

The Person of Christ

Part 1

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[00:00:01] ...is Christ. And already today we've had our precious Lord before us. We've had the foreshadowings.

When we come to the Gospel we have the facts. We've had the types. We've had the pictures.

And again, in the New Testament we have the reality. We've been considering the work of Christ. And I would like to supplement that this evening by looking at the person of Christ, because indeed that is the sum and substance of Christianity, the person and the work of Christ.

[00:01:02] And with that in view, I'd like to turn our thoughts to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, and the first 32 verses. The aspect of one who came close to us, born of the Virgin, growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. So truly a man that on many occasions we find him in prayer.

This is the Gospel of the man Christ Jesus, even on one occasion, spending all night in prayer to God. And so in a very wonderful way we have the meal offering. We also have the prosperity or peace offering, because what we have in Luke's Gospel brings us into communion with him and [00:02:06] brings us into communion with his God and Father. The grace of God is very prominent in this Gospel. So that would, I think, connect itself with what we've had before us in Matthew and Mark. We have the sin offering, the trespass offering, John's Gospel, the burnt offering, but particularly in Luke we may view the Lord in the aspect of the meal offering and of the peace or prosperity offering. That's just suggestive. Perhaps some here have different ideas on how the offerings in Leviticus relate to the Gospels. Of course, I'll be very glad to have other thoughts on this also. So now we're in Luke's Gospel, chapter 5 and verse 1. I think we shall see that there is a certain [00:03:02] sequence in these four incidents. They are put together in a certain way. If something happens on one occasion, and then the Lord comes to one city, and then he speaks of one day, and then it says, after these things, certain occasion, certain city, a particular day, and consequences. And if I were to put a caption over my subject tonight, what I would wish to point out is, man, nothing, Christ, everything. This is what God would seek [00:04:05] to teach us. As to ourselves, as we're standing in the divine presence, we're nothing. We have to be put out of sight. In a sense, that's what we do in baptism. We're buried. But Christ is to be magnified. Christ is to be everything. And so we are called to walk in newness of life.

Luke tells us in writing to most excellent Theophilus what he intended to do in this Gospel. He sought to draw up a relation concerning the matters fully believed among us. We, as Christians, have

matters which are fully believed among us. I suppose that's why we're [00:05:08] here this evening. We have a common faith, common outlook, common understanding based on the word of God, things which are fully believed among us. How we can thank God that we have it today in his written word. And he tells us there were those who were eyewitnesses. They saw the things. He says there were those who were attendants on the word. The Lord Jesus here is spoken of as the word, just as he is in John's Gospel chapter 1. Only in John's Gospel chapter 1, it takes us back to the past eternity when the word was in the beginning with God. But here, these attendants on the word were attendants on the word made flesh, the word that became flesh and tabernacled among us. And so he says there were those who came into contact with the Lord [00:06:02] Jesus who could witness what they saw, witness what they attended upon. And it says that they tried to draw up a relation concerning these matters. But then he said, it seemed good to me also, he said to Theophilus, to write unto you with method. In other words, there's a certain order or methodology or manner in which Luke presents the truth. And he also tells us something else. It doesn't say he was an eyewitness. We know he was not. It doesn't say he was an attendant on the word. He was a Gentile convert, we understand. But it says that he was accurately acquainted from the origin with all things. Now, how was it? How is it possible that Luke was accurately acquainted from the origin with all things? There's only one answer. [00:07:05] Inspiration. Revelation. The truth was revealed to him by God. He was the inspired writer of this, gospel. And so he says we can know the certainty, the certainty of those things in which we've been instructed. So in Christianity, we are divinely instructed. We have certainties. And Luke was simply the human instrument, the pen writer, so to speak. But God put together the thoughts which he [00:08:02] communicated to us in order that we, along with Theophilus and along with Christians down through the centuries, might be accurately acquainted with these things in which we've been instructed. And in order that we might know the certainty of them. Raises the question, of course, are you an instructed believer? Because we should be instructed believers. And the word of God, the gospel record, is given to us for our instruction. But really, I only looked at the preface to the gospel to show that Luke wrote with method. He put things together in a certain way. And actually, when we come to look at it carefully, it's not a chronological record. He was [00:09:01] not following through the truce in a historical sequence. Rather, he was putting the incidents and the parables and the activities of the Lord Jesus together in what we might describe as a moral way. In a way in which he connected them to bring out important lessons. Mark, and particularly, I suppose, is more the chronological or the historical order. Matthew, that we know, is divided up into the great discourses. And in John's gospel, everything is centered around the signs that the Lord did and also the feasts of the Jews at various stages. So we've got to say then when we look at Luke that the Lord, in the manner in which the things are given, would seek to bring, shall we say, spiritual lessons or moral lessons before us. [00:10:05] And I think we'll see that in chapter 5 where, as I said, man is nothing and Christ is everything.

Now, the starting point is this familiar story of the Lord standing by the lake of Gennesaret and the crowds, the multitude, pressing upon him to hear the word of God. It's good to hear the word of God. It'd be nice if there'd been a multitude here tonight. I'm sure it would. People were standing around the sides, pushing in at the door, desiring to hear what the Lord had for them. Well, things are weak amongst us. It's a day of remnant testimony. We speak about the fable few, but nevertheless, despite conditions of outward weakness, despite departure, and in the [00:11:15] last 50, 60 years there's been great departure in the Christian profession, much weakness. In spite of that, the word of God is still the word of God. And we can bless God that we at least are here to take heed to what he might say to us through the word of God. And so here the multitudes were pressing on the Lord Jesus as he stood by the lake and seeing the two ships with the fishermen out of the men in their nets, he enters into one of the ships and asks that Simon thrust it out a little from the land and using the water as a

natural sounding board, he sat down and he taught the [00:12:01] people out of the ship. And then when he was finished his discourse, he said to Simon, he said, launch out into the deep. And he said, let down your nets for a haul of fish. And Simon was a little bit hesitant, I suppose, because he said, what's he saying? We've been out fishing all night and we've caught nothing. I went fishing once on a fishing boat. I suppose it was all afternoon and caught nothing. That was in the Shetland Isles. And I thought, well, at least caught no fish. I can go to the fish and chip shop now and I'll get some fish that way. And then when I got [00:13:03] there, I discovered there were no fish left. All the fish had been sold. So I was not too successful at catching fish. But Simon was an experienced fisherman and he said to the Lord Master, our teacher, we've toiled all night. We've taken nothing, nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word, we'll let down the net. At thy word, I will let down the net. So even though he was somewhat doubtful, he put the net down. And what happened? Laying closed, a great multitude of fish or fishes, you can say both in the English language, fish or fishes, and the net was breaking. [00:14:04] So much so that they had to beckon on to their partners. They came, they filled both the ships and the weight of the fish was pushing the boat down in the water so that they began to sink. But I want you to think of the effect of this incident on Simon, on Simon Peter's heart.

Suddenly, he realized that he was brought into the immediate presence of God. This one, who, as a man, sat in his boat and spoke to the people and then said, [00:15:05] out into the deep water and put your net down. He had the control over the fishes in the sea.

He was the creator. He was in the presence of God. He was in the presence of his Lord, of his creator, and he had a consciousness of who he was. And he did something which was a little bit contradictory. He went and he fell at his knees, but he was saying, depart from me, depart from me for I'm a sinful man, O Lord. See, there was the attraction of grace. And Luke's gospel is all about the grace of God. In the previous chapter, in the synagogue [00:16:10] at Nazareth when he spoke, it says, they all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Gracious words. Here he was acting in grace. But Peter, he came to the self-revelation of himself. I don't know a suitable word in English, in French, I think they say bouleverse, you know, he was turned upside down and inside out. All of a sudden, he saw himself in the true light of God's presence and he saw the sinful man that he was. He should not have been in God's presence. And he said, depart from me, I'm a sinful man. But at the same time, [00:17:07] he recognized him as his Lord, O Lord. It was a very real, moving experience for Peter. His mind was taken off everything else. What about your fishes, Peter? You've never had a catch like it in your life before. Never mind the fishes. Your nets are breaking, Peter. Never mind the nets. What about the boat? The boat's sinking. Never mind the boat. What are James and John going to think about you, your partners? Never mind my partner. You see, he was abstracted. He was closed off from everything else, from his surroundings, from his outward circumstances. [00:18:06] And he was sat down in the immediate presence of God. Now, have you had that experience?

To be brought into close quarters with God? To have a personal audience interview with Christ?

Where he looks into your heart, looks at your condition by nature, and you realize that you're not fit for God's presence. This was where Peter was. He came to see that he was nothing in God's sight. Man, nothing. And you know, Peter was a believer at this stage. He was already a disciple.

[00:19:13] He was a follower of the Lord Jesus. Some people, prior to their conversion, they come under conviction of sin, and they've got a very deep experience of sin. Then they come through to conversion, and they get relieved of that burden. But there are others who turn to Christ in a...

I'm thinking of Lydia. She was a seller of purple. It just says, whose heart the Lord opened. I'm thinking of those who, in a simple faith, lay hold of Christ for salvation without perhaps realizing the depths of their own depravity, without realizing what their nature is, how truly [00:20:08] they're black in God's sight. This was Peter's consecration, I suppose, when he was led to see a sinfulness, and that he was unfitted for the presence of God and for the presence of Christ. And so, he's drawn to a traction of grace. He fell at his feet, but looking at himself, he says, I'm a sinful man, oh Lord. What a wonderful word the Lord gave him. You know what it is, don't you? Fear not. Words so familiar from the Lord's lips on various occasions. Fear not!

[00:21:02] Your sinfulness, your natural condition, your depravity, your nothingness, it's not going to be a barrier. It won't shut you out from my grace. In spite of what you are, the Lord says, I'm prepared to have you. And he says, fear not. He said, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And no wonder that when they brought the boat to shore, they forsook all and followed him. Now, wouldn't it be good tonight if some of us found our way into the presence of Christ, [00:22:08] discovered our own nothingness, were drawn to him in grace, and heard him say to us, fear not, and tell us that we could be serviceable to him, that he would use us in reaching out to others. From henceforth thou shalt catch men. He'd been out in the boat, he'd toiled all night, he'd used his skills, he'd caught nothing. But when Christ was in the vessel, what a difference. It couldn't contain the fish. You know, dear brothers, in our outreach, we seek to reach out to others. And we lament our lack of success. Do we have Christ with us [00:23:05] in our activities? Do we have Christ with us in the ship? Or do we count too much on ourselves? In our own self-confidence, on various occasions, again, Peter showed his self-confidence, but on this occasion he was reduced to nothingness, to give room, to give place to the Lord. Circumstances were the same, the sea was the same, the fish were the same, the boats were the same, the nets were the same. What made the difference? Christ was with him in the boat. May we seek to have Christ with us in our activities in serving him. And may we, first of all, in the lessons that are brought before us, in the four incidents that I've read, see that man is nothing. Now the next individual that we read about, his name is not given to us. We're just told that he's [00:24:11] a man who had leprosy. But it doesn't just say he was a leper, it said he was full of leprosy.

Full of leprosy. And leprosy, we know, was a very loathsome disease, and it was a type of sin, of the defilement of sin. And it was a disease in our Bibles, the Old Testament, in the Gospel, it was a disease that man could not cure. It was beyond the ability of man to provide a cure for leprosy in the Bible. And here was this man, and he was in this certain city, he was full of leprosy.

[00:25:09] But he knew that the answer was in the Lord Jesus. He knew that the Lord Jesus had the power to cure him, to cleanse him. And so when he saw the Lord Jesus, he fell on his face. Verse 13, beseeching him, making requests to him. And here's his language, Lord, if thou wilt, if you are willing, [00:26:03] he said, thou canst make me clean. He said, you've got the power, but I'm not sure if you've got the desire. So he says, if thou wilt, if you will, you're certainly able to do it. Now you know, turn back to chapter 4. Peter's wife's mother was ill, a fever. Interesting for some church authorities that he who is reputed to have been the first Pope should have had a mother-in-law. I suppose you don't have a wife, you don't have a mother-in-law. How much that says for [00:27:01] a celibate priesthood or a celibate Pope, I don't know. But anyway, it's just a word. A word from the Lord Jesus was sufficient to rebuke the fever. And in chapter 4, also with the unclean spirit, he rebuked the unclean spirit. A word was sufficient. What about this matter of leprosy? Would a word have been sufficient? Of course, a word from the Lord would have been sufficient, but the man had doubted his willingness.

He says, if thou wilt. What a response. He demonstrated his willingness. He reached forward. That's what it says. Verse 13, he put forth his hand, reached forward, he touched him. Touched him with those wonderful words, I will be thou clean.

[00:28:03] I wonder, dear brothers, dear sisters, have we had a personal touch, a personal touch from the Lord Jesus? Peter came into close quarters with him, and here this poor leprous man full of leprosy, he stretched forth his hand and touched him. Now, if any other man had touched the leper, he would have been defiled. But the spotless Son of God is also the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. When he touched the leper, he was not defiled. Rather, he brought cleansing. And not only so, in doing so, he proved not only the perfection of his manhood, the fact that it could not be tainted, that it was impeccable, that it could not be touched by sin, that his [00:29:02] character of manhood could not be defiled. The perfect man. But it also showed the power of God. Jehovah was present in Israel to cleanse the leper. Not only was he man, but he was God. God and man in one blessed person, and the leper was cleansed. And we need to be cleansed from our sin.

Sin brings guilt. We're going to look at that. But sin is unclean, and sin brings defilement and impurity into our lives. So we need a touch. We need that personal touch from the Lord to deal with the sin which is at the root of our problem, and to cleanse us. We think of Peter. In the words [00:30:10] of Romans, he would say, I know that in me that is in my flesh. Good does not dwell. He'd made that self-discovery. We think of the man full of leprosy here. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses us from all sin. This man was cleansed. And we too, if we come to the Lord in that way, and have a personal touch from him, we have cleansing from the defilement of sin. It says immediately the leprosy departed from him. And then the Lord Jesus sent him to the priest according to the law, for a testimony unto them, for a testimony unto the law. The only thing I'd say [00:31:05] in regard to that is that there was approach to God. There was approach to God according to the law on that day. It was through the priest. We as believers have our sins cleansed. We've cleansed him from sin, but it's with a view that we might approach God, that we might come into God's presence. By him, through him, we've accessed by one spirit unto the Father. Hebrews, it says, let us draw near with a pure heart and full assurance of faith. We don't need to go to a priest or an archbishop or anyone else. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. We have access through Christ, and just as this man approached according to the ritual of his day through the law and through the priest and in the Jewish system of things, we in our day who have [00:32:02] cleansing of our sins have this blessed approach to God. So Peter was brought into close quarters with the Lord Jesus, and here this leper felt the touch of the Lord Jesus. When we come to the next incident, another certain day, a particular day, he was teaching. A man with a palsy doesn't mean an awful lot to us today, does it? It means the man was paralyzed actually. He was paralytic. He couldn't walk. He was paralyzed, and they sought means to bring him in and to lay him before the Lord Jesus. Isn't that what we need to do with our friends? To bring them into the Lord's presence, our families? Where's my wandering boy tonight? Those that are near and dear to us, let's lay them before the Lord Jesus. That's what these men did. They sought to bring him in, and they sought [00:33:08] to lay him before the Lord Jesus, and there were difficulties in their circumstances. They couldn't get any other place. What are they going to do? All these crowds of people about. Again, it's the multitude. You ever try to push your way through a crowd? Not very easy. Not very easy when you're just on your own, but if you're carrying someone on a bed, I would think it would be even more difficult. But they weren't put off. They weren't hampered. They went up on the housetop, and they started to demolish the roof of a man's house. That's what it says. They took the tiles off. They took it aside, and they let him down through the tiling, through the roof, into the midst before Jesus. What the Lord Jesus remarked on was not the faith of the man that was paralyzed. It was the [00:34:07] men that brought him when he saw their faith. Let's

go to Jesus, the Lord Jesus, about our problems. Let's go in faith. Let's lay our loved ones out before him in faith and see what he'll do. In response to their faith, in infinite mercy and in grace, we're speaking about grace, he saw their faith, but he responded to the man. He said, man, this was a big statement. He said, my sins are forgiven you. Your sins are forgiven. That's a pretty immense statement, isn't it? From a man on earth. He says, I've forgiven his sins. The scribes in the far, all these religious people around [00:35:04] about. Who's he? He's speaking blasphemies. How can he say such a thing? Who can forgive sins but God alone? They were very educated, instructed men. Of course, they were right in what they were saying. Only God could forgive sins. That part of it, they were right. What they hadn't realized was that one who in grace was standing in their midst, teaching them, that man. In verse 17, it says, the power of Jehovah was present to heal them. That power, that virtue that was in Christ was available to these scribes and Pharisees. It was there in him. They were saying, who can forgive sins but God alone? God, Jehovah was present. The power of Jehovah, [00:36:07] Jehovah himself, Jesus Jehovah was present to heal them. They didn't know it, but he knew their thoughts. He could read their thoughts like a book. He can read your thoughts. I don't know what you're thinking precisely at this moment in time, but the Lord knows exactly your thoughts. He knows my thoughts. He knows the thoughts of each one of us. It's beyond our feeble comprehension, but nevertheless, there's the fact. He said, which is easier? What's the easiest thing to say? Your sins are forgiven or to say, rise up and walk. There's a logic here, he says, but to demonstrate or to show that you may know that the son of man has authority upon earth to forgive sins, he says to the man. Again, notice in verse 24, he makes it personal. We've been talking tonight [00:37:13] very much about personal relationship. Peter at his feet, the touch on the man with leprosy. Here he gets a direct word again. He says, I say unto you, arise, take up that couch, go into thine house. Immediately, he rose up before them and he went to his house. Our houses are important to God. House is mentioned numerous occasions in Luke's gospel. He went to his house, glorifying God. He came in by the roof, went out by the door. When he came in, the bed carried him. When he went out, he carried the bed. Not only was he physically cured, [00:38:05] not only had he power to walk, but he had the assurance of forgiveness of sins. So these are things for us, cleansing from defilement, approach to God. Here's another thing we need, forgiveness of sins. But what does it result in? Power to walk. And that's what we've got to do down here. We talk about our behavior when we say the Christian walk. We're talking about our behavior, talking about our life, talking about how we conduct ourselves every day. Is it Christ honoring? Is it God honoring? We don't have any strength in ourselves like Peter. What's the answer? The answer is here, that the Lord Jesus gives us the power. Rise up and walk. That's the challenge to each one of us tonight. We receive the forgiveness of sins, but he says to us, [00:39:03] rise up and walk. Go to your house. And that's exactly what he did. He rose up before them, he departed to his own house. And that power, the power of the Holy Spirit, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. That's the answer to our Christian walk, forgiveness of sins, and the power that Christ brings to walk in a way that would glorify him. And then lastly, we come to Levi. And I think as we've been going along, we'll see that man is nothing, and we'll see that Christ brings healing, and he brings cleansing, and he brings forgiveness, and he gives his approach to God, and he gives us that power in which we can walk to glorify God, even in our own homes. What's our testimony like in our homes? [00:40:03] With our brothers, with our sisters, with our spouses, our husbands. That's how this man went back. And we need personal word from Christ to regulate our lives. I say unto you, Levi was called and he was sitting at the receipt of custom. He was making money, no doubt about it. The money was coming into him. It's a very pleasant thing, taking in money. Most people have taken in money and they're happy. But you know, the Lord Jesus came across his path, and one word was sufficient, follow me. He rose up. Wonderful. He followed him. But, you know, he's called Matthew in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew chapter 9, chapter 9, it tells you that the Lord Jesus sat at foot, he reclined [00:41:06]

at table, he was having a meal in his house. Matthew's point of view, he's concentrating on what the Lord was doing. But you see, we have different perspectives in the different Gospels here, and look, it's not what the Lord's doing. Here it tells us what Levi was doing. It says, Levi made him a feast. It says he made him a great feast. You see, the Lord was becoming paramount. The Lord was becoming important. It was all what the Lord was doing. He went forth. He saw a tax collector. He said unto him. Levi rose up and he followed him. And then it says, he made him a feast. He made much of Christ. He made him a great feast. There was something there for Christ. So you see, we started with man, nothing, nothingness of what we are in nature. A process in the different stories going on in order that Christ might be everything in order that we [00:42:04] might make much of Christ. That's our privilege, dear ones. That's why we'll come together in Lord's Day morning to break the bread and drink the cup to remember the Lord. We want to make much of him. And it was in his house. We want to make much of Christ in our house. I was in a home in India and there was this thing on the wall that said, Christ is the head of this house. The on-scene guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation. And a brother said to me, he said, that's good. I said, yes it is. But I said, the husband's the head of the house. But nevertheless, Christ has a place. If he comes in, he must have that first place. He's going to be everything and in all. It says that in all things he might have the preeminence. Man, nothing, Christ everything. Levi made him a feast. He gave him that place in his home. Do we give him [00:43:02] that place in our hearts? Do we give him that place in our homes? And also it was in presence of all these scribes and pharisees. They were all gathered together, a great company of tax collectors and others sat down with him rather, I should say. But the scribes and pharisees were there. Are we making much of Christ in the presence of others? In order that God might be glorified. Well now, time has gone. Man, nothing, Christ everything. Might we just close in singing 422 as God would bring us into fellowship with himself. Verse 6 says, Grace divine is this transcending all that else the heart employs, tis the son and father deigning us to give of their own joys. 422.