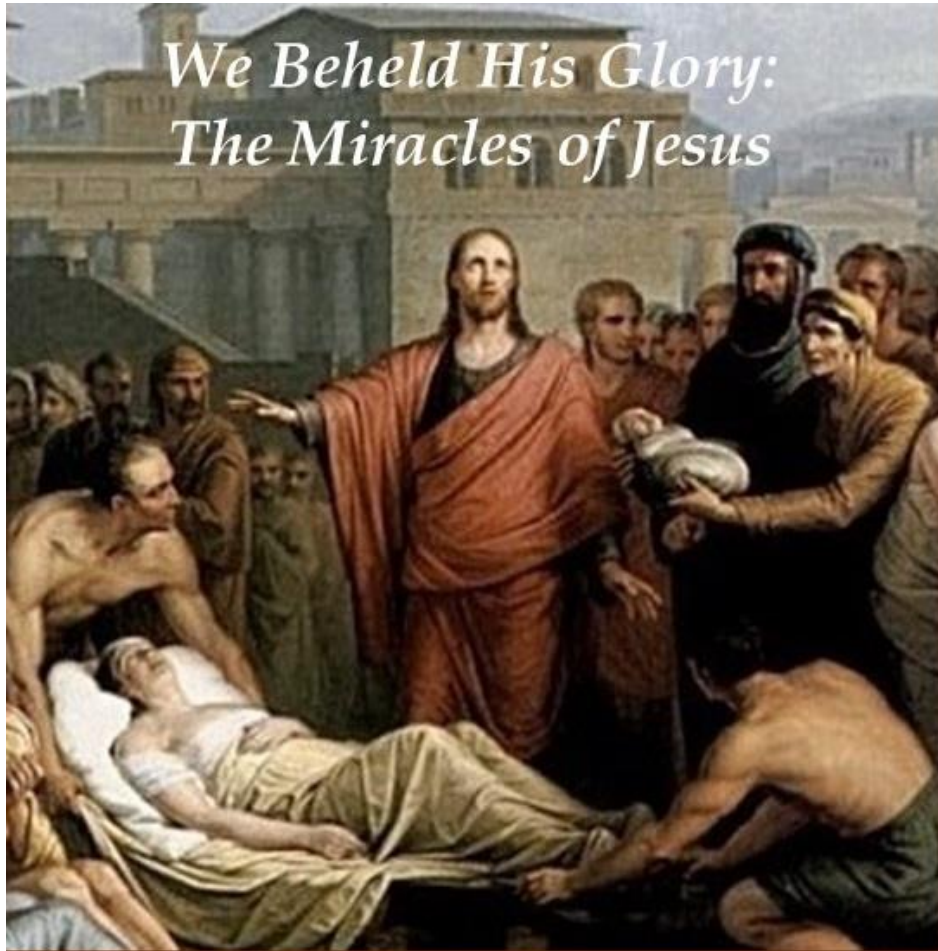


*We Beheld His Glory:
The Miracles of Jesus*



12 Daily Readings from Gospel of John

J.C. Ryle

Adapted by Ron Jones

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Gospel of John

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TIPN #107

J.C. Ryle Bio

J.C. (John Charles) Ryle was born on May 10, 1816 in Cheshire, England. He grew up in a nominally Christian home. His parents were members of the Church of England, but were never committed to it or to Christ. However, God began to work in J.C.'s heart when he was a young man. He became seriously ill with a chest infection and was confined to rest. During this time, he began to read the Scriptures seriously and to pray and eventually came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Reflecting on his salvation, J.C. commented later, "Nothing to this day appeared to me so clear and distinct as my own sinfulness, Christ's preciousness, the value of the Bible, the absolute necessity of coming out of the world, [and] the need of being born again."

He was ordained as a pastor and preacher in the Church of England in December 1841 at the age of 25 years old. He served as pastor in four congregations during his ministry. He became well-known as a strong and Biblically sound teacher of the Scriptures. He preached many sermons and wrote many tracts (small booklets on various Bible topics) addressing contemporary issues of his day that he felt Christians needed to understand. He wrote several books, the most famous being the "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels." The "Expository Thoughts" is a book which gives a passage by passage explanation of the four gospels balancing solid scholarship with practical exhortation. Ryle lived to be 84 years old and died on June 10, 1900 in Chidwall, England.

J.C. Ryle was a man who loved Christ and loved his Word. He was a careful scholar who had a desire that Christians understand the practical applications of the Gospels based up a clear understanding of what the writers meant when they wrote them.

Preface

If you tell someone that you are a Christian and being a Christian is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, they might say “So, what is so great about Jesus?” The greatness of a relationship with Jesus Christ is the greatness of Jesus Christ himself. The quality of a relationship is based on the quality of the person you have a relationship with. Jesus Christ did not claim to be a gentle itinerant preacher who went around teaching people that they should love their neighbor and do good to others. He claimed to be the Son of God. This claim displayed his divine glory because it was true.

He was the second person of the Triune God sent by the Father to redeem a people for himself by his death on the cross for their sins. This is what Jesus claimed about himself and what his apostles claimed about him. When Jesus made that claim he separated himself from every good religious or moral leader who ever lived. None of them ever claimed to be God, come in the flesh. This glorious acclamation elevated Jesus above anyone and everyone.

This eBook is the second in a two-part series of daily readings from the Gospel of John. In the first eBook, entitled “We Beheld His Glory: The Claims of Jesus,” we see how the Gospels reveal the glory of Christ by what Jesus claimed about himself. In this second eBook, John the apostle reveals how Jesus proved his claims to be God and revealed his divine glory by his miracles.

These two eBooks have been adapted from JC Ryle’s Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John. I have designed this daily reading schedule to help you as a believer focus on Jesus your Savior and grow in your relationship with him. I have adapted his writing by updating some of his wording for contemporary readers. I have also added my own exposition from the text in places where Ryle may not have given as full an explanation of Christ as it was my purpose to do in this eBook. Through these Bible passages you will come to know Jesus in a deeper way.

My hope is that JC Ryle would have been blessed by how I have taken his work and adapted it for Christians living today. I do know that he, like I, am always encouraged when the Word of God is carefully explained and the Lord of our lives is glorified through that exposition. May the Lord encourage you through his Word in this eBook.

Ron Jones

Contents

Day 1	Jesus Turns Water into Wine	John 2:1-11
Day 2	Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit	Mark 1:21-34
Day 3	Jesus Cleanses a Leprous Man	Mark 1:40-45
Day 4	Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant	Luke 7:1-10
Day 5	Jesus Heals a Paralytic	Mark 2:1-12
Day 6	Jesus Calms a Storm	Mark 4:35-41
Day 7	Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter	Luke 8:40-56
Day 8	Jesus Restores Sight to Bartimaeus	Mark 10:46-52
Day 9	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand	John 6:1-14
Day 10	Jesus Walks on Water	Matthew 14:22-33
Day 11	Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead	John 11:21-45
Day 12	Jesus Rises from the Dead	John 20:1-10
Postscript	An Invitation from Jesus	Selected Scriptures

Day 1 Jesus Turns Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

These verses describe a miracle which should always possess a special interest in the eyes of a true Christian. It is the first, in order of time, of the many mighty works which Jesus did, when he was upon earth. We are distinctly told, "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee." Like every other miracle which is recorded in the Gospels, it is rich in spiritual lessons.

We learn, firstly, from these verses, how honorable in the sight of Christ is the covenant of marriage. To be present at a wedding was almost the first public act of our Lord's earthly ministry. Marriage is a covenant ordained by God for the benefit and blessing of the human beings he created. It ought never to be spoken of with levity or regarded with disrespect. It is God's plan for all the descendants of Adam and Eve to build civilization on the foundation of marriage and family. God clearly defines marriage in Genesis 2:24 as a sacred covenant between a man and woman who join together as husband and wife in a lifelong relationship of loving each other.

We learn, secondly, from these verses, that there are times when we should rejoice and celebrate God's blessings in our lives. Our Lord himself sanctioned a wedding-feast by his own presence. Have you ever wondered why God ordained so many national feasts for his people Israel? There were the major feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets and Tabernacles. God wants his people to joyfully celebrate the blessings he gives to his people. Faith in God and Jesus Christ was never meant to make people guilt-ridden and melancholy. On the contrary, it was intended to free them from guilt and increase real joy and happiness among them. As Christians, we should celebrate each day the great salvation we have in Christ and the great future that is ours forever!

We learn lastly and most importantly from these verses, the Almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told of a miracle which he wrought at the marriage feast, when the wine failed. This miracle demonstrated Jesus' power over nature. This miracle revealed his true identity as

the Creator God of the universe. Human beings have many abilities, but only God himself can create. Angels can manipulate nature, but not create it. Only God can create which is what this transformation from water to wine revealed.

To transform the water, Jesus used his divine supernatural power on the molecules of water and changed them into the molecules of wine. Thus, by changing water into wine Jesus demonstrated his power over even the structure of atoms. With this single act Jesus proved that the natural universe is at his command and control. John declared that Jesus was the creator of the universe when he wrote, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3) Thus, he has control over every ounce of it. He can suspend the laws of nature which he created at will without any natural consequences if he so chooses.

But there is more. Wine is produced by many natural processes that require a long period of time. The plant needs to grow. The grapes need to mature. The grapes need to be harvested. The grapes need to be treaded into juice. The juice needs to ferment over time. Quality wine takes a long time to ferment. Jesus, in a moment, bypassed all of that process and changed that water into a fine wine, an act which only God, the Creator of the universe, could accomplish. And even though, the people at that time, drank wine mixed with water (at least three parts wine to one part water), they could taste the difference between that wine and the ordinary wine of the local vineyards.

The manner in which the miracle was worked deserves special notice. We are not told of any outward visible action which preceded or accompanied it. It is not said that Jesus touched the waterpots containing the water that was made wine. It is not said that he commanded the water to change, or that he prayed to his Father in heaven. He simply willed the change, and it took place. He who could do such a mighty work, in such a manner, was nothing less than truly God. When Jesus performed various actions when he did miracles such as putting mud on the blind man's eyes, he did not do that because it was necessary for the miracle; Jesus could simply will the miracle. He did it to teach a particular lesson while he did the miracle.

It is a blessed thought that the same almighty power of will which our Lord here displayed is still exercised on behalf of his believing people today. We have no need of his bodily presence to maintain our cause. We have no reason to be discouraged because we cannot see him with our eyes interceding for us, or touch him with our hands, that we may cling to him for safety. If he wills our salvation and the daily supply of all our spiritual needs, we are as safe and well provided for as if we saw him standing by us. The will of him who could say to the Father, "I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am," is a will that has all power in heaven and earth, and must prevail. (John 17:24.)

Happy are those who, like the disciples, believe on him by whom this miracle was wrought. A greater marriage feast than that of Cana will one day be held, when Christ himself will be the bridegroom and believers will be the bride. A greater glory will one day be manifested, when Jesus shall take to himself his great power and reign. Blessed will we be in that day when we celebrate together with all other believers in his glorious kingdom!

Day 2

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit

Mark 1:21-34

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

There are many kinds of miracles that Jesus did to demonstrate that his claims to be the Son of God were true. One kind was his power over Satan and his demons. These evil angels are more powerful than any human being and are equal in power to holy angels that serve God. But they are under the absolute infinite authority and power of God. If Jesus was God come in the flesh as a human being, then he would have authority and power over them and he did. Jesus could command demons at will. This he does as a regular course of his ministry here in Capernaum and in the other places where he was preaching and teaching.

We learn, in the first place, from these verses, the testimony of demons concerning the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. The demon here cries out, "I know who you are - the Holy One of God." Satan and his demons were created by Christ and they knew Christ was the Son of God. They knew Christ, when the Scribes were ignorant of him, and the Pharisees would not accept him. These spirit beings and their acknowledgement of who Christ is should remind us that the physical world that we live in is not the only one that exists. All around us the world continually proclaims that there is no god and it continually tempts us to give up our faith in God saying it is fantasy. But the world is wrong. The Scriptures were given to us by God to continually remind us that the spirit realm exists and God is the Supreme ruler of the universe. There is a heaven and hell. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Notice, too, that the demons acknowledged Christ, but were not obviously saved. They believed in him intellectually, but they refused to submit to him and trust him as Lord. That was the essence of Satan and his rebellion. Satan and these evil angels knew God, saw God and experienced God, yet refused to bow before him and submit to him.

It is the same with human beings. The mere belief in the facts and doctrines of Christianity will never save anyone. Such belief is no better than the belief of demons. People don't come to Christ or turn away from Christ because of intellectual issues. Ultimately, they turn from Christ because of pride. They refuse to bow before the God of the universe as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures. No one will stand before the Great White Throne and repent of their refusal to submit to God. They will all stand before God in defiance and refuse to bow before him. As Jesus

said, the angels will “throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:42) They will grind their teeth in anger against God and weep at what they have lost, but they will never turn to God.

Demons all believe and know that Jesus is the Christ. They believe that he will one day judge the world, and cast them down to endless torment in hell. It is a solemn and sorrowful thought, that on these points some professing Christians have even less faith than the devil. There are some who doubt the reality of hell and the eternity of punishment. Such doubts as these find no place except in the hearts of self-willed men and women. There is no infidelity among demons. “They believe and shudder.” (James 2:19)

As Christians we not only believe intellectually that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, but we have come to him by faith and turned from our sin and asked him to save us. It is one thing to say “Christ is a Savior.” It is quite another to say “He is my Savior and my Lord.” The devil can say the first. The true Christian alone can say the second. We have a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus. In our daily lives, he encourages us, strengthens us, convicts us, and uses us for the furtherance of his kingdom and glory. What a blessing!

We learn, in the second place, that Christ’s power over demons is absolute. Satan and his demons can only do what God allows them to do. We are in the middle of a war that Satan is waging against God, and Satan uses the world to incite our fleshly nature and make us ineffective for God. Jesus calls Satan, the “ruler of this world.” (John 12:31) God allows Satan to rule the mass of unbelievers who populate this planet. God allows him to set up a false kingdom of rebellion against God. This kingdom permeates society and culture whose beliefs and values, words and actions violate God’s righteousness.

Especially today, Christians are called by the world of unbelievers judgmental, biased, prejudiced, and intolerant when we call immoral behavior sinful and a violation of the Word of God. Satan is behind this and through this attacks Jesus Christ. Jesus warned us “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

At times, we can get weary from standing against the world, but we must always remember that Satan and his demons are limited to what God allows them to do and one day, they will be thrown into the lake of fire where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) Jesus said, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) We can have peace in Jesus because we know that our eternal destiny is with him in his kingdom and all those who have rebelled against God will be judged and receive the just recompense for their rebellion.

Day 3 Jesus Cleanses a Leprous Man

Mark 1:40-45

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

We read in these verses how our Lord Jesus Christ healed a leper. Of all our Lord's miracles of healing none were probably more marvelous than those performed on leprosy people. The exact ancient skin infection called "leprosy" in the Bible is not known, but its symptoms and results are described in the Bible. Leprosy plagued Israel. Leviticus 13 describes how a priest is to distinguish between infectious leprosy and other non-infectious diseases of the skin such as eczemas and rashes and the like.

It would start innocently with a swelling or a rash or a spot on a person's skin. But then it would turn the hair in the diseased area white and there would be raw flesh visible in the swelling, this was leprosy and demanded the diseased person be quarantined. This disease gradually spread over the body, bleaching the hair white wherever they appeared, crusting the affected parts with white scales, and causing terrible sores and swellings. From the skin the disease seemed to eat inward to the bones, rotting the whole body.

Because of its infectious nature and terrible consequences, God declared the disease "unclean" and quarantined the individual. Leviticus 13:45-46 tells us that the leprosy person had to wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose. He had to cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." He was to remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He had to live alone and his dwelling had to be outside the camp.

In the first place, we see in this passage, the divine omnipotent power of our Lord Jesus Christ over incurable diseases. "A man full of leprosy" applies to him for relief, and is at once healed. Jesus said, "be clean," and immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. This was a mighty miracle. One command by Jesus and instantaneously the disease is gone and his body is completely cured. The leper is made well in a moment. It is but one single touch of that almighty hand! "And immediately the leprosy left him." This is another sign that Jesus was who he claimed he was. There is no mystery here. Jesus continuously proved that he was the Son of God. If God became a man, we would expect him to have divine omnipotent power. Jesus did because Jesus was God become a man.

In the second place, we see the leper come to Jesus by faith in him. Mark records, "And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." This leper believed with all his heart that Jesus was the messiah and could heal him from his

leprosy. His request was not asking Jesus if he could heal him, but if he would be willing to heal him. That is faith. And his faith had caused him to act. If you believed someone could cure you of a dreaded disease, wouldn't you act and go to him? People with genuine faith come to Jesus Christ. They don't sit around hoping Jesus will come to them. They go to Jesus and implore him and kneel before him whether it is for salvation or for healing of any kind or both.

In the third place, let us see the mercifulness and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He heard the leper's pitiful cry, "If you will, you can make me clean." Mark allows us to see exactly what Jesus was feeling. He felt pity, sympathy and sorrow at the suffering of this man. Then Jesus did the unthinkable, he reached out his hand and touched his leprous skin. Jesus could have healed him without touching him, but he chose to touch him out of love and compassion. It was the first human touch he had since he got this dreaded disease.

Behold here another strong foundation for our faith! Our great High Priest is compassionate and sympathetic toward us in our suffering. He never grows weary of hearing and responding to our prayers. He knows that we are weak in the midst of a fallen and troubled world. He may not always choose to heal us physically as he did the leper, but he always chooses to bless us in the midst of our suffering and turn our suffering into an instrument for our spiritual good. Remember he is always aware of the future he is providing for us in heaven where suffering and trouble do not exist and where there is fullness of joy in the presence of God our Father (Psalm 16:11)

Lastly, who can conceive of the greatness of the change in the feelings of this leper, when he found himself healed? The morning sun rose upon him, a miserable being, more dead than alive, his whole frame a mass of sores and corruption, his very existence a burden. The evening sun saw him full of hope and joy, free from pain, and ready to rejoin his friends and family and society. Surely the change must have been like life from the dead.

Let us praise God our Father that his Son works his almighty power in the lives of those who, like this leper, come to him by faith and believe that he is messiah and Lord. That leper received more than just physical healing, he received spiritual healing. He had embraced Christ and Christ had embraced him. We are told in the Gospel to come to Jesus, to believe on Jesus, to live a life of faith in Jesus. We are encouraged to lean on him, to cast all our care on him, to repose all the weight of our souls on him. We may do so without fear. He can bear all. He is a strong rock. He is Almighty. He can give life to the dead. He can give power to the weak. He can increase strength to those who have no might. Let us trust him, and not be afraid. The world is full of snares. Our hearts are weak, but with Jesus nothing is impossible.

Day 4 Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

Luke 7:1-10

After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." And Jesus went with them.

When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Jesus enters the town of Capernaum and is met by some Jewish local officials with a request for a healing from a Roman centurion living in the town. A centurion in the Roman army was a military officer in charge of a hundred men. We should notice first in these verses, the love that the centurion displays toward others. We see his love in his treatment of his servant. He cares for him tenderly when sick, and takes pains to have him restored to health. We see his love again in his attitude towards the Jewish people. He did not despise them as other Gentiles commonly did. The elders of the Jews bear this strong testimony, "He loves our nation." We see his love lastly in his generous support of the Jewish place of worship at Capernaum. The messengers he sent to our Lord supported their petition by saying, "He is the one who built us our synagogue."

The centurion had become a Godfearer. A Godfearer was a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel in the synagogue, but was not circumcised and therefore, not a full Jewish convert. There were many Godfearers among the Gentiles in Israel. The most famous Godfearer in the New Testament was another centurion named Cornelius who Luke describes as an "upright and God-fearing man...a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God." Cornelius and this unnamed centurion, like Ruth and Rahab, had believed in and trusted Jehovah, the God of Israel, and that faith changed his life. But he still needed Jesus.

So Jesus went with the Jewish officials to the house of the centurion, but before they arrived, the centurion sent friends to stop Jesus from coming. Those friends told Jesus "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you." These were genuine words of a humble man. He was not worthy of Jesus coming to his house because he believed that Jesus was the messiah sent from God and he was a sinful man before God.

We should notice second in these verses, the humility of the centurion. When people come to Jesus they must come with humility recognizing that they are unworthy and have no right to ask the God of the universe for anything because they have sinned against him. They realize they only deserve punishment. But God, out of his love, offers mercy if they will repent of sin and come humbly to God. This the centurion did.

Remember the parable Jesus told of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. The Pharisee in his self-righteous pride prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector in humility prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The Pharisee would not recognize his own sinfulness before God, but the tax collector did. That is humility. And Jesus taught that true humility before God will be recognized by him and be rewarded, when he said "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

We should notice thirdly that the centurion was a man of great faith. This Jesus himself emphasizes about the centurion. The centurion, through his friends, said "But say the word, and let my servant be healed." He goes on to say that he realizes that Jesus, like him, has authority. His military authority allows him to order his soldiers and they respond. He recognizes that Jesus also has divine authority over nature. The centurion believed that if Jesus simply commanded a healing, it would take place. That is faith. That is salvation faith. Jesus marveled at the great faith of this Gentile centurion, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."

The centurion read and believed the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures that told of God's many incredible miracles in the OT and the faith of the men and women who followed him. He read and believed the promises of the messiah told by the prophets. When he heard about Jesus and what he was doing and proclaiming, he believed that Jesus was the messiah and approached him in his need. His faith in Jesus was so great that he didn't even need to see him in person to believe that he could use his divine power to heal his servant.

We should notice lastly the divine power of Jesus the Son of God. Luke says the servant was "sick and at the point of death." Matthew goes into a little more detail of what the centurion had told Jesus. He mentions that the centurion said that his servant was lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly. (Matthew 8:6) His servant had a crippling disease and was dying in horrible pain. After Jesus praised the faith of the centurion. Luke simply records, "And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well." (Matthew 8:13)

Matthew fills in the final details. He writes that Jesus told the centurion's friends to go back to the house and tell the centurion "'Let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." (Matthew 8:13) Without going to the house, without even seeing the dying servant, without touching him or looking at him, our Lord restores the dying man to health, by a single word. He speaks and the sick man is cured. He commands and the deadly disease departs. We read of no prophet or apostle, who wrought miracles in this manner. We see here the divine omnipotent power of the Son of God. Will you approach him humbly in faith and trust him to work his divine power in your life each and every day?

Day 5

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Mark 2:1-12

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

In this passage, Jesus is returning to Capernaum from his trip preaching throughout Galilee. Jesus had chosen Capernaum as his home after he began his ministry. Jesus was in the house when a huge crowd heard that he was back and came to see him. They filled his house until there was no more room. While he was teaching them the Word, four men came carrying their paralyzed friend on a mat to seek healing, but it was so crowded they couldn't get through the front door.

So, they went up onto the roof probably through an outside stairway. Roofs in those days had openings between wood beams covered by branches and other materials. Having made an opening in the roof, the four lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. Thus, their paralyzed friend landed right in front of Jesus.

First, notice the genuine faith of this paralytic and his friends. Mark records that when Jesus saw their faith, he spoke to the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. In that moment, Jesus looked down at the man and then up at the four friends. He looked into their minds and hearts and saw that they came to him not just for a healing, but because they believed in Jesus that he was the messiah of Israel. Jesus does not forgive the sins of unbelievers who come to him for healing without faith in him as messiah. They had saving faith in Jesus.

They came to Jesus for healing not as some came to him that just wanted a healing and were not interested in actually following Jesus. In John 6, after Jesus had miraculously fed the people, many came back the next day looking for more free food. Genuine faith is not coming to Jesus to receive some benefit from him, like a happy and prosperous and healthy life. It is coming to him as these men did, with hearts and minds trusting that he was the messiah and if he so chose, he

could heal them. They were prepared to follow Jesus as the messiah and came to him humbly seeking his will and power in their lives.

Second, notice the commitment of their genuine faith. When God opens people's hearts and minds to Christ, they take action. They come seeking Christ. The message of the Gospel that Jesus is the Son of God and that people are sinners in need of the salvation provided by Jesus Christ is a hard message for people to hear unless God opens their hearts and minds to hear it. We should not be surprised that unbelieving people think Christians are intolerant and judgmental. We should not be surprised that unbelieving people mock us and resist our message of God's standard of righteousness which they are violating everyday of their lives. It is not until God removes their spiritual blindness that they can see the truth.

This happened when these men heard about Jesus doing miracles and preaching the Word of God. God opened their minds and they believed he was the messiah and decided they were going to do whatever it took to bring their suffering friend before Jesus. Genuine faith always results in action in our lives. The friends of the paralyzed man desired to bring him to Jesus, that he might be cured no matter what the obstacle. That's commitment!

Evangelism is like picking fruit from a tree. If the fruit is ripe, it will be soft and easily picked. If the fruit is not ready it will be hard and unable to be picked. A person checks the fruit to see if it is ripe or hard and picks the soft ripe ones and waits patiently for the hard unripe ones. We share the gospel with all people. The ones whom God has opened will come to Christ as these men did with the paralytic. If people don't respond readily to Christ, they are not ready and we should not try to push the gospel at them.

Third, notice the divine authority Jesus displayed as the Son of God to forgive sins. Jesus said to the paralyzed man who had come to him by faith, "Your sins are forgiven." In the Old Testament, God says he alone forgives sins. Isaiah 43:25 states "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." The scribes knew this and immediately began to say to themselves, "He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And they would have been right in this instance had Jesus not been God. Jesus was, in fact, using this situation to disclose his true identity. This was the purpose of his miracles, to be a sign and verify his claim to be the messiah, the Son of God. In John 5:36 Jesus said, "For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me." So, one of the ways Jesus claimed to be God was by claiming to have God's authority to forgive sin. For the paralytic, it was more important than the physical healing he was about to receive.

Last, notice the divine omnipotent power Jesus exercised in healing the paralytic. Mark records Jesus' response to the charge of blasphemy, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." To demonstrate Jesus' divine authority and power to forgive sin which cannot be seen by human beings, Jesus exercised his divine authority and power to heal the body which could be seen by human beings. "He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.' And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"

How do we know Jesus truly was the Son of God? We know because he claimed it. In this event, he claimed to have divine authority and power to forgive sin which only God has. In this

event, he demonstrated divine authority and power by healing a paralyzed body which only God can do.

Our saving faith in Jesus Christ is based upon the claims and miracles of Jesus himself as recorded by and from eye-witness testimony. Our daily faith is also built on these claims. Since Jesus is the Son of God, he has divine authority and power to work in our lives. His miracles show that there is no obstacle Jesus cannot help us overcome. There is no suffering Jesus cannot help us endure. There is no circumstance or person that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! (Romans 8:38)

Day 6 Jesus Calms a Storm

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

It had been a busy day for Jesus. He had been preaching to the multitudes in parables from a boat offshore. Later he had taught his disciples privately concerning the meaning of these parables. When evening arrived, he must have been tired and exhausted. He told his disciples "Let us go across to the other side." He wanted to cross over from the busy western or Capernaum side of the sea of Galilee to the eastern side, to the place of the Gerasenes with a view for retirement and rest, after the fatigue of the day. The Sea of Galilee was infamous for sudden violent windstorms, a fact of which the disciples were well aware. Mark records, "And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion."

Let us learn in the first place, that Christ's service does not exempt his servants from storms. Here were the twelve disciples obediently following Jesus, wherever he went. They were daily attending on his ministry, and following his word. They were daily testifying to the world, that, whatever Scribes and Pharisees might think, they believed in Jesus, loved Jesus, and were not ashamed to give up all for his sake. Yet here we see these men in trouble, tossed up and down by a tempest, and in danger of being drowned. You can imagine if these seasoned fishermen feared for their lives, the windstorm was bad, really bad.

Christians will face trials and obstacles as we serve Christ. If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing, if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments. We live in a fallen world and God has not promised to make us immune from that fallen world. The abundant life Jesus talked about was spiritual (John 10:10), one filled with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) not one that gives earthly prosperity or immunity from trouble. But God has promised that "all things work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Let us learn, in the second place, that our Lord Jesus Christ was really and truly human. We are told in these verses, that when the storm began, and the waves beat over the ship, he was in the back part of the boat, asleep. He had a body exactly like our own, a body that could hunger, and thirst, and feel pain, and be weary, and need rest. No wonder that his body needed repose at this time. He had been diligent in his Father's business all the day. He had been preaching to a

great multitude in the open air. No wonder that when the evening came and his work finished, he fell asleep.

The Savior in whom we are trusting is as really a human as he is God. He knows the trials of a human, for he has experienced them. He knows the bodily infirmities of a human, for he has felt them. He can well understand what we mean, when we cry to him for help in this world of need. He is just the very Savior that men and women, with weary frames and aching heads, in a weary world, require for their comfort every morning and night. In Hebrews 4:15, it says "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." This means that the Lord can sympathize with our weaknesses as humans, but since he did not give into his weaknesses, he is not overwhelmed by his own problems so that he has no time for ours. Sometimes those we go to for support are unavailable because they have so much trouble of their own. The Lord is never like that; we have his full understanding attention when we are weak and in need of strength. Like the prodigal son's father, his arms are out waiting for us to come to him in our weakness.

Let us learn, in the third place, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as God, has almighty power. We see him in these verses doing that which is impossible. He speaks to the winds, and they obey him. He speaks to the waves and they submit to his command. He turns the raging storm into a calm with a few words, "Peace! Be still!" Those words were the words of him who first created all things. The elements knew the voice of their Master, and, like obedient servants, were quiet at once. Pause for a moment and picture that in your mind, a loud raging storm, then instant calm and quiet after a simple command by Jesus. Amazing!

For the Lord Jesus Christ nothing is impossible. No obstacle, trouble, trial, task is too great for the divine, omnipotent Jesus. You say, "Sure Jesus was right there with the disciples in the boat. All they had to do was go to him and ask him to help. Jesus seems so far away today as we live our lives." The good news of salvation is not just that we will be with Jesus in heaven, but that Jesus is with us right now on earth. In fact, he dwells within us. In Galatians 2:20 Paul declares, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior lives within us and therefore he is with us wherever we are. We may not have his physical presence, but we have his spiritual presence which is even better. He is ready and able to work in our lives, but we have to trust him. And if we are struggling with trust, we can ask to help us to trust him. What a blessed Savior we have!

Finally, we learn from this passage that faith in Jesus Christ must be faith in his true identity as the Son of God. After Jesus demonstrated his divine almighty power and stilled the storm, Mark records, "And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" They believed that Jesus was the messiah and the Son of God, but they did not fully realize what that meant. The Jews believed that the messiah would be a human whom God adopted as a son, but was not God's Son of one nature with God the Father. Moses and Elijah appealed to God to command nature and work miracles over it. Jesus himself commanded nature and worked miracles over it. They were afraid because they were realizing that this man was God. God was in their boat. Jesus was clarifying for them who he actually was and they were grasping it. The greater the trial we face, the greater work the Lord does in our lives to deliver us from it or through it, and the greater is our awareness of his divine person and power.

Let us leave these verses with the comfortable recollection that Jesus has not changed. His heart is still the same that it was when he crossed the sea of Galilee and stilled the storm. High in heaven at the right hand of God, and yet living within us, Jesus is still sympathizing, still almighty, still patient and merciful towards his people. Let us be patient with ourselves when we struggle with trusting the Lord through a trial and with other Christians when they do. We can come before him in our weakness and ask him to help us trust him. Look into the Scriptures for the kind of passage such as this where God is demonstrating his miraculous power in the lives of his people. Remember that God may display his power in our lives in a different way as he works his plan out for our lives, but he can and will do it according to his will as he blesses us, his children whom he loves (1 John 3:1)

Day 7 Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter

Luke 8:40-42, 49-56

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying... While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Jesus returns to the area of Capernaum near the sea where a large crowd was waiting for him. These crowds were anxious to see him, view his miracles, and find healing for their sick family and friends. There, in the midst of them, was a man named Jairus, whose encounter with Jesus is recorded in three of the Gospels. He was a "a ruler of the synagogue." He was most likely responsible for arranging the synagogue for meetings and probably leading the council of elders in the synagogue. His position as a synagogue official and a representative of the Jewish establishment puts him in the public eye.

Let us first notice, in the verses before us, the desperation in Jairus' request because of his love for his daughter. Only a parent can truly appreciate the love that parents hold for their children and the deep concern parents have for their safety. So often teenagers and young adults who are still living at room rebel against the rules that parents have for their safety. They fight curfews and phone calls to check in because they feel that parents are judging everything they are doing. In reality, God has given to parents the responsibility of protecting their children and when they do, they should be respected and thanked for it. There is no purer love than the love of a parent for his or her child. Jairus had that love and was willing to do anything to save his daughter from death.

Let us notice, secondly, in the verses before us, that faith in Christ's love and power is the best remedy in time of the deepest trouble. There is nothing worse than the potential death of a child except when the child actually dies. When Jairus heard that his daughter had died, his heart must have broken. He had faith in Jesus as the messiah and believed he could heal his daughter, but could he raise her from the dead? Before Jairus could answer that question in his own mind, Jesus lovingly and mercifully, answered it for him. We are told that when Jesus heard the tidings, that the ruler's daughter was dead, he said to him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

Jesus told Jairus that he could and would make his daughter well. Jesus was strengthening Jairus' faith to trusting Christ to do the impossible, raising his daughter from the dead. When we are facing a great trial and we seek Christ in faith and prayer and the trial gets worst, it may be because Christ is building our faith to trust him for even more difficult trials. This is one of the major ways he does this, by allowing obstacles into our lives that are so great, only he can help us overcome them. When this happens, do as Jairus did, follow Jesus and trust him to overcome the greater obstacle.

Let us notice, thirdly, in the verses before us, that only faith can cast out fear in the midst of crisis. When Jairus heard that his daughter had died, he immediately became fearful as all parents would under the circumstances. That is a normal response to a crisis. Jesus immediately encouraged Jairus to keep looking at him and keep trusting him to work a miracle in his daughter's life. He said, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." Eliminating fear in our minds and hearts is a direct result to exercising greater faith in Jesus Christ to work in our lives.

Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith when you are having difficulty trusting him. He will help you. This is how we can have peace, calmness, and quietness of spirit. A hundred painful things may happen to us every week in this evil fallen world. We may not always know the reason why, but we need to trust our Lord. Without faith we shall be constantly disturbed and cast down. Nothing will make us cheerful and tranquil but an abiding sense of Christ's love, Christ's wisdom, Christ's care over us, and Christ's providential management of all our affairs by his omnipotent power. Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." I'm sure Jairus kept his eyes on Jesus as they walked toward his daughter's lifeless body.

Let us notice, lastly, in these verses, Christ's divine omnipotent power over death. We are told that he came to the house of Jairus and turned the mourning into joy. He took by the hand the breathless body of the ruler's daughter and called to her saying, "Child, arise." At once by that all-powerful voice her life was restored. "And her spirit returned, and she got up at once."

This incredible miracle by the Son of God is one of the three great instances which the Holy Spirit has chosen to record of our Lord restoring a dead person to life. The other two instances are those of Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain. There seems no reason to doubt that our Lord raised others beside these three. But these three cases are specially described as demonstrations of Jesus' true identity as he displays his almighty divine power. In all three cases we see life at once restored at Christ's command. Only God can raise the dead.

When Elijah the prophet raised the widow's son, he prayed to God and God raised the son. (1 Kings 17:21-22) But when Jesus raised these three, he did it by his own command as God! Our faith in Jesus Christ must be faith in him as the Son of God, God who became a man who has the sovereign and supreme power and control over everything. There is nothing Jesus cannot and will not do if it is within his will. This is what we need to focus on when we are struggling with trusting Christ in our daily lives. Focus on Jesus and who he really is and it will strengthen your faith and transform your life.

Day 8 Jesus Restores Sight to Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52

And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem as he left Jericho with his disciples. This city which Mark mentions here was located about fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples passed by two blind men as Matthew 20:30 tells us. Mark and Luke focus only one of them probably because he was more well known. His name was Bartimaeus. In those days when men were unable to work due to a physical disability such as blindness or paralysis, they had no way to support themselves, but to beg.

In the first place, we have here an example of strong faith. We are told that as Jesus went out of Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus, "was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" Bartimaeus was blind in body, but not in soul. The eyes of his understanding were open. He saw things which Annas and Caiaphas, and hosts of educated Scribes and Pharisees, never saw at all. He saw that Jesus was the messiah, the Son of David. This was a title of the messiah since it was prophesied that the messiah would be a descendant of David. The genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 demonstrate that Jesus was indeed descended from David.

Bartimaeus had not witnessed any of our Lord's mighty miracles since he was blind, but he had heard the report of them, and hearing had believed. He was satisfied from the eyewitness testimony of others. He reasoned rightly that only the messiah could do such wonderful and amazing things. Jesus must be the promised Savior, and must be able to heal him. And so, when our Lord drew near, he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

Let us strive and pray that we may have like precious faith. Like Bartimaeus, we are not allowed to see Jesus with our bodily eyes. But we have the historical records of the eyewitness testimony his omnipotent power, and grace, and willingness to save, in the New Testament. We have exceeding great promises from his own lips, written down for our encouragement. Let us trust those promises implicitly, and commit our lives to Christ unhesitatingly. Let us not be afraid to put all our confidence on his own gracious words, and to believe that what he has engaged to do for sinners, he will surely perform.

What is the life of saving faith, when once begun, but a continual leaning on an unseen Savior's word? What is the first step of a Christian, but a crying, like Bartimaeus, "Jesus have mercy on me?" What is the daily course of a Christian, but keeping up the same spirit of faith? "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

We have, in the second place, in these verses, an example of determined persistence and perseverance in his request in the face of difficulties. We are told that when Bartimaeus began to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me," he met with little encouragement from those who were near him. On the contrary, "many rebuked him, telling him to be silent." But he was not to be stopped. If others did not know the misery of blindness, he did. If others did not think it worthwhile to take such trouble, in order to obtain relief, he knew better. He cared not for the rebukes of unfeeling bystanders. He heeded not the ridicule which his disability probably brought on him. "But he cried out all the more" and so crying obtained his heart's desire, and received his sight from our Lord.

Persistence and perseverance in making your requests to God is taught by the Lord Jesus himself in Luke 11:9-10. Jesus said, "And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Jesus gives to us, his followers, a three-fold exhortation arranged in order of rising intensity in our hearts over the request. "Asking" implies a humble request for something we need. "Seeking" implies earnest and diligent petitioning for something we feel we really need. "Knocking" implies persistent and persevering petitioning for something we feel we desperately need. The difference is how we feel in our hearts about a particular need. The Lord wants us to bring them all to him so he might answer them according to his will and timing. But answer them he will. Jesus responded to Bartimaeus' persistence and perseverance by healing his blindness in an instant. He may not always heal us, but he will always work out the situation for our spiritual good and bless us in the midst of it. (Romans 8:28)

We have in the third place, the divine omnipotent power of Jesus, the Son of God, in healing Bartimaeus of his blindness. Sometimes when we read about Jesus' miracles, we tend to focus on the person being healed or the compassion and mercy of our Lord, but we must never forget the incredible power of Jesus over his creation. Blindness is not something that man can affect by medicine or therapy or surgery. Once a person becomes blind, it is a permanent condition for the rest of one's life. When Jesus healed Bartimaeus, it was instantaneous and an incredible display of the glory of the Son of God. The issue in our lives is never if Jesus can work, but what he has chosen in his infinite wisdom to do in our lives. His power never changes. His power never diminishes. His power never falters.

We see, lastly, in this passage, a striking example of what happens when one received mercy from Christ. We are told that when the blind man was restored to sight, "he followed Jesus, glorifying God." (Luke 18:43) He felt deeply grateful. He resolved to show his gratitude by becoming one of our Lord's followers and disciples. Jesus commended his faith and this is always a result of true saving faith. Those who witnessed this miracle were amazed and immediately gave praise to God.

Grateful love is the true spring of real obedience to Christ! Men will never take up the cross and confess Jesus before the world, and live for him, until they feel that they are indebted to him

for pardon, peace, and hope. The ungodly are what they are, because they have no sense of sin, and no consciousness of being under any special obligation to Christ. The godly are what they are, because they love him who first loved them, and washed them from sin in his own blood. Christ has healed them spiritually and therefore they follow Christ.

In all our trials and troubles in this life, we must never forget as Christians what Jesus has done for us in securing for us a future with him. When we stand before Christ and see and experiences all the glorious blessings he has for us, we will know that no sacrifice Christ has called us to in this life could be compared to what has given to us. As Psalm 16:11 says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Day 9 Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

These verses describe one of our Lord's most remarkable miracles. Of all the great works that he did, none was done so publicly as this, and before so many witnesses. Of all the miracles related in the Gospels, this is the only one which all the four Gospel-writers alike record. This fact alone is enough to show that it is a miracle demanding special attention.

We learn, firstly, from this miracle the nature of Christ's almighty power. We see our Lord feeding five thousand men with "five barley loaves and two small fish." Creative power was manifestly exercised. Food was called into existence that did not exist before. In healing the sick, and raising the dead, something was amended or restored that had already existed. In feeding five thousand men with five loaves, something must have been created which before had no existence. Jesus can call into being that which was not before, and call it out of nothing.

As fast as he broke the loaves and the disciples carried them away to distribute them, so fast did the loaves multiply under his hands. It was in the act of breaking and distributing to the disciples that the miraculous multiplication took place. In fact, there was a continual act of creation going on. Bread was continually called into existence which did not exist before. The greatness of this miracle is perhaps not sufficiently realized. One loaf and less than half a fish to every thousand men! It is evident there could not have been more than a small morsel for each one without a miraculous increase of the food.

We learn, secondly, from this miracle an unanswerable proof of our Lord's divine power. To satisfy the hunger of more than five thousand people with so small a portion of food as five loaves and two fish, would be manifestly impossible without a supernatural multiplication of the food. It was a thing that no magician, impostor, or false prophet would ever have attempted. Such a

person might possibly pretend to cure a single sick person, or raise a single dead body, and by trickery might persuade weak people that he succeeded. But such a person would never attempt such a mighty work as that which is here recorded. He would know well that he could not persuade over five thousand men, women, and children that they were full when they were hungry. He would be exposed as a cheat and impostor on the spot.

Yet this is the mighty work which our Lord actually performed, and by performing it gave a conclusive proof that he was God. He called that into being which did not before exist. He provided visible, tangible, material food for over five thousand people, out of a supply which in itself would not have satisfied fifty. Surely, we must be blind if we do not see in this the hand of him who John describes as creator. John 1:3 says, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. made the world and all that therein is." To create is the peculiar prerogative of God.

We learn, thirdly, from this miracle before us that with Christ nothing is impossible. The Savior is loving, gracious, and merciful, but also almighty with infinite power. When he wills something, it shall be done. When he commands something, it shall come to pass. He can create light out of darkness, order out of disorder, strength out of weakness, joy out of sorrow, and food out of nothing at all. Forever let us bless God that this is so! We might well despair, when we see the corruption of human nature, and the desperate hardness and unbelief of people's hearts, if we did not know the power of Christ. "How can any man or woman be saved? Can any child, or friend of ours ever become a true Christian? Will we make it to heaven by trusting Christ?" Questions like these could never be answered, if Jesus was not Almighty. But thanks be to God, Jesus has all power in heaven and earth. Every promise of his to us will be accomplished just as he said.

We learn, lastly, from this miracle how the Lord can supply all our needs. We live in the midst of an evil world, and see few with us, and many against us. We carry within us a weak heart, too ready at any moment to turn aside from the right way. We have near us, at every moment, a busy devil, watching continually for our halting, and seeking to lead us into temptation. Where shall we turn for comfort? What shall keep faith alive, and preserve us from sinking in despair? There is only one answer. We must look to Jesus. We must think on his almighty power and the wonders he has displayed from the beginning of creation until today both in the lives of his people Israel and in the church and in our lives. We must call to mind how he can create food for his people out of nothing, and supply the needs of those who follow him, even in the wilderness. And as we think these thoughts, we must remember that this Jesus still lives, never changes, and is on our side. Jesus told his disciples just before he left the earth, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Day 10 Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

As evening comes upon Jesus, his disciples, and the over five thousand people he has fed, Jesus desires to spend time alone with God the Father. So, he sends his disciples in a boat to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus sent his disciples off in a boat, he never mentioned when and where he was to meet them. The disciples probably left the shore in the evening. It was a slow sail because the wind was against them and they found themselves "a long way from the land, beaten by the waves." John says "the sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing."

This situation must have immediately reminded them of the last time they were in a storm on the lake. At that time Jesus was with them asleep in the boat. When they had cried out to Jesus, he commanded and immediately the storm stopped and all was calm. It was a faith stretching experience. This time Jesus was not with them and he was about to stretch their faith further and give them another demonstration of his divine infinite power they would never forget. Jesus is growing their faith as he uses the circumstances of everyday life to reveal his true nature as the Son of God.

First, we need to notice from this miracle, what absolute dominion our Savior has over all created things. We see him "walking on the sea," as if it was dry land. Those angry waves which tossed the ship of his disciples to and fro, obey the Son of God, and become a solid floor under his feet. That liquid surface, which was agitated by the least breath of wind, bears up the feet of our Redeemer, like a rock. Science will tell us, that for material flesh and blood to walk on water is a physical impossibility. And that is true for human beings, but not for the God who created the universe. It was just as easy for Jesus to walk on the sea as to form the sea at the beginning, just as easy to suspend the common laws of nature, as they are called, as to create those laws. Learned men talk solemn nonsense sometimes about the eternal fixity of the laws of nature, as if they were above God himself, and could never be suspended. It is well to be reminded

sometimes by such miracles as that before us, that these so-called laws of nature are neither immutable nor eternal. They had a beginning, and will one day have an end.

There is encouragement here for all true Christians. We must remember that there is nothing created, which is not under Christ's control. He may allow his people to be tried for a season, and tossed to and fro by storms of trouble. He may be later than they wish in coming to their aid, and not draw near until the "fourth watch of the night." But never let them forget that winds, and waves, and storms are all Christ's servants. They cannot move without Christ's permission. "Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty!" (Psalm 93:4.)

Second, we need to notice from this miracle, how much trouble the disciples bring on themselves by their doubt. We see Peter boldly asking, "*Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.*" After Jesus tells him to come, he "got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus." Can you imagine what a feeling that must have been? Peter was actually walking on water. The disciples who probably at first thought Peter had lost his mind, were speechless as they witnessed this incredible supernatural miracle. And Peter was almost to Jesus, when he looked around and "saw the wind." Then he became afraid and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

Peter's faith was strong and bold as long as he focused on Jesus and his divine omnipotent power as Jesus stood on the water. But he took his eyes off of Jesus and put it back on the worldly circumstances surrounding him. Once he did that, the Lord stopped doing the miracle and he began to sink. Jesus did not do that as punishment, but as a lesson for Peter to realize the importance of trusting Jesus and focusing his life on his divine Savior who is able to do all things he so desires.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Peter started the race as he jumped out, but he didn't endure to the end, reaching Jesus. He took his focus off Jesus and put it on his circumstances.

The weak flesh got the better of his willing spirit. He forgot the wonderful proof of his Lord's goodness and miraculous power, which he was experiencing at that moment. He considered not that the same Savior who had enabled him to walk one step, must be able to hold him up forever. He did not reflect that he was nearer to Christ when once on the water, than he was when he first left the ship. Fear took away his memory. Alarm confused his reason. He thought of nothing but the winds and waves and his immediate danger, and his faith gave way and he cried out to the Lord for help.

Thirdly, we need to notice from this miracle how merciful our Lord Jesus Christ is to believers when we are struggling to trust him. We see him stretching forth his hand immediately to save Peter, as soon as Peter cried to him. He does not leave him to reap the fruit of his own doubting, and sink in the deep waters. He only seems to consider his trouble, and to think of nothing so much as delivering him from it. The only word he utters, is the gentle reproof, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

We read "Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him," This shows the exceeding gentleness of Christ! He can bear with much, and forgive much, when he sees true grace in a person's heart. He would have us know that doubting does not prove that a man has

no faith, but only that his faith needs to grow. When you are struggling with doubting the Lord to work in your life, pray to him to give you stronger faith. One question to ask yourself when you are struggling with doubt, "When the trial is over, what do I want to look back on, that I stood firm and trusted the Lord or that I struggled with trusting the Lord?" This question has helped me activate my faith in many trials I have faced. If you know the Lord, he will never leave or forsake you even when you doubt.

Lastly, we need to notice the increased faith of the disciples as they saw the true nature of Jesus as he displayed his incredible power. Matthew records, "And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'" Faith is strengthened not by the will of the Christian forcing himself or herself to believe, but by observing what the Lord has done in the lives of his people in the pages of Scripture. This is why the Bible is not written like a theology book. Instead, the Lord gives us a historical record of what he has accomplished in the lives of believers who lived in the past so we can see what he is capable of. We focus on the Lord as we read the pages of Scripture revealing the incredible power he has. Our faith is strengthened because we know that the Lord has not changed and his divine infinite power can work in our lives as well.

When you are struggling with trusting God to accomplish his will in your life, when the obstacles seem insurmountable, you are in the best place to see the Lord display his power in your life. Be patient. Read the Bible and focus on the miracles the Lord has displayed in the lives of his people and followers. Then, the Holy spirit will use God's Word to strengthen your faith in the Son of God and give you peace.

Day 11 Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

John 11:21-27, 32-45

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

Jesus had heard that his friend Lazarus had died and went to console his sisters, Martha and Mary, and raise him from the dead. He arrived there after Lazarus had been dead four days. First, these verses teach us that true Christians may be sick and ill as well as others. Lazarus and his two sisters were personal friends of Jesus Yet Lazarus was sick, even to the point of death. The Lord Jesus, who had power over all diseases, could no doubt have prevented this illness, if he had thought fit. But he did not do so. He allowed Lazarus to be sick, and in pain, and weary, and to languish and suffer like any other man. The lesson is one which ought to be deeply engraved in our memories.

Living in a world full of disease and death, we are sure to need it someday. Sickness, in the very nature of things, can never be anything but trying to flesh and blood. Our bodies and souls are strangely linked together, and that which vexes and weakens the body can hardly fail to vex the mind and soul. But sickness, we must always remember, is not a sign that God is displeased with us. It is part of God's curse which we human beings have brought upon ourselves because

of our sin and rebellion against God in Adam and carried out by us before we were saved by God's mercy and grace.

God can heal instantly and completely and does at times, but most often chooses to heal us slowly and use it for our spiritual good. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Suffering tends to draw our affections away from this world, and to direct them to things above. It sends us to our Bibles, and teaches us to pray better. It helps to strengthen our faith and build our patience. It shows us the real value of our hope in Christ that one day we will shed the pain and difficulty of this world for the blessings we will share in the heavenly presence of Jesus Christ. Then let us be patient and cheerful when we are laid aside by illness. Let us believe that the Lord Jesus loves us when we are sick no less than when we are well.

We learn, secondly, how important it is for Christians to understand the Christ's person, office, and power. When Martha said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Martha was demonstrating that she did not understand the extent of Christ's divine power. Jesus did not need to be there physically in order to heal Lazarus. We have already seen that Jesus can heal from a distance in his encounter with the Centurion and his sick servant. When the centurion told Jesus he did not need to come to his house to heal his servant "But say the word, and let my servant be healed." (Luke 7:7) Jesus commended this Gentile's faith, saying, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." The centurion's faith was based on right knowledge about Jesus. Martha's faith was based on incomplete knowledge.

Mary then says, "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Again, Mary's incomplete knowledge of Jesus believes that he can ask God to raise her brother from the dead even as Elijah the prophet did. When Jesus responded, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him (by faith), "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." If Jesus were just a human prophet, her response would have been a strong declaration of faith by Martha of our great hope as God's people, but Jesus was not just a prophet; he was the Son of God. So, Jesus now presents the truth about himself. "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus is the source of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal; of the living, both in the present world and in the world to come. He is the cause, source, or fountain of the believers' glorious resurrection and of their everlasting life. Because he lives we too shall live. He is not dependent on God to give life as a human prophet would be. He is the God of life. He then describes what that means. Here is an expanded translation to give the meaning. "Whoever believes in me, though he die physically, yet shall he live eternally in a resurrected body, and everyone who lives spiritually and believes in me shall never die that is, experience eternal death." The believer in Jesus will die physically, but be alive in spirit and soul and then will be united with his body at the resurrection and thus experience eternal life fully. The believer who lives spiritually by faith in Jesus will never experience eternal death. Jesus as God is the source of this eternal life.

There is matter here which deserves the close consideration of all true Christians. Many of them complain of lack of sensible comfort in their religion. They do not feel the inward peace which they desire. Let them know that vague and indefinite views of Christ are too often the cause of all their perplexities. They must try to see more clearly the great object on which their faith rests. They must grasp more firmly His love and power toward those who believe, and the riches He has laid up for them even now in this world. We are, many of us, sadly like Martha. A

little general knowledge of Christ as the only Savior is often all that we possess. But of the fullness that dwells in Him, of His resurrection, His priesthood, His intercession, His unfailing compassion, we have tasted little or nothing at all. They are things of which our Lord might well say to many, as he did to Martha, "Do you believe this?"

We learn, thirdly, what a depth of tender sympathy there is in Christ's heart towards his people. We read that when our Lord saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping with her, "He was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled." We read even more than this. He gave outward expression to his feelings, he "wept." He knew perfectly well that the sorrow of the family of Bethany would soon be turned into joy, and that Lazarus in a few minutes would be restored to his sisters. But though he knew all this, he "wept."

This weeping of Christ is deeply instructive. It shows us that it is not sinful to sorrow. Weeping and mourning are sadly trying to flesh and blood, and make us feel the weakness of our mortal nature. But they are not in themselves wrong. Even the Son of God wept. It shows us that deep feeling is not a thing of which we need be ashamed. To be cold and stoical and unmoved in the sight of sorrow is no sign of grace. There is nothing unworthy of a child of God in tears. Even the Son of God could weep. It shows us, above all, that the Savior in whom believers trust is a most tender and feeling Savior. He is one who can be touched with sympathy for our infirmities. When we turn to him in the hour of trouble, and pour out our hearts before him, he knows what we go through and can pity.

Let us remember these things in daily life, and never be ashamed of walking in our Master's footsteps. Let us strive to be men and women of a tender heart and a sympathizing spirit. Let us never be ashamed to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. Well would it be for the Church and the world if there were more Christians of this stamp and character! The Church would be far more beautiful, and the world be far happier.

We learn, lastly, the immense power of God Jesus was capable of displaying which supplies unanswerable proof of his divinity. He whose voice could bring back from the grave one that had been dead for four days, must indeed have been truly God! The miracle itself is described in such simple language that no human comment can throw light upon it.

Jesus addressed Lazarus when he raised him from the grave. We read that "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!" At the sound of that voice, death could no longer hold him in its grip. At once "The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth." Jesus then said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." The greatness of this miracle cannot possibly be exaggerated. The mind of man can scarcely take in the vastness of the work that was done. Here, in open day, and before many hostile witnesses, a man, four days dead, was restored to life in a moment. Here was public proof that our Lord had absolute power over the material world! A corpse, already corrupt, was made alive! Here was public proof that our Lord had absolute power over the spirit realm as well as the physical realm. Jesus is God come in the flesh.

Let us turn from this passage with thoughts of comfort and consolation. We are comforted by the thought that the loving Savior of sinners, on whose mercy our souls entirely depend, is one who has all power in heaven, and earth, and is mighty to save. We are comforted by the thought that when we ourselves lie down in the grave; we may lie down in the full assurance that we shall rise again. And that resurrection will be far different than the one Lazarus experienced.

Our Lord Jesus “will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” (Philippians 3:21) We must live every day of our lives in light of our glorious future with Christ.

Day 12

Jesus Rises from the Dead

John 20:1-10

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him." Therefore, Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. So they ran both together and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.

And stooping down and looking in, he saw the linen clothes lying there, yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him, and went into the tomb and saw the linen clothes lying there. The face-cloth which had been on his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who came to the tomb first, went in also and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is recorded by all four gospels with each gospel giving different details. When put together, they form a comprehensive picture of what happened that morning. It is clear from their eyewitness testimony that Jesus rose bodily from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. This passage in John and the rest of the Scriptures give us abundant evidence for the truth of the resurrection.

First, we learn, in these verses, that there were eyewitnesses of the scene at the tomb on the morning of the resurrection. John the Apostle records for us the events immediately after Jesus had risen from the dead in the early morning. He focuses on three individuals who were considered trustworthy people by Jesus himself before he died, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John.

Mary Magdalene and the other women mentioned in the other Gospels were headed to the tomb early in the morning. Mary most likely ran ahead of the others and arrived at the tomb first. She was so excited and confused at the missing body of Jesus that she left the tomb just before the others arrived. This is the first evidence of the resurrection in this passage. Mary testified that the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb. If Jesus had risen from the dead, his body would not be in the tomb.

The second evidence comes from what John and Peter saw when they came to the tomb. They also saw the body of Jesus was gone. But they saw more. The presence of the grave clothes and the position of the face-cloth was definite evidence of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus had been wrapped with strips of cloths as is the custom of the Jews which had been stuck together with about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes. (John 19:39) John saw the linen strips lying there.

Had Jesus' body been stolen, the thieves would not have taken the time to unwrap his body and leave the wrappings there. They would have grabbed his body and left quickly and unwrapped it later. But that wasn't all. Peter also saw the face-cloth lying by itself folded up. The Jews would not wrap strips of cloth around the head of the deceased, but put a face-cloth over

it. If the thieves were in a hurry, they would most likely have dropped the cloth on the ground. They would never have folded it up and placed it a location separate from the cloths so it would be noticed. Who had done such a thing and why? It was a sign from the Lord. He had neatly folded the face-cloth and placed it by itself apart from the cloth strips to leave evidence of his resurrection.

This evidence is all Peter and John needed. John records, "Then the other disciple who came to the tomb first, went in also and he saw and believed." Peter and John were the first of the apostles to see the evidence and believe in the resurrection. Jesus rose bodily from the dead. What a glorious truth!

Second, we learn, in the Scriptures, that Jesus appeared in his glorified body to many, especially the apostles. All became eyewitnesses of his resurrection. He was seen at least eleven times after he rose again, at different times of day, in different ways, and by different witnesses. He was seen first by Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18), then by the other women who were at the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10), then by Peter (Luke 24:34), then by two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33). Then he was seen by ten disciples in the evening in a room (John 20:19-23), then by eleven disciples again a week later. So powerful was that appearance to Thomas that he exclaimed to Jesus "My Lord and My God" (John 20:24-29).

Paul wrote, "he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." (1 Corinthians 15:5-8) If there is any fact in Christianity that is well supported by evidence, it is the fact of Christ rising from the dead.

Third, we learn, in the Scriptures, that the resurrection of Jesus also demonstrated that he was the promised messiah whom the prophets had foretold in the Old Testament. When Peter was preaching in Acts 2:29-36, he quoted from Psalm 16:8-11, "For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." Then he proclaimed, "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses."

Lastly, we learn, in the Scriptures, the resurrection of Jesus was also the proof that all of his true followers will one day be resurrected from the dead and enter his forever kingdom. We need not fear death and look at the grave with despair, when we remember that Jesus Christ rose again in the body. As surely as the head rose, so shall the members be raised. As Peter declares, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the grand proof that what Jesus claimed about himself is true, that he is the Son of God who was sent by God the Father to redeem sinners. All of his words are true. All of his warnings must be heeded. All of his promises will come to pass. Jesus is worthy

to be trusted and with our salvation. Jesus is worthy to be trusted and followed in our relationships. Jesus is worthy to be trusted and followed in our daily lives no matter what we face, no matter how difficult.

An Invitation from Jesus

Maybe you have been reading this book and have been encouraged as you have seen the glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his miracles and resurrection from the dead, but there is a doubt in your mind whether you truly are a Christian, a child of God. You want to experience all of the blessings that the Lord offers, but you are not sure that you are experiencing them. Maybe you have even gone to church your whole life, but never made a personal commitment to Jesus or you are not sure you have. I invite you to read this chapter and make sure of your salvation by turning to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Maybe you know that you are not a Christian and have thought about Jesus, but have never really done anything about it. You have never made a personal commitment to him. In this chapter, I would like to share with you what the Gospels say about how you can come to know the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and become a child of God.

Jesus came to give people the opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with him. Jesus said that he was the good shepherd who cared deeply about his sheep, so much so that he was willing to lay down his life for them. When Jesus laid down his life at the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of people, he gave them the opportunity to come to him and receive forgiveness and become a part of his spiritual flock. Jesus said,

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep...For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. (John 10:14-15, 17)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28)

Jesus invited people to come to him for salvation

Jesus knew that the trials and tribulations of life bring spiritual weariness and burden to the hearts of people. He invited people to come to him for spiritual rest and peace. Jesus said,

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

To come to Jesus involves trusting in Jesus

Jesus said that people "come" to him by believing in him, that is, by trusting that he is the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of people, and that he will give them eternal life if they trust in Him. Jesus said,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

To come to Jesus involves turning away from sin

Jesus was very specific about the issue of sin in people's lives. Sin is turning away from following God's moral standards. Jesus offered forgiveness for sins if people would turn to him and accept his payment on the cross. Jesus preached a simple message of "repentance," which means "turn away from sin and turn to God."

"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Jesus said that if people did not turn to him and believe in him, they would die in their sins. Dying in their sins meant divine judgment. Divine judgment meant punishment forever away from the presence of God. Jesus said,

"For unless you believe that I am he [the Son of God], you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. (John 12:44-49)

Trusting in God is not enough, you must trust in Jesus

Many people assume that it doesn't matter what they believe about Jesus. As long as they "believe in God and love him" they will go to heaven. But Jesus did not teach that belief. Jesus taught that God the Father desired that he, God the Son, also be honored and glorified. Anyone that does not honor the Son cannot honor the Father who sent him. Jesus said,

"For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:22-24)

Jesus clearly said that he was the only way to salvation and receiving eternal life. There are no other ways to heaven or living with God forever.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

To come to Jesus involves asking him to save you

The Gospels record that the people that came to Jesus all did the same thing. They believed that he was who he claimed to be; they turned from their sins; they trusted him to save them; and they asked him to save them.

An example of this is the last person Jesus saved before he died. He was a criminal on a cross hanging next to Jesus. He had sinned against God and man and had received the just penalty of his crimes. Yet God in his mercy gave him the opportunity while facing death to hang on a cross next to God's own Son. This man realized who Jesus was and humbled himself before the Son of God. He turned from his sin, trusted Jesus, and asked Jesus to save him. Jesus responded to the man's faith as he always did, promising him that he would receive eternal life with the Son of God forever. This is what Luke records,

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Luke 23:32-33)

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Will you come to Jesus and receive eternal life?

The words of Jesus that you have just read are not only for those who lived at the time of Jesus, but also for you. Jesus is speaking these words to you and inviting you to come to him for salvation and to receive from him eternal life. He desires that you come into his kingdom.

How do you do it? By coming to him in prayer and asking him to save you. You must turn from your sin and acknowledge to God that you are a sinner and no longer want to live according to your own will but you want to follow Jesus' will. You must believe that Jesus is exactly who he claimed to be, the Son of God, God become a man, and that he died on the cross for your sins.

Ask the Lord Jesus to save you from the penalty of your sin and accept his payment for your sins on the cross. Ask him to be your Savior. Trust him to save you; trust that he will save you if you turn from your sin and ask him. If you are not sure what words to use to speak to Jesus, below is a prayer that you could use. It is not the words; it is the desire of your heart.

"Lord Jesus, I admit to you that I am a sinner and have sinned against you. I turn from my sinful way of life. Please be my Savior. I accept your payment on the cross for my sins. I trust that you are the Son of God and will save me now that I am asking you. Thank you, Lord. Amen."

If you are not sure that in the past you have asked Jesus to be your Savior, you can ask him today. In fact, you may have gone to church most of your life, and yet have never turned to Jesus

and asked him to save you, you can make that commitment right now. Turn from your sin and ask him. Once you have asked him, trust that Jesus has fulfilled his word and is now your Savior.

You may not “feel” like a change has taken place in your life, but it has. You must believe by faith that Jesus is now your shepherd and you have eternal life in him. May the Lord bless you as you enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!