



Presenting Christ-Part 2

The Use of Scripture

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, like most homeowners, I have a lot of things that need to be fixed and built and repaired in my aging house. And as a husband, I also have a honey-do list. Yes, even Pastor Mike has a honey-do list. And in my case, it's more of a collage than a list because my wife, as I've told you, her proclivity is for those Post-it notes. And so for her, she will choose to stick the requisition against the drawers of my dresser. So I can't even get socks in the morning without seeing what needs to be done on the house. And there it is on the dresser for me to see. And it's kind of a Wittenberg door, just to think theologically here, with loving house-related grievances posted there every week.

So on Monday is my day off. When I have the energy, I will go to my dresser and I will look at the things that need to be fixed. And, of course, every job begins with me assessing the challenge—you know, what am I up against here? And then, of course, I trip downstairs to the garage to see about the tools that I need to get it done. Because there are things to saw, there are things to drill, there are things to cut, there are things to fix and pry and wedge or whatever—I've got stuff to do. None of it I can do with my bare hands. I need tools to get the job done. And oftentimes, I'll go to the garage and find out I don't have the right tools. So I head off to Home Depot and try and buy what I need and come back and I get to work. Because there's nothing more frustrating and nothing more futile than trying to accomplish a task with inadequate tools.

When it comes to our task—our primary task as Christians here left on earth—to make disciples, to win people to Christ, the same holds true. Nothing more frustrating or futile than for us to try to go about that task with the wrong tool, with inadequate tools. And when it comes to our task as evangelists, it's much more difficult than, I don't know, drilling a hole or sawing a board or, you know, getting a bit into some masonry blocks. It's much more difficult than that. When it comes to the task, the Bible often equates it to warfare, to combat, to battle. And certainly you're not going to go into battle without tools, right? You need proper tools for that. And it's like the old saying, you know, don't bring a knife to a gunfight. Remember that old line? Nothing could be more apt in terms of a warning for us when we go out to speak to our co-worker or neighbor or our friend about their need to come to Christ. You don't want to go in under-clubbed. You need to have the proper tools.

Now, you may say, "Well, last week you ended our time together, and you said, 'Well, that's the Holy Spirit that yields the result, so we already have the tool; the Spirit's going to do the work.'" Well, that's true. He is credited with the results whenever someone comes to Christ, but he has crafted a weapon, a tool for us, put it in our hands, and put us there on the front lines. And he says, "If you're going to get the job done, and I'm going to be in this working the change in people's hearts, you've got to utilize this tool, this weapon." As it's put in terms of the Bible, it's living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. It's a book that he wrote. And that book is so powerful it



will discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And the Bible says that's the thing that the Holy Spirit uses—the book that the Holy Spirit wrote—to change and shape and alter lives.

Paul speaks of it elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 10, verses 4 and 5. He says, you know, the weapons of our warfare, they're not of the flesh. I love this phrase: they have divine power to take down strongholds, to destroy strongholds, to tear down every lofty thing or every opinion that raises itself up against the knowledge of God. It has that kind of effect—to take captive every thought in obedience to Christ. Now, you can go out with a lot of persuasive mechanisms and methods and stories and all kinds of things. But nothing's going to do that work—to tear down those lofty opinions and those thoughts raised up against God and take those people's thoughts and make them captive to Christ—except the divinely powerful weapon that the Scripture is and that God, and His Spirit in particular, has given us.

Now, as we're studying through our passage here on presenting Christ in Luke chapter 4, something happens very interesting here in verse number 16 as he makes his way to his hometown—of his childhood, at least, this childhood hometown. He was born in Bethlehem but raised in Nazareth. He does something in this text that we may not expect. And if you haven't turned there yet, please do. And as he's going to take the people he grew up with and the people he knows from his hometown and see about making their thoughts obedient to Christ and presenting his claims, he does something interesting and something we wouldn't expect in that he's the Son of God, the incarnate second person of the Godhead. And if you are the second person of the Godhead and you want to convince people about your authority—who you are, your role in God's salvific plan—if you want to take their thoughts captive to you, I'm thinking there are a lot of ways you can do that. I mean, you can do a lot of things to make your point. And I wouldn't imagine that you're going to pull out an old ancient scroll and be using the same exact tool that we have access to today. But that's exactly what he does.

Take a look at it with me, beginning in verse 16. It says, "He came," that is Jesus, "to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom"—and you'll see this wasn't, you know, a one-time thing; he did this all the time—"he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. And he unrolled the scroll and he found the place where it was written." Now, in the margin it'll probably say this, but this is a quotation here from Isaiah 61. It says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. And because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Look at the drama here in verse 20: "And he rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down." And if you think of that in your American mindset, you'll think, "Wow, that was quite a sermon—read the Bible, sit down." Well, they would read the Bible standing up—the scroll—and then they would sit in what's called the seat of Moses. If you've been with me to Israel



or been there with someone else, of course, it has a great example there in the ruins where they would have a seat—the seat of Moses—where they would preach from; they would preach sitting down, which sounds appealing to me. “The eyes of all,” verse 20, “were on him; they’re ready to listen, and fixed on him, their eyes were fixed on him. And he began to say to them”—and he’s going to preach there, and the parallel passages and even in verse 22 we’re going to recognize that there’s more to it than what he’s just saying here—but he starts his comments on Isaiah 61 with this: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Well, Christ, with everything at his disposal, can talk about anything he’s seen in his pre-incarnate state, as he says in the book of John often, in the glory that he had before he came to earth. I mean, the things that he could talk about in first-person experience, the things that he could do to show his power and authority—and all of that takes a backseat to him pulling out the ancient scroll of Isaiah, reading from it, and saying, “Here, you need to see the power of this text being fulfilled in my life.” Huge.

I’d like to put it this way, if you’re taking notes: let’s start with that simple observation and follow the example of Christ. As Christ defers to the written testimony of the Word of God, you and I, in our evangelism—we’re going to present Christ and his claims—let us prefer God’s testimony over yours. Let us prefer God’s testimony, the written Word of God, over your testimony—what Christ has done for you.

Now, before you get mad at me, there’s a place for using your testimony. I know you like to share your testimony. That’s great. And it’s good to hear what Christ has done for you and all the things that you’ve experienced as a follower of Christ and how your life has been changed and the relief and freedom you had when your guilt was forgiven. Great; all for that. But you’ve got to prefer the testimony of Christ, which is written in the Scriptures, over your story—just like Christ does. It’s an amazing thing that he sets aside what he could say and he goes to what God has already said. There’s power in that.

It’s the kind of power that I used to have as a latchkey kid. When I was growing up in Long Beach, if you grew up that way, from three to six you’re on your own—but you’re really not on your own, because Mom’s always got expectations and Dad has always left you a set of instructions—at least in my house—on the kitchen table on the little yellow pad. And once we got our homework done, which was the first thing on the list, we had all these other things we had to accomplish if we had time before Mom and Dad got home. Now, my brother and I could talk about what we think Mom and Dad should have us do, and, you know, “I got in trouble for this last week; don’t do that.” Nothing was more powerful than taking the little yellow tablet and making your brother read it. Because that’s direct communication. It’s one thing for me to sit there and say, “Well, you really ought to,” and “It would be good if you did,” and “In light of what Mom and Dad expect, I think this or I think that,” or “Let me tell you my experience last time I did this or did that with Mom and



Dad.” Listen, that’s great. But what really matters is getting people face to face with the words of their Creator, the words of God, the words of their Father. That needs to be preferred.

Let me show you, not just by way of example in Luke 4, but specifically in the teachings of Christ. In John chapter 5—please keep your finger here in Luke 4 and go to John chapter 5—and let me show you when Jesus explains this and starts talking about how important the testimony of the Scriptures are. And I know we’re tempted to prefer our testimony, and here’s why, as we’re turning to John 5: maybe because we think my testimony is current, it’s relevant, it’s applicable, it’s so 21st century, and I’m sharing with someone like me, and therefore that would be much more relevant than an ancient text. But because the Bible is something that not only claims, but proves to be living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword—it can pierce through to their hearts—that’s a promise your testimony doesn’t have. And the last line there in Hebrews 4, verse 13, it’s so strong in saying, after all of that, you need to recognize that our lives—each of our lives—are naked and exposed before God, the One with whom we have to do, or the One to whom we’ll give an account. And when I recognize that I’m bringing to people the message of God, and if I can show them the words of God—reiterate, quote from memory, get a Bible out and make them read it and say, “Let’s talk about this particular passage”—I’m putting them face to face with the words of the One that, in their heart, the Spirit that has designed their heart is going to bring that connection when He chooses to do so—have the authority of that Word before the God that one day they’ll stand before. This is so important: to get the Bible involved in the conversations we have with people about Christ.

Look at how John 5 puts it—or Jesus puts it as he is recorded in John 5—drop all the way down to verse 31. It’s such a huge statement, that if Christ says something and it doesn’t sync with the testimony of God in Scripture, he’s saying it means nothing. Look at verse 31: “If I alone bear witness about myself,” if it’s just me coming in and giving you my story and I’m going to tell you who I am, “my testimony is not true.” You shouldn’t even listen to it. “There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.” It’s outside, it’s objective, and frankly—as he gets down into it—it’s propositional; it’s put in sentences and phrases and words and letters.

Now, he’s going to say he does that in real time in His earthly ministry for three years through the miraculous events that he does, and that’s one thing we might expect. But the real focus of this testimony, as we’ll see in this text as it unfolds, is the Scriptures itself. Verse 33: “You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning lamp, a shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice in his light for a while.” But the testimony that I have—the one about me—is greater than that of John. Now two things: “for the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, they bear witness about me.” Now, when I can turn water into wine, I can take bread and feed 5,000, when I can heal the leper and make the blind see, I mean, you can see that—you can recognize God’s attesting affirmation of my claims. But he goes further, verse 37: there is another aspect to this, the one he’ll camp on for the rest of this section, for the next eleven verses: “The Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me,” not just



through me but about me objectively, outside of me, in third person. “His voice you have never heard”—you’re not getting what He’s saying—“and his form you have never seen,” because if you don’t get what He’s saying, you’re certainly not going to have a connection with the God of the Bible. “And you do not have”—here’s the real problem—“his word abiding in you”—not a part of your thinking; you haven’t accepted it; you haven’t adopted it—“for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.”

“You search the Scriptures,” verse 39, “because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name,” without the attestation of Scripture, “you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another,” when it’s that brotherly concept of affirming one another, “and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” And that’s inscribed where? In Scripture. And he goes back to that, verse 45: “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father.” Of course he could. “There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.” Now, he’s been dead for 1,400 years by the time Christ is saying these things. What’s he talking about? The writings of Moses. “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

The connection that Christ makes, that even trumps his miraculous signs, is that there is something written about him in the Scriptures that attests to who he is, what he’s come to do, and the truthfulness of the message that he brings. He defers to the Scriptures—so much so that if I said something that’s not in keeping with that, then there’s a problem. I mean, this is huge. You might expect that from the Apostle Paul, as he says in Galatians chapter 1: if I or an angel from God tell you something that wasn’t already revealed in Scripture, well then, hey, I should be *anathema*, accursed. But to have Christ, the second person of the Godhead, in essence say the same thing puts a value on Scripture that I think you and I just don’t have. And in some ways, we’re somehow intoxicated by our own stories, saying, “Well, I tried it; you should try it. Look what it did for me.” And we’re passing on the very thing that has the power to convict people of their need for Christ: the Scriptures, the written Word of God. We’ve got to get back to the Bible and recognize nothing is more persuasive than that.

Now, I can say something like, “Nothing’s more persuasive than getting them face to face with the propositions of the Bible,” and you’ll say, “Well, there are other things that would be, but God’s just not doing them.” Let me prove you wrong on that one. If you’re thinking that thought, turn with me to one more passage—to Luke chapter 16, Luke chapter 16. Now, if you look at this chapter, you’ll know the story here of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus tells a story about one man who goes to heaven and one man who goes to hell, so to speak—one who’s being comforted with Abraham and one that’s being tormented for his sins. Now, that’s the bottom-line concern of everyone that we approach with the gospel.



Well, the rich man here at the end of the story sits there and debates with Abraham about sending Lazarus back to share a warning and concern to his brothers about coming to the place of torment. Let's pick it up, verse number 27: "He," the rich man, "said, 'Then I beg you, father'"—that's Abraham—"to send him"—that's the dead Lazarus. Now, he's alive in spirit, obviously, but he's dead like the rich man is—"send him to my father's house"—you're never going to send a dead spirit, right? He's alive, but his body's dead, he's departed from planet earth—"to his brother's house," or his father's house. That means we're talking about a resurrection. That would be spectacular—to have Lazarus raised from the graveyard and go talk to his brothers. He says, "I'd like you to do that, please," verse 28, "because I've got five brothers, and I want Lazarus to warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment."

Now, that's the concern we have for our non-Christian friends: if you don't embrace Christ, if you don't accept the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, you're going to face eternity, paying for your own sins by a just God in a place of absolute measured justice on your life. It will be terrible. We want people to avoid that. And here he is saying, "I know my brothers will avoid it if you just send back this dead person, and he rises from the dead. That would work." Abraham responds, verse 29: "They have Moses and the Prophets"—now again, most of them dead for 1,400 years—"but the writings of Moses and the writings of the Prophets" is what he's talking about. "Let them hear them. Let your brothers hear the Scriptures." And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they'll repent. I know they will." And he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

Do you hear what's being asserted here? That you and I, when we fantasize in our minds about God—"If you just did this for that non-Christian relative, I know they'd come to faith. Oh, I know they'd put their trust in you. I know they'd repent if you just did this." And sometimes we don't even verbalize it, but we think in our minds, "Give them some spectacular display," or "Providentially work their life out to have this, this, this, and this happen—I know they'd be..." "Just give them someone in their industry that's successful, that can tell them they can have Christ and be okay." Whatever we fantasize about as being the thing that's really going to persuade them, recognize this: the Bible says the Scripture itself is more persuasive and more powerful, and it has a better effect on people than anything we could ever imagine—including miraculous events like someone popping up from a coffin at a funeral. That's huge.

I think we underestimate the power of the Word. And you and I need to say, "Wait a minute, when I speak to someone about Christ, I've got to get to the Bible. I've got to get them to the words of Scripture." I've got to carry around in my briefcase or my backpack, or I've got to have a Bible I can pull out. And when the topic comes up or when I speak about Christ, I want them to see the words of Scripture. I want them to read the words of God. I want them to see it for themselves. Because that has power that—if I could go poof or do some kind of magic trick or, you know, call out some miracle from heaven—it wouldn't have the power that the written Word of God has.



Now, I'm not saying your testimony doesn't have a role to play in evangelism. I'm just saying, don't go away from some encounter with a non-Christian friend because you've talked about how you came to Christ and what Christ has done for you, thinking you've done evangelism. You haven't. It's just part of it. The main part of it that we dare not neglect is getting those people—their eyes, their nose—in front of a Bible and showing them the Word of God. Can you recite it to them? I suppose you can. You could say it, you can summarize it, you can paraphrase it, you could quote it from memory. But you've got to get those words of God—the powerful words of God—into their mind. God does the work from there. It's like the sower and the soils. The power is in the seed—the Word of God. The Word of God is spread out; we're sharing our stories, and some of your stories aren't all that dramatic or exciting. They don't have the power that the Word of God has. Prefer God's testimony over yours—even Jesus did that.

Verse 18—let's look at Jesus here in Luke chapter 4. I guess I should finish the bottom of verse 17 and at least set this up. He was handed, in verse 17, the Isaiah scroll. That was the reading for the day, I'm assuming. And so he gets the scroll. He unrolls the scroll, bottom of verse 17, and this should be underlined: he found the place where it was written. This was strategic. This was important. This was focused. He's going to a particular text, and he starts reading in verse 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"—that's from Isaiah 61.

Because I know I can preach that whole first point, you can say, "Well, I'm going to carry extra Bibles around in my car then. And then when I find somebody, I'm going to talk about Christ, I'll hand him a Bible. Give them the whole thing—'Go read; get the powerful Word of God in your life.'" When you give a person a Bible, you know what they do—even if they read it? Where do they go? Where do you go when you get a book? The beginning. You've read the beginning of the Bible. It's important—I don't want to cut it out; super important. But there are a lot of things there before you ever get to the message of Christ or the claims that get very urgent in our modern lives about our need for repentance and faith in Christ. It's going to take a lot of reading and a lot of names, right? Even if you started with the New Testament—"I'll just give a New Testament out"—the first chapter of Matthew is a long list of names. I don't know if they're going to get to chapter two if I just hand them a Bible and say "start reading." I need to be very specific, and so was Christ. Now, Christ takes the scroll and he finds the place; he looks for the place and finds the place where he thinks, in this encounter with his relatives, his extended family, his clansmen that he grew up with in Nazareth—he wants them to have their thoughts obedient to Christ, to become the person that gives their allegiance to Christ. He wants to take them to a passage that will be most effective. And so it is for us: we want to direct where we take people in the Bible and make sure we're giving them the things that are most important. Are we going to get to the rest? Sure. We want them to start on the DVR and get the whole counsel of God. But when we do evangelism and point people to places in the Bible, it needs to be as strategic as Christ.

Now, let's think about the strategic nature of this particular passage as Christ makes his claims. Verse 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"—He is—"because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." Now, that's a mouthful, and in context it fits perfectly with what we've seen. Christ is coming in the power of the Spirit; the Spirit of God is on him according to the



baptismal historic scene there that's laid out for us. So he's now endowed with the power of the Spirit. He is called the Christ, which is the word "anointed."

By the way, if you don't know that, "anointed" in the Old Testament is transliterated from the Hebrew word *mashiach* to the word "Messiah." In the New Testament, the verb here *chriō*, its noun form *Christos*, is translated "Christ." To say someone is the Messiah or someone is the Christ is simply to say—if we were to translate it—they've been anointed. Now, in the Old Testament, who did we anoint? Whoever was authorized by God to be the prophet or the priest or the king. All three of those you see examples of being anointed. They were the ones that were authorized to speak for God—to represent to men God as prophets, to represent to God people—that's the priest—and to rule people—the king. All of those were anointed. The Messiah was going to be a confluence of all of those things—Prophet, Priest, and King. The ultimate expectation of the Old Testament Jewish rabbi or any reader of the Scripture was: one day, the ultimate Anointed One would come—the son of David, the ultimate Priest, the one in the order of Melchizedek, the one who would be the Prophet or spokesperson or the *logos*, the Word of God would come in human form. That was the person that was anticipated, and that's who Christ was. And he reads from a text about the Christ, the only one who comes to now proclaim—and you know this, you've been around church long enough to know this word—"good news" translates the Greek word *euangelion*, and we get the word from that when we transliterate "evangelism" or "evangelical."

He's going to preach to them the good news—the gospel; that's another way to translate it. And he's going to preach all of that to the poor. "Oh, this is about financial planning." It has nothing to do with being financially poor, you realize. Keep reading. Look at the paradigm that's set up: "and to proclaim liberty to the captives." "Oh, this is about jail ministry and incarceration." No, it's not about that either. "To proclaim the recovering of sight to the blind"—this is an optometrist verse. No, it's not about optometry, it's not about financial planning, and it's not about incarceration. It's about these themes that are repeated throughout the Bible: liberty to those who are oppressed; proclaiming the year of God's favor.

Now, that translation—not a bad one, it's a good one—"favor." But sometimes we see that as the synonym of "grace," and we sometimes think of the word in Greek translating the word "favor." This is not that word. This is the word in this text that is more of the "acceptance" or the "inviting" or "the gate is open and allowing you in." It's translated here "favor." Favor—not the same word. Favor sometimes translates the word that we also translate "grace." This is the word like "the gate is open—acceptance." The Lord wants to accept. Now is the time of God's acceptance—his favor. He's going to forgive people who are—what?—spiritually poor, spiritually captive, spiritually blind, spiritually oppressed. These are some of the Bible's favorite words for the whole concept of what Christ came to do: to forgive us of our sins, relieve us of our guilt, to take those who are guilty before God and make them innocent before God; to have the One who knew no sin become sin for us on the cross as the Lamb of God, so that we might become, in Christ, the righteousness of God. That transaction is what this passage is about. It's not about eyesight; it's not about economy; it's not about captivity; it's not about any of that. These are classic Christian biblical connections and images and analogies—metaphors, if you will—of what Christ came to do.



He could have gone to a lot of places. I'm thinking, if you're going to open a scroll and say—as he says at the end of this—"Hey, it's fulfilled in your hearing," I'm thinking you've got the whole Isaiah scroll in your hand—go to Isaiah 53. There's a lot of places—go to Isaiah 9, go to Isaiah 7. Now, if you know your book of Isaiah, those are key passages that are messianic. I think, "Go there." He doesn't go there. He goes to what's urgent and what's central to the gospel, and that is the promise that if you would trust in the Messiah, the Anointed One, you could go from spiritually poor to having the righteousness of God; you can go from being spiritually captive in sin to being released from your sins and forgiven; you could go from being spiritually blind to seeing now the light of the gospel and the light of the glory of God; from being spiritually oppressed to being spiritually accepted. That's the picture of the gospel.

But that's important, because for me, I think so often we get weighed down in our evangelism, talking around the main issues. We often spend a lot of time on the garnish—on the ancillary issues—and we don't camp on the central themes. So, number two on your outline—let's just summarize what Jesus did here this way: Number two, we need to point to the gospel's central promises. Point to the gospel's central promises. Now, there are a lot of ancillary promises which, by the way, aren't uniformly promised to us. And there are a lot of things in our testimony even that we seem to camp on: "Well, it's been great since I became a Christian because, you know, I didn't have peace in my heart and now I have peace. I didn't have a song in my ear and now I'm joyful. And I didn't have purpose and direction and now I have direction." And we start talking about all these other things, and we don't deal with the main thing: "Before God, I was spiritually poor." As Revelation says, I thought I was rich and wealthy and in need of nothing, and I realized I was poor, miserable, blind, and naked. I couldn't see the truth. I couldn't embrace God because I was destitute before God. We don't deal with issues of captivity: Jesus said, "If you have sinned, you're a slave of sin." And the punishment and the law of sin and death is eventually going to bring sentence upon you as a captive to sin. Oppressed, blind—these issues are always presented to us in Scripture as the key issues of the gospel, and for us to miss them is to really spend our time evangelizing people about things that are never really the core issues of the gospel.

Well, it's the temptation we have with our testimony. I think they'll listen to me if I'm going to talk about current 21st-century life and how God has helped me as opposed to ancient Scripture. And I really think if I deal with those other issues that feel so good and I don't deal with hell and guilt and substitution and heaven and repentance—if I don't deal with that—I think it'll be a more palatable experience in my evangelism. And again, you're wrong in that. If you think that, you've missed the power and the point of the gospel altogether.

Here's one example of this from John chapter 9 when Jesus deals with the blind man—speaking of blind and seeing. Jesus is known, from time to time in his ministry, to do things that deal with literal poverty and literal blindness and literal slavery and literal oppression. All of those, I should point out, are examples of the real concern of spiritual poverty and spiritual captivity and spiritual blindness and spiritual oppression. Here's a classic example—John 9. And, by the way, even

logically step back and think about this: he heals the man born blind in John 9. That's what this passage is about. How long do those eyeballs work? How long? Well, depends on how old he is and when he dies. I don't know. If you know the passage really well, you know he's got parents that are alive that go and talk about the whole situation; he's tossed from the synagogue. So I don't know—20 years old? I don't know how old he is, and I don't know how long he lives. But I know this: his eyeballs have long since rotted in a grave somewhere—have they not? They didn't last very long. They didn't last but a few decades, I'm assuming, if he had an average lifespan. So whatever Christ did, it wasn't a permanent fix for anything. But Christ came to do permanent things—eternal things, eternally important things. And every time he even raised someone who was a paralytic, every time he healed someone with leprosy, every time he even raised a human from the dead, they were subject to dying again; those eyes were subject to not seeing again. These were just temporal examples of his power so that you would listen to his message that was about spiritual blindness, spiritual poverty, spiritual captivity, and spiritual oppression.

Bottom of this passage, verse 35: he heals the blind man. Now he's dealing with the Pharisees who have kicked him out of the synagogue because they didn't like the blind man's answers. He's now seeing the healed blind man, and in verse 35 Jesus comes around and he hears that the Pharisees had cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him—the healed blind man—out of the synagogue. And having found him, Jesus said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Have I talked to you enough about that phrase? It always should take our minds back to Daniel 7: there's the prophecy of the Son of Man coming, vested with all the power of the Father, coming on the clouds; he would be the reigning King of the world, and one day all the nations would serve the Son of Man. That's the phrase from the prophecies of the Old Testament. Well, that was another phrase for the Messiah. He said, "Well, who is he, sir," verse 36, "that I may believe in him? I'd like to trust him. I'd like to give my allegiance to him. But who is he?" And Jesus says—ironically enough—"You have seen him." With your brand-new eyeballs, here's the first one you saw, and "he is the one who is speaking to you." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And if you really understand the Daniel prophecy, this is the right response: you'd better bow down and worship the Son of Man because he has all the power vested in him from the Father and from heaven, and all the earth will give praise and worship him—which, by the way, is blasphemy if he's not the incarnate God. Is it not prohibited in the Old Testament to worship anyone but God? And he worships him, as he ought.

And Jesus said, verse 39, "For judgment I came into this world." What are you talking about? "Judgment" is used in a lot of different ways in the New Testament. He didn't come to bring the final judgment; he came to bring us to a place of judgment. The word *krinō* means to make a distinction—just like you go and judge the cantaloupes on the aisle at the supermarket: this one's good, this one's bad. He came to help us make the distinctions in our thinking about what's true and what's not—what is, in this case, truly a valid claim of being the Son of Man and what's not. Those who embrace him and worship him and give allegiance to the Son of Man and those that don't. "I came into the world for this reason." And now he gives the analogy based on the temporal sight of the blind man. He says, "Listen, this is the real concern: that those who do not see may see." Now here's the thing about the blind man: when he couldn't physically see, he was groping about; he knew he was blind; he knew he needed help; he knew he needed clarity. He said, "That's what I want. I want people to know that they need the thing that I have, and I want them to see it and realize it. And those who see"—like the Pharisees—"I want them to become blind." What's the



point? Because if you really are blind and you recognize you're blind, then you're a candidate for seeing.

There's a lot going on here. Verse 40: though the Pharisees were getting what was going on there, they were near him; they heard these things, and they said to Jesus, "Hey, what are you saying? Are we also blind? Are you saying that about us?" And Jesus said—love this; now back to the core issues with words that are no longer steeped in metaphor—"If you were blind"—there's no metaphor—"you would have no guilt. If you, like the blind man, really said, 'I really want to know—are you the Son of Man? Because if you are, I'll believe in you and I'll worship you'—if you were blind like that and searching for the truth with that sincere heart, then you would have no guilt." Why? Because—what's the deal?—embrace the Messiah. Recognize that he came as the Lamb of God to bear your sin. Repent of your sins. Give him allegiance. You get your guilt removed. "But now that you say, 'We see'"—you're rejecting me; you're saying, "We understand—we've discerned that you are not the Son of Man; we don't give you worship"—he said, "Since you say that, your guilt remains."

What's the concern of the gospel? Guilt and forgiveness, heaven and hell, being released from the penalty of our sin or having to suffer the penalty when we die. That's not going to play well in our thinking and our imagination. We think, "I need to share that with my neighbor. Can I just talk about how much peace I feel and what a great thing it is—the fellowship and friends in my small group?" Listen, that's ancillary stuff; that's garnish. That's the bonus stuff that comes along with it. What really matters—the core issues—are the issues that you and I are a bit squeamish about sharing with our non-Christian friends. But the power is in the truth of the central, core, big components of the gospel.

It's as silly as us standing on a listing ship that's about to sink. I often talk about the lifeboat because it's such an obvious metaphor and picture that we can all envision about the gospel. And sitting there on the deck with one foot on the lifeboat and one foot on the deck trying to get people to get into our lifeboat, and what we're doing as they walk by, maybe oblivious to the fact that the ship is sinking—we say things like, "Hey, get into my lifeboat. The cushions on this lifeboat are so soft—hypoallergenic—we have the best cushions. Have you seen our lifeboat? Just peek in at this thing. We put in a Dolby surround sound stereo system in our life—really sounds good. Just sit in the middle; you'll love the sound. And I know, you know, you've got your bottle of water there—we put in cupholders; every seat on ours—it's great in there. Now, most lifeboats, they don't have glove boxes; we have an extra-large glove box. Everybody gets a glove box. It's so awesome. Did you see the fresh paint? How good this boat—this boat is beautiful." That sounds like a lot of modern-day evangelism. From heaven's perspective they're looking at us going, "Oh, it's so good. You know, I have so much purpose and peace in my life and direction; I felt alone and now I have all these things going—so great. Oh, you should try God—come on, get in."



Do you understand the core message of the gospel? That is: sinking—you will die. This floats—you will live. I mean, that's the gospel. You want to stay in your life denying the deity of Christ and the salvific nature of his redemption on a cross? You will suffer eternity away from God and all of his grace and goodies. That's not where you want to be. You want to be in this boat because it doesn't sink, and it's going to take us to a place called the kingdom of God where all the blessings of God will be unmitigated, bestowed on his children. Get in the stinking boat. "Well, how are the cushions?" It doesn't really matter, does it? Get in the boat.

And by the way, when it comes to this message, you need to recognize—if you want to pitch the gospel to your friends saying to them all these temporal things, "You know, this will be great if you just become a Christian," because I've experienced some of these and you're telling them about things that—though there may be verses that show this happening in some people's lives—are not always the case, not always true. I hear the stories about people sharing the gospel—I hear it firsthand sometimes—and they talk about how your life is going to become so wonderful, your life's going to become so peaceful, "It'll be great. You know, before work I was struggling—became a Christian and God got my prayers together, and I've been advancing now in the company"—all this stuff. You know, if you lead in your gospel presentation with that, you're lying to the people you're sharing the gospel with, because there is no uniform promise of that. As a matter of fact, if you've read the New Testament, the heroes of the New Testament were not people that were getting their healings left and right and their bank accounts kept going up. Have you noticed that? They were getting their property seized and confiscated, and a lot of them were suffering terrible injustice—not only being whipped and chained and having rocks thrown at them, but often they struggled with chronic illnesses and trouble in their own physical bodies.

You want to say, "It's all going to be better for people who follow Christ because it'll be great—what a wonderful life you'll have—come and join us"? It's a lie. It's not always true. Does it happen sometimes? Yes. Are there examples of it? Yes. Is there an upside to some things that we experience? Sure. That's not the gospel, though. And you don't know where their life is going to go. As a matter of fact, you want to get real about it? Hey, the cushions on the ship are much softer than the ones in this lifeboat. If you want to start asking me about that—there are no cupholders here. The paint—I don't know; we have no clue when the last time this thing's been painted. It will really get rocky, probably, from here to the kingdom. It will not be a pleasant... and, you know what? Climate control—none of that. It can get really cold on this lifeboat. All I know is: that one's going down and this one's going to end up at a really good place. Get in the boat.

If you don't think that should be a part of our evangelism, then you haven't studied the model in the New Testament very well. Let me give you this passage—just jot it down—Acts 14:21–22. After Paul and his apostolic buddies went around and shared the gospel in Derbe, it says he went back to Iconium and Lystra, and he went to these places strengthening the souls of the disciples. You know what he said—classic verse, memory verse in some people's childhoods: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." There's the message. Strengthening the souls of the disciples—it starts with this phrase that we didn't often memorize: he strengthened them, exhorting them to continue in the faith, saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the



kingdom of God.” Think about that: don’t get out of the lifeboat. Continue in the lifeboat. Don’t even think about going back on the ship. Get in the boat; we’re going to make it—but through many rough waters we’re going to have a rocky trip on the way there.

Now, maybe you haven’t had that—South Orange County, Christian living in peacetime where there’s no persecution taking place and your property isn’t getting seized, and it’s not yet illegal to carry a Bible around and say we believe it—fine. You’re living in a time that’s an exception, not the norm. You know that, right? Great. But the reality is, I can’t promise my co-worker that if you follow Christ your life’s going to be fantastic. I can’t promise that, and I shouldn’t promise that. I need to camp on the central promises of the gospel.

Peter did that so well. We don’t have time to study it in depth, but it’s the last service—let’s just go there; at least we won’t take very long—in Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2, please. In Acts chapter 2, Peter is preaching—this is worth looking at with your own eyeballs—in this sermon because it really summarizes where we’ve been in point one and point two. Peter is preaching, and he’s trying to get these people saved. And notice what he does. Let’s just start with reviewing our first point: we should be focusing not on your testimony but on the testimony of Scripture. And that’s exactly what he’s doing. I’m thinking, if you’re Peter—you’ve got three years to talk about living and walking with Christ. You’ve got a lot of testimony. Can you imagine? “You know, I just want to tell you, I spent so much time—it was so great. I remember when he was preaching the Sermon on the Mount”—and “Just to pray with Jesus brought such peace to my heart.” None of that. He’s going to—look through the passage here in the bottom of chapter 2—he’s talking about Joel chapter 2; he’s quoting Psalm 16. When we get near there, near the middle of the 30s, he’s talking about Psalm 110, verse 34–35. And in verse 36, after all of this focus on the testimony of Scripture, he says this: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him”—Jesus—“both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” He’s the Lord—he’s the boss; you need to give allegiance to him. He’s the Son of Man. He’s the Christ. He’s the Anointed One. He’s going to be the Prophet who speaks to us in the name of God; he’s going to be the Priest—we go to the Father as the mediator. He’s our mediator. “But you crucified him.” Your sins. These are people coming, by the way, from all over the place for the Feast of Pentecost. They weren’t there in town when they crucified Christ; they didn’t crucify him personally, but their sins did, and that biting, stinging truth about our sins causing his death—the one that we should have died. I mean, there’s so much there in terms of the central, core issues of the gospel.

“Now when they heard this” they were saying, “Oh, we’d rather hear your testimony and how good it is to walk with Jesus,” and... No. It got to them. They were “cut to the heart” because they stuck on the central issues of the gospel, quoting Scripture, using Scripture, preferring Scripture. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles—these people did—“Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized”—what’s baptism all about? In this case, it’s the water ceremony—the water identification—and it’s the first act of obedience: “Go make disciples, baptizing them.” How do we make a disciple? We call them to repentance and trust in Christ. Then what do we do? We baptize them. So here he’s calling people to get right with God through repentance—which implies faith, obviously—and a step of obedience, your first step of obedience,



every one of you: “do that in the name”—the authority, the sphere, the arena—“of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you’re going to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Those are the main issues. “The promise,” which is what the gospel is—it is a promise—“is for you,” and it’s the same promise held out to your children; it’s held out to those who are far off and everyone whom the Lord God calls to himself.

“Now with many other words”—if you notice, when you read through the sermons in the book of Acts, just like in the Gospels—you read them and if you set a stopwatch, they only take like three and a half minutes, and you’re thinking, “I want to go to that church; sermons are really short.” But that’s not it. These are summations and summaries. These are the CliffsNotes on the sermons; they’re obviously quotations from the sermons. But as this text says, this sermon went on and on—“with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them.” But you want the summary? Here’s the summary. It’s not about the ancillary issues; it’s not about the peripheral issues; it’s not about the fringe benefits. It’s about this: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” You’ve got to get saved. Why? Because the wrath of God is coming. It’s exactly what 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says—being freed and saved from the wrath that is to come. “So those who received his word”—those are people that repented, put their trust in Christ—“then they were baptized, and they were added that day about three thousand souls.”

“Well, wait a minute, that’s not the message that should convert anybody because that’s offensive to people, talking about your sins—‘You crucified him’—and ‘You’ve got to repent,’ and ‘You’ve got to be saved,’ and ‘The world’s going to hell,’ and ‘The ship is sinking’—that shouldn’t save anybody.” But that day—one sermon—3,000 people. You wonder how powerful the Word of God and a focus on the central promises of the gospel is all about? It’s a lot better than your testimony and our fluffy talk about the fringe benefits of Christianity. Powerful. Point to the gospel’s central promises.

I can just do what I’ve done there. If there can be any hope of that shifting in your life—less of your testimony, more of the testimony of Scripture, and less of the talk about fringe benefits that you can’t promise them anyway as uniform promises to all Christians—and focusing on the central issues of Christ, heaven, hell, sin, repentance, guilt, guilt forgiven. If we can focus on those things, we’ve done a lot in this sermon.

One more thing, though. Let’s just go back to Luke 4—it’s printed on your worksheet—and look at how he ends this. He sits down, rolls the scroll up, gives it back to the attendant, sat down. Verse 20, middle of the verse: “The eyes of everybody are fixed on him.” What’s he going to say? He begins to speak to them. We’ll get more in this next time, but here he starts it with this: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Underline the word “fulfilled.” “It’s been fulfilled in your hearing.” It’s the same root word that Luke started with—Luke chapter 1, verse number 1—he’s going to write this orderly account of all the things that were—here’s how it’s translated in the ESV—how did it translate—shouldn’t start a sentence like that—“accomplished.” Same root word,



though: “fulfilled.” Christ fulfilled Scripture. And in this text, he points out that Isaiah 61 is being fulfilled right now, as the Spirit-endowed Anointed One comes, presenting the good news to those who are spiritually poor, spiritually captive, spiritually blind, and spiritually oppressed—and there’s favor, acceptance you can have from God—put your trust in the Messiah. That is fulfilled—that ancient Scripture written hundreds of years before Christ is fulfilled. Now, that’s not the one that will impress your non-Christian friends—“Well, anyone can claim to fulfill that.” But there are a lot of others that do, and Luke’s Gospel is all about that. He said, “I want to write you an account of how Christ fulfilled all these things—the Scriptures.”

That’s important for us because of our confidence in this powerful weapon that God gave us—the Holy Spirit wrote for us—called the Bible, and it has, punctuated throughout it, this sense of attestation from heaven, and that is this thing we call predictive prophecy. But we’re talking about presenting Christ, and though I want you to be impressed with that, it would be good for us to present this to our non-Christian friends: you need to understand how important this message is because it is predicated on—it is built upon, it is founded on—a God who has kept his promises in the past. Put it this way: number three, we need to show God’s prophetic track record. He made promises and he kept them.

Now, the gospel is a promise, and that promise is: if you trust in Christ, you’ll avoid the penalty of your sin. Why should I believe that? Well, look at the promises that have been fulfilled. You can just focus on messianic promises and the promises that were fulfilled in Christ. That brings weight to me believing that if I trust in Christ, I get relieved from my sin penalty.

Now think about this. If I came to you—I don’t know—you met me five years ago, let’s say, and after a sermon I meet you on the patio: “Hi, what’s your name?” You give me your name. You say, “That’s great.” “Hey, just want to tell you one thing: next week you’re going to have the stomach flu. It’ll be the worst stomach flu you ever had. I just want you to prepare.” You drive home with your wife: “Oh, weird.” “Yeah, that’s crazy. I felt great. I haven’t had a stomach flu for years.” Next week you get the stomach flu, and it’s the worst one you’ve ever had. You come back to church with a little bit more respect for your pastor: “Wow—maybe the guy knows some things.”

A month or two later I come to you on the patio and say, “Hey, just want to let you know: next month you’re going to get a promotion and you’re going to become the regional manager in your office. It’s going to be great—pay bump, everything.” And you go, “Nah, not me. I don’t even—they’re not even opening...” Next month, sure enough, you get a promotion. “Oh, guy’s gone...” You get a pay bump. You’re in a new office now. “Wow, Pastor Mike—amazing.”

A couple of months later I come to you and say, “Hey, I just want to warn you. I know you got a new car and all that, but next April there’s going to be a windstorm, it’s going to knock a tree down,



and a huge part of this tree trunk is going to land right on the hood of your car and crush and total your whole car. Sorry to tell you that.” You’re like, “I never park near trees.” Sure enough, April comes around—your car’s crushed. “Wow—amazing.”

A couple months later I come to you: “I just want to tell you—I know you’ve got a lot of things you probably can’t afford, but you’ll be able to afford it all later because you’re about to win next month the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes.” “I don’t win that.” Sure enough, you’re there in your pajamas, Saturday morning—balloons, big fake check—you’ve won. Like, no way.

I came to you with very specific statements about the stomach flu, about a promotion at work, about a tree limb across your car, and about the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes—and all of them came true. You come into church: “I want to talk to you after church. I’ve got something I’ve got to tell you.” You’re going to be there to talk to me. “Oh, yeah. What do you got to say, Pastor Mike?” “Meet me by the doughnuts; we’ll talk about it.” “Okay.”

“Hey, I just want to let you know: I know I prophesied some things about your life, and they’ve all come true, right? Have they come true?” “Oh, yeah, they’ve come true.” “Well, here—I’ve got one more. This one’s big.” “Really? What is it?” “Just want to let you know: next summer, in the middle of the summer—can’t tell you the exact day—but just know next summer California is going to break off and fall into the ocean. Everything’s going to be underwater. It’ll be like—lost city of Atlantis—gone. So, you know, right at the Colorado River, just snapping off there, and all of it’s going down, and a new rift up through Nevada. It’s just going to go. So I would just recommend that you move—like, I don’t know, to be safe, move to Texas. You want beachfront? Arizona. Lake Havasu—that’s fine. But just know right there, it’s all going to go into the ocean.” So you’re driving home with your wife: “Did you hear what Pastor Mike said?” “Yeah, that’s crazy, though. I have heard that before—it’s nonsense.” You start checking it out on the internet. You look at Caltech; you do all this stuff: “Ah, that’s craziness—not going to happen. Even if we had the worst earthquake—it’ll never happen.” So what do you do? Ignore me? Stomach flu, car branch, promoted, sweepstakes winner—you’re going to ignore me? No way. If I just specifically prophesied four things about your life and every one of those came true, if I warned you about what’s happening next summer and I had yet to be wrong—are you going to gamble with your future? No—you’re putting your house up for sale, like right this afternoon. You’re getting out of the state. Because you’ll believe me based on my track record. That’s with four prophecies.

God wanted you to be so convinced of what he said—that if you do not repent of your sins you will perish—or, to put it in inverse terms, “If you believe in me, even if you die, yet shall you live.” He wanted you so much to believe the promise of the gospel that he loaded his Bible from Genesis—let’s just think Old Testament—to Malachi, full of very specific predicted prophecies, and he batted a thousand on those prophecies. Do you want to gamble with that?



See, I'm not trying to evangelize you; I'm assuming you're here to get prepared and equipped to evangelize others. Can you bring a little bit—not an illustration; you can leave the illustration behind—can you go to the Scriptures and point out to people that the predictions of the Bible have always come true? “Well, I’ve never really done that study.” It’s time to do that study.

Early in the week I start the sermon prep. Sometimes I can't help but, on Sunday night, I'm there in the text trying to think about the next week. Now I've got a lot to do Monday, of course—honey-do list up there—but then, you know, work starts again Tuesday morning, and I've got all these things to do, and the sermon kind of gets in the background. But I make sure it's in my mind as early in the week as possible, and I'm working through it. And remember this last week—I'm working on it Sunday night, and I'm thinking about what's coming up next week. And in the back of my mind—Monday came, Tuesday came, and I was working a little bit on it here and there—and I kept thinking, “It's going to be so great.” I even told my wife, who was in the last service and said, “I didn't think your sermon was what I thought it was going to be,” because I told her that it was going to be different, because I said this: “I can't wait to get to this passage, because here Christ fulfills what I call a secondary messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61. I can't wait just to go through some of the Old Testament messianic prophecies and just do what this passage is doing for our congregation. It'll be great.” And then, of course, the more I work on the passage, the more I think, “Yeah, okay, well, just maybe Isaiah—we'll just work through the Isaiah prophecies.” And it was, “Well, maybe just like half of Isaiah—maybe the highlights from Isaiah.” Maybe I start in Isaiah 50 to make sure we get 53, and I'll just go through 61. See... and then by Saturday morning I'm going, “I can't do any of that. There's no time. There's too much to say about this passage as it relates to shifting our preference from our testimony to God's and focusing on the central promises.”

So even when I'm talking about the importance of God's prophetic track record, and I'm talking as fast as I can talk (if you notice), I can't get around to listing the prophetic promises. I just can't. So if you've ignored every other homework assignment I've ever given you from the pulpit, this is one that really needs to be done. And I've listed it for you on the back of the worksheet, question number four—that is on the discussion questions—and that is that you, because I don't have time, need to do something to dive into the predictive prophecies that have already been fulfilled. I'm not talking about prophecy conference and what's coming in the future—though at least one of the books does that that I've listed—but, as number four says, I want you to pick a resource—here's the question: “What resource listed below”—and I've listed some for you—“or other resource, because you've got better resources than me—fine—get a resource and utilize that resource to broaden your exposure to the prophetic aspects of God's Word and therefore deepen your confidence in the divine authority of the Bible.” You need to do some work on this. And then be specific, I said, about what the goals would be—“And I'll do this; I'll do it by here; and I hope that accomplishes this.” Great. But you've got to get into some of these, because I'll often quote various ones like Micah 5:2. If you're going to pick the next Messiah—his birthplace—I mean the main, the singular and most important person that the Old Testament talks about—you're going to pick where? Let's just say Israel is California. You're going to pick where the next big, you know, “Messiah of California” is going to come from—which will be the singular, only one. Where would you pick? I don't know—if you're an oddsmaker—L.A., San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento—you're going to pick the big centers. You certainly wouldn't pick Needles. “It's not going to be... I think, probably come from Needles.” You understand that Micah 5:2 pinned the Messiah's birth in



Bethlehem—"too small to be numbered among the clans," Bethlehem Ephrathah—to say "that's where the Messiah is going to come from," the little village in which David was born. That's just amazing. That's like saying, "You're going to get a promotion"—that's not even close to that; it's even more specific than "a tree branch is going to fall on your car in April." And when you start—all you need is four to be impressed enough. If you are convinced by my dumb illustration, take four prophetic prophecies regarding Messiah that were anticipated before Christ came to be fulfilled in Christ, and you should be able to stand back and say, "Wow, there's power in the prophetic track record of God." That should lead me, as I expose my friends to that, to say, "You can't ignore this promise," and that is: if you don't repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ, the ship's going down, and you will pay for your sins.

You know, and people always say, "You list too many; I don't know where to start." Well, okay. Maybe if you're like, "I don't even know if the Bible was written... you know, maybe the prophetic track record is based on the fulfillment was really before the promise." And I know people say that—some have said that; it's stupid. But that's like saying the Old Testament promises were written after the New Testament history played itself out. Or they say the New Testament history is flawed, and it's not really what happened. Maybe F. F. Bruce's book—the second one on the list—*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Very simple, easy to read. If you want one to start—very simple, easy reader—although he's a brilliant scholar (or was a brilliant scholar—he's even more brilliant now, but he's not here anymore). Then start with that book, because that's a stupid thing to say. And he doesn't even get into this book, but I think to myself: do you know that Ptolemy Philadelphus in 250 BC commissioned the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament—the 39 books—to be translated into Greek because they were in the process, of course, under Alexander the Great's commission to Hellenize the world, make everybody speak Greek? So they took this—and look it up—Ptolemy Philadelphus commissioned that the Old Testament be translated into Greek in 250 BC. Now you've got to have an Old Testament before you can commission the translation of the Old Testament. Even if you don't believe that these things were written before, just start with that.

"Start with... well, I think it's changed—the telephone game—because we don't have the original manuscripts that Moses wrote." Little thing on the internet: "Dead Sea Scrolls." Just look it up and just do a little research on the integrity of the message from when it was written to the time that you have it, translated one time into English in your Bible in the Old Testament.

Some books on Scripture—if you just want to go for... I mean, here's one that's out of print: if you just want to go for "Where are the predictions and the fulfillments?" Payne's book—J. Barton Payne's book down there in the middle—*Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*. I don't think that's in print anymore; it should be—big old book (1980). Just take a book like that that just stops at every book of the Bible and says, "Here's a promise; where was that fulfilled? Here's a promise; where was that fulfilled? Here's a promise; where was that fulfilled?"



And if all this reading is too, you know, intimidating, you're a visual learner—maybe fourth one on the list: Wayne House and Randall Price wrote a book, *Charts of Bible Prophecy*. If you just want lists without a lot of explanation, just get a book like that that has, I don't know, 180 pages worth of biblical prophecies listed and categorized and systematized in a book like that and just get familiar with the prophecies of the Bible.

And, by the way, I know this: when you get familiar with the prophecies of the Bible, don't start imagining that every other religious book has the same things in it like ours does. "Well, the Qur'an is probably full of this kind of stuff too." No, it's not. There's not another religious book that has specific, predictive prophecies punctuating almost every book in its canon. None. None. Look it up. Do comparative religion courses. Read it. Study it. Read the Qur'an. Read every other religious book you can get your hands on—we don't have that. The Bible is a unique book.

Do you want them just on the Messiah? There's plenty there you can work. Kaiser's book—he's been here to preach; I've had him down to preach in my pulpit—*The Messiah in the Old Testament*. Varner—he's been here to preach—down there second from the bottom—*The Messiah: Revealed, Rejected, Received*. So many. There's your list. There's your homework assignment. I urge you, exhort you: spend some time this week getting re-familiarized with the prophetic track record of the Bible, and then get a few of them in your mind, in your Bible—highlighted—that you can show to people when you're sharing the gospel.

I don't have time to take you there, but I wanted to; you can jot it down: Acts 26:22–29. Paul is sharing a bit of his testimony—which I said, we do see examples—but he brings them back to the fulfillment of the promises that were in Moses and the Prophets about the Christ. And he persuades Agrippa and Festus—that short-lived procurator/administrator of Judea—to reconsider the claims. You may say, "I don't accept it because there's something supernatural in it." That's what Festus said: "You're crazy." He said, "I'm not crazy. Look at the fulfillment and promise—promise and fulfillment."

Sitting off just off the coast of Tasman Bay in New Zealand—some of you have been there; just on the bottom half of the island, north part of the bottom half—there sits a rock just off Tasman Bay. It's called Split Apple Rock. Some of you may have seen that or been there or kayaked by it. They do kayaking there. It gets its name because, if you look at it, it's a gigantic granite boulder that looks like someone took a knife—and it's almost perfectly round—and just cut it in half; there's just two halves split right there. It's giant; it's almost like it's a piece of art—this rock that's split in half—Split Apple Rock.

If you gave me an apple and you said "Split it in half," I've got tools for that. I don't have to go to the garage for that. Matter of fact, I might not even need a tool for that. That one I maybe, on a good



day, could do with my bare hands. Don't test me on that; I've never tried it—maybe not—but I don't know, long fingernails...

But if you imagine Split Apple Rock in Tasman Bay in New Zealand—unsplit... it's a giant boulder—and you said, "Go out there and cut that thing in half." Not only could I not with my bare hands—like, there's nothing in my garage that can do it; there's nothing at Lowe's or Home Depot that can pull that off either. That is impossible. You're going to need something that I don't have. I don't have that in my arsenal.

First time I saw a picture of Split Apple Rock in New Zealand, my mind went to Ezekiel 36. Because Ezekiel 36 says the problem with your lost friend is that he has a heart of stone. And that's the problem. Arguments and stories and testimonies—they just can't penetrate that. But Hebrews 4:12 says there's something that can penetrate the hardest heart—living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing and dividing the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. The Word of God is the weapon God has given you that can take a heart of stone and change it. You're trying to soften it up by dealing with the fringe—stop it. Go to the heart of the matter. You think maybe your story would be more applicable, more relevant than the Bible—some ancient Bible verse? Stop thinking that way. It can't possibly be more relevant than the words of God Himself. "I don't know—they'll just think it's another offering on the menu of religions in the world." It's not. We're not saying, "Try God; check it out; try it for a while." This is not detergent. This is something that God has proved a hundred times over in specific prophecies of the Old Testament. Show them that and convince these people that the God who warns them of the coming wrath and offers them forgiveness—not only forgiveness, reward and blessing, a kingdom where he says, "Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"—that promise is one that is predicated on a long series of fulfilled promises.

I know we can never wield the Word of God as we ought unless we know it. So maybe this is just a call this morning just to get reacquainted with your Bible at a level that you haven't been in the past—to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that doesn't need to be ashamed.

Would you stand with me? Let me let you go with your homework assignment.

Let's pray.

God, thanks for this crew. Thanks for their heart to come every week and to study. And they know—most of them, at least, in the room—know what this series is about. So they know this is about becoming equipped to share the gospel. That's what we're going to deal with—not only last



week and this week, but four more sermons on this topic. So God, I'm just impressed with them and their desire to come to be trained in this kind of thing. I know some are doing it; many are zealous to do it. But even those who are listening to my voice who are already involved in evangelism—let them be even more effective as maybe they spend less time on their testimony and more time pointing out the passages of Scripture, and even having their friends and loved ones and co-workers read that and discuss it—get their eyes on the text of Scripture. But then also be able to not follow so much of modern evangelicalism and spend time talking about the fringe benefits, but to get to the heart of the matter. And then, God, just to get reacquainted with the amazing, fascinating promises that have been fulfilled in the past—that we might have great confidence, and that there might be great urgency given to our non-Christian friends when they hear and see the connection between God's track record and his future promise regarding our destiny.

And God, of course, all of this—no matter where we're at in our knowledge of the Bible—is going to motivate us to get back into it. So let us go deeper. Let us linger longer in the text of Scripture. Let us be motivated to spend time in that book, that we might be able to recite it as the word of Christ richly dwells in us, and we can utilize it in our conversations with non-Christian friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Equip us in that regard, I pray. Make that the result of this sermon and the series of sermons that we're going to continue in here. In Jesus' name, amen.