to follow his example and he suffered and how do you follow his example in your suffering, even when you are suffering unjustly and unrighteously, falsely accused, slandered in your life, in your ministry, in your work, in your character? Falsely accused. Well, that's what happened to Christ, right? Falsely accused. He wasn't hanging on the cross because of any real guilt that he had done, all of the accusations were trumped up against him. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." Earlier they had spat upon him and blindfolded him and beaten him with their fists and he didn't retaliate. That's what Peter is pointing to here. He said, "Christ suffered, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth." Watch it, verse 23, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but," here's the positive side of it, "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." He was content to leave his unjust suffering in the hands of his

Father rather than retaliate and establish his own position against those who were opposing him. He kept, as it were, his hand over his mouth.

And here's the point, beloved, here is the point for today: Jesus, who was a man, did that. He responded to mistreatment with patience and without retaliation. He submitted his case, as it were, to the heavenly Father and now you, as a Christian, look to him for your example in the midst of your own unrighteous suffering. You cannot as a Christian retaliate against those who have treated you wrongly. You can't because you are following a different example. Instead of driving you to revenge, it should drive you to your heavenly Father. It should drive you to Christ and say, "Oh, Lord Jesus, you know exactly what this is like. You know what it's like when men lied against you and you didn't retaliate. Men inflicted unjust suffering on you and you didn't retaliate. You turned to the Father instead. Lord Jesus, I look to you because I want to be the same way as you."

And the suffering which so irritates and animates you and I sometimes suddenly becomes, you must understand this, you must understand this especially as our world gets increasingly dark and vengeful toward Christianity, you must understand this, that what is supposed to come out of your heart in those times when you are suffering like that is not retaliation, not revenge, not always arguing your case, it is meant to drive you to your heavenly Father for greater intimacy and consolation from him. It's not to justify yourself before men, it is to draw you into greater intimacy with the one who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and you go to him and you pour out your heart to him, "Lord, you understand. Lord, I trust you. Lord, you sympathize in my weakness. You have been here and you are here unjustly. If people knew the truth about me, I would suffer more. But, Lord, you know and I'm following you and I want to dwell in the sympathy. I want to share in these sufferings and join in this with you. You know what this is like. I have a little small taste of what it was like for you 2,000 years ago in this and I love you all the more for it."

And all of a sudden your suffering and the unjust accusations that come against you because of your faith are suddenly redeemed into a great eternal purpose of intimacy with Christ and you can forget about trying to justify yourself before men because you're so preoccupied with the greater reality and the more valuable reality of being in greater intimacy with him and you just get along and you get on your knees or you go for a long lonely walk and say, "Lord, it is so precious that you understand this. You are my example and I'm going to respond to this unjust suffering like you responded to yours. I'm going to trust my Father. I'm going to trust you. I don't have to defend myself here, you'll take care of it." And that has a transformational impact on life. It doesn't matter who wronged you. Look, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of the intimate circle. Jesus knows what that's like. He knows what betrayal is like. In the most intimate of human relationships, he was betrayed and those of you that have been betrayed, have a sympathetic ear with Christ. All because he was a man. Walked on the same sod we do and we love him for it.

Final point, final thought that's especially sweet and it's kind of just building on this. I kind of bled into my fourth point with that last few comments. You needed an example. Christ gave you an example. You know, you look around and you see people and it's just getting, I know it's just getting worse and worse, that people are so miserably lost. Not just spiritually but they have no idea how to live life. They have no idea what to do with themselves and what to do with their relationships because they don't have a pattern. In Christ, we have a pattern. We have a blueprint to follow.

Fourthly, you needed an example, fourthly, you need a sympathetic helper. You need a sympathetic helper and, again, this is just kind of reiterating what I said earlier. The notes were a whole lot cleaner than the way it came out. A lot more logically precise. Point 4: you need a sympathetic helper. Because Jesus has lived as a man, he is able to sympathize more fully with us in our own experiences.

Look back at Hebrews. We looked at these verses last week so we won't spend much time here. Hebrews 2:18. All of this tied to the humanity of Christ. I hope and pray and trust that you see how precious this is. Verse 18, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." He knows what temptation is like. He never sinned but when you're under the power of temptation, he understands what that is like and he is able to come to your help with an added sense of empathy as a result of it.

Look over at chapter 4, verse 15 in Hebrews. "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses." Stating that positively, "We do have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses." That's what he's saying. We have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses, and he is "One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." It looks so impossible to you to live righteously in the midst of the circumstances of your life, to trust God despite all outward appearances to the contrary. To trust him when provision is lacking; to trust him when there doesn't seem to be a way forward. It seems so impossible. Where am I going to do this? How am I going to do this? Where does it come from? Well, when you're feeling that way and I'm preaching to myself now as much as anyone else, when you're feeling that way, look to Christ. Look to Christ. He is one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin and the weakness that you feel in the midst of that temptation, the weakness that you feel in your failures, the weakness that you feel in your uncertainty about the future, look, the whole point of that, just like I was saying a while back a few minutes ago, the whole point of that is to drive you to greater intimacy with Christ. God deprives you so that you will look to him, not to punish you. He's simply drawing you into greater intimacy, that intimacy for which you were created.

Verse 16, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence," with boldness, that word means "freedom of speech," to speak freely to God in the midst of those times of want, those times of temptation, "let us draw near with a sense of confidence and privilege to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Your position of want, your lack of understanding, your lack of power, your weakness, all of those things that are endemic to human existence even as a believer in Christ, all of

that, all of that weight is simply meant, not to push you down from on top, but to get behind your back and the weight of that is to push you to the throne of grace so that you would grow spiritually. So that you would be conscious of this, conscious of your want, conscious of going to Christ in the midst of it, so that you would ultimately see the display of his grace and mercy as you have sought him in your time of privation, and the time of want then is transformed into an opportunity of great spiritual blessing because it draws you to Christ. You seek him and he ultimately displays his grace and mercy to you and all of that, beloved, all of that works because Christ was a man himself and able to sympathize with your suffering and not only able, willing and powerful to pour out further grace and mercy upon your situation. That's what his humanity has done. We need that, don't we? We get weighed down. We get discouraged and we need a sympathetic ear.

So are you tempted? So was Christ. Are you suffering? So did Christ. Are you in physical need? So was Christ. Have you been slandered? So was Christ. Have you been betrayed by friends? So was Christ. Are you weeping in grief? So did Christ. He wept outside the tomb of Lazarus. He wept over Jerusalem. He was a man of great emotion, actually. He knew what it was like to weep. To weep, to care for parents. In the person of Christ, God himself has experienced human need, weakness and sorrow and now that he has triumphed over the grave, now that the work of redemption is finished, now that he has ascended to heaven on high, he is in a great position of glory, power and authority and yet he is there as your sympathetic brother in your suffering to bring aid and comfort to you in your affliction. He lovingly receives you, not as one wondering why you are struggling, but one who receives you as that sympathetic friend and says, "I know. I know what it's like. Welcome. Come. Share your heart with me. Pour this out to me. That is one of the reasons why I became a man was so that I could be an ever present help to you in times just like this."

Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, knew what it was like to be discouraged. In his exposition of Psalm 88, this is one of my favorite things that Spurgeon ever said. In his exposition of Psalm 88 which is a very dark Psalm, it's the one Psalm where there is almost no ray of light in it at all, Spurgeon said this as he was writing out his exposition of it, speaking with a little bit of that English manner of expression. He said this and I quote, "He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would dare or care to tell of inward anguish. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, having with the exception of the sin of it, having felt it all in Gethsemane when he was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." He told the disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved," and if you are here and you're deeply grieved, you've got just another point of connection with our Lord Jesus Christ to go to pour your heart out to him and to know, informed by the Scriptures, that he receives you with sympathy and grace and mercy.

Jesus has helped us. He mediated for us with God. He took the penalty of our sin as a human sacrifice. He's an example for us to follow. He's a sympathetic helper in times of need. All flowing out of the reality of his humanity. Why did Jesus become a man? He did it for you. He did it for us. And now ascended into heaven, he represents us as our

brother before a loving, gracious Father, all working together to ensure the outcome and the perfection and the culmination of your salvation. I love him, don't you?

Let's pray together.

*Lord Jesus, we honor you here today. We thank you for your grace, your mercy and we're left with the question: why would you bother? Why would you bother for such things? Why would you do this for men who fall short of your glory? Ultimately, there was only one answer to that question and it is because you are a loving, gracious, merciful Savior who had great sympathy and pity on us in our miserable condition. Our Father, it's because you so loved the world that you gave us your only begotten Son. It's because you so loved the world, you so loved the church, that you sent Christ in human flesh so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*Father, I'm sure in a room of this size there are people who do not yet know Christ. I pray for them today. I pray that this display of Christ before them would so warm their hearts and draw them to him, it would be such a display of your great kindness to men, that your kindness in this display of the humanity of Christ would lead them to repentance.*

*Father, may your grace also encourage those of us who know you. Father, as we have walked through and we have struggled in the past days and we have struggles in the days and yet to come, Father, may the consideration of these great truths build in us a hope and a confidence and an assurance and a willing to take that next step forward knowing that that next step is going hand-in-hand, footstep-in-footstep, with a great Savior who did a great work on our behalf and who has still yet more to show us and to display to us when we enter into our heavenly home.*

*Lord Jesus, we do love you. We love you so imperfectly and we falter so many times but, Lord, with Peter in John 21 we say, "Look at our hearts." You know all things, Lord. You know that we love you and with that, Father, not as a statement of merit but just as a statement of heart desire, you know that we love you. With that, receive our thanks for the humanity of Christ. Receive our thanks for our salvation. Receive our thanks for even one another and being able to share in these things together as fellow believers in Christ. And, Father, enable us and empower us individually to walk this week, this day, in a manner that glorifies you. And Father, we do ask you once more, we beg you once again, to bless us collectively so that these initial days and weeks of ministry that we're doing together and sharing in together would be the foundation that you would be building to have a clarion call of the Gospel, a clarion call of Bible teaching in this area, that would outlive every one of us. Father, may your truth prevail in this body both today and in the days to come, in the years to come and, Father, may your sweet people in this room know the comfort and the joy and the hope of believing in Christ and have the sense of that energizing their lives today and over these next few days and the week to come. We commit ourselves and our lives to you, grateful for all that Christ has done and humbly submitting ourselves to your leading guidance and blessing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

You have been listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church. For more information about our ministry, including Pastor Don's blog and our location and service times, please visit us at [truthcommunitychurch.com](http://truthcommunitychurch.com). You will also find Don's sermon library where you can download free messages on many biblical passages and topics. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.