

The Apostles Doctrine

by Martyn-Lloyd Jones

The sermon emphasizes the importance of teaching and doctrine in the Christian Church, and how it is essential for the growth and development of believers.

Duration: 59:42

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:40-42, Acts 2:44, Acts 2:46

Topics: "Apostles Doctrine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of examining ourselves in the light of the early Christians described in the book of Acts. He highlights the uncertainty of life and the need for Christians to be ready to meet death and eternity. The preacher also addresses the confusion surrounding the message of the gospel and asserts that the only hope for the world is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He then focuses on the manifestation of this new life and nature in the early Christians, highlighting their drastic transformation and their steadfastness in the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers.

Transcript

The words to which I should like to call your attention this evening are to be found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, in the second chapter, reading verses 40, 41, and 42. Verses 40, 41, and 42, in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. And with many other words did he, Peter, testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And you remember last Sunday night we were looking at also verses 44 and 46.

And all that believed were together and had all things common. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Now, let me remind you again of what we are doing.

We've been looking at this statement, indeed, at the whole of this second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles for several Sunday evenings. And our reason for doing so is this, that we start from the proposition that the only hope for the world tonight, in all its troubles, and perplexities, and anxieties, and

unhappinesses, is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But now the question arises immediately, what is that gospel? What is that message? And as I need scarcely remind you, there is great and tragic confusion with regard to that.

No, perhaps, has there been greater confusion with regard to this question than there is at this present time. And that is why I'm calling your attention to this second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Indeed, we began in the first chapter, and I hope to go on as God enables us to consider other statements also in this great book.

For what is this? Well, this is a book of history. It's called the book of the Acts of the Apostles. And that's quite a good name.

But as I pointed out, an equally good name would be the continuing work and activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the writer, you remember, Luke, starts by saying, the former treatise of Amedeus Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, implying that here he's going to tell us of what Jesus continued to do. And that exactly, of course, is what this book is.

Because we shall find Peter saying again in the third chapter, when everybody was trying to worship him almost, and to praise him for healing men who had been born lame, Peter turned to them and said, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go, and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know. Yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Very well.

Here I say we have the continuing activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see him forming and establishing the Christian Church. If you really want to know what Christianity is, if you want to know what it means to be a Christian, if you want to know what the Christian Church is, surely the thing to do is not to start by reading what somebody living today may think it ought to be, or thinks it is.

The only honest thing to do is to go back to its origin, to the beginning. You've no other authority, otherwise it's just a human opinion, and one man's opinion is as good as another man's opinion, and you have nothing, and you'll find it'll change from time to time. No, no, there's only one honest thing to do, and that is to go back and to see how it ever came into being.

What it was like, what it did, what its members were like, and what characterized them, and so on. Now that's exactly what we are doing, and here it's all put quite simply and plainly before us, and what we've seen is this, that a Christian essentially is one who has been entirely changed. Now here are these three thousand that were added to the original group of 120.

You remember 120 people met there in an upper room with the apostles. To that number, as the result of one sermon preached by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people were added to the Christian church, and what we've seen about them is this, that they underwent a very great change. These people, some of them, were the same people who, but a few weeks before, had been crying out with a crowd about our Lord, and saying away with him, crucify him, give unto us our raptures.

The same people, but now listening to the preaching of the apostle, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, that had just descended upon the early church, we are told that they were pricked in their hearts, and they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said, repent, change your minds, think again, see how wrong you've been, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of their rigors. Now that's what happened to them. They underwent a complete change.

They were entirely renewed, to use the biblical term, they were born again. Now that's the thing we've been seeing and emphasizing, that the Christian is not merely somebody who's slightly different from somebody who's not a Christian, he's not just a little bit better, no, no, the point is that he's entirely different. He's got a new understanding, a new outlook, a new mind, he feels in a different way, his will acts in a different way, he's a new man, he's a new creature.

These are the terms that are used in the New Testament. But you see, all this is forgotten today. The common idea is that the Christians are good men.

He doesn't do certain things, and he tries to help people along, and holds certain idealistic views, and he holds strong opinions on certain prominent questions like apartheid in South Africa, bombs, and so on. That's a Christian. But you see, that isn't what we find here.

We find something entirely different. And this is the authority. Now this is not only found here in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

If you take the trouble to read the long history of the Christian church, you will find that whenever there is what is called a reformation or a revival in the history of the church, it is always a returning to this. People who'd been formal in their religion suddenly are awakened and are changed, and you get a repetition of this. There'd be no church tonight were it not for the great revivals and reformations which have brought people back to the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Right. Now then there is the fundamental definition, and what I'm doing now is this. I'm holding before you what we are told here of the way in which this new life, this new nature manifests itself.

Life always shows itself. A man always reveals what he is. We all do that.

We show what we are. We show how we think by what we do. And so did these.

And it became clear at once that something drastic, fundamental, had happened to them. What was it? How did they show it? And let me remind you again that I'm doing this and holding this before you, my dear friends, not out of a theoretical or an academic interest, but because I trust we shall all be examining ourselves in the light of this. The world needs Christian people today.

Not only that, we are all moving and our lives are advancing and life is uncertain. We don't know how long we've got left in this world. Any one of us, quite apart from war and bombs, are we ready to meet death and eternity? That's the question.

That's why this is all so vital. We may say we are Christians. Very well, let's test ourselves in the light of what we are told about these people.

Are we like these people? Here are the first Christians. Do we conform to this pattern? Very well, we see that they show the new life in certain ways. The first thing we saw was this, that they leave the world.

Peter tells them to do this. Save yourselves from this untoward generation, this crooked generation, this rebellious, recalcitrant generation. Save yourself.

Get out of it, says Peter. If you remain there, you're doomed. Get out.

And they did. But then positively, they joined themselves to these apostles and this company of 120 people. In other words, they became members of the Christian Church.

Now then, we are looking at this and we find that what's so obvious about them is that this becomes immediately the biggest thing in their lives. You can't keep them away. They continued steadfastly and all that believed were together and that all things come up and they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house.

You see, you didn't have to drive these people to a place of worship. You didn't have to wheedle them and cajole them. You couldn't keep them away.

They wanted to be together the whole time and we've considered the reasons why that was so. It was this new life that they'd all got together. And so they came together and they continued together.

Now then, the next question we come to and this is what I'm putting before you this evening is this. What did they come together for? What happens in a Christian church? What is the church for? Here are these people. They've come out of the world.

They come together to this particular group of people called Christians. Why do they come together? What do they come together for? I think you'll all agree with me that that's a question that needs to be asked today. What is the Christian church for? What does she do? What does she provide? What is it about her that attracts people? What do they find when they come to the Christian church? Doesn't this question need to be asked? I think you'll agree that it does.

And I think you'll agree further that it's essential we should start with a negative. What did they come together for? Socials, whisk drives, dances, raffles, dramatic performances, lectures on politics, literature, sociology. You see the importance of the negative, don't you? There was nothing like that in the early church.

I'm not here to denounce these things. That's not my object at all. But I'm here to ridicule them and to show how far removed they are from the Christian church.

All that you can get in the world, and you can get it very much better in the world. The Christian church, in a sense, makes a fool of herself when she attempts these things. She does them so badly.

If you want things like that, well, go and get it done professionally, get it done properly. But that's not the Christian church. It's a travesty.

You see, I'm not here to defend Christendom. I'm not here to advocate any particular section of the church or any particular local church. I am here to hold before you the picture of the New Testament church.

That's the only church I recognize. They didn't come to the church to do things like that. They didn't expect them and they didn't get them.

And when true revival takes place, those things go out. They're the first things to go out. People lose their interest in them.

A church which can only exist by resorting to things like that is, I say, the greatest travesty imaginable of the New Testament church. It's the exact opposite of the New Testament church. What did these come together for? Well, here's the answer.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine or teaching and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers. Something, you see, purely spiritual. And this is the pattern for the church at all times.

That's what they came together for. They did it daily. They couldn't have enough of it.

You couldn't keep them away from it. This is what they wanted. Now, let's look at this.

Let's start with the first doctrine, the apostles' teaching. Now, this is the first thing that is put here in this list. And that's why we've got to start with it.

And it's very important that we should do so. Why? Well, I want to try to show you this. Because, again, there is not only confusion at this point.

There is real opposition to what we read here. Real opposition to it. But the first thing these first Christians desired was further teaching from the apostles, the apostles' teaching, the apostles' doctrine.

They coveted this and they desired it with the whole of their being. Shall we, before we go any further, ask ourselves a simple question? Do we desire the apostles' teaching, the apostles' doctrine? God grant that that's the thing that brings us all to this meeting tonight, that we want to know the apostles' teaching, the apostles' doctrine. Now, I say that, unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion at this very point, just at the present time.

But look at these people, and this is what you find. And this tells us something tremendously important. It's this, that Christianity is not only and not merely an experience.

Now, I've been emphasizing that it is an experience, and I must go on doing this. It isn't merely an intellectual point of view. When a man becomes a Christian, he has undergone the profoundest change a man can ever know.

It is indeed a profound experience. But it isn't only an experience. Why do I have to emphasize that? Well, for this good reason, that there are other agencies in the world that can give people experiences.

And how do you tell the difference between the experience of becoming a Christian and some other experience, a psychological experience, if you like, or the change as the result of some psychotherapy or something like that, or the change produced by one of the cults? Because they do. It's no use disputing it. They do influence their people, and people talk about their lives being changed, and this and that.

How do you tell the difference between an experience, which is Christian, and one which is not? There's only one answer, and that is the cause of the experience. A Christian is a man who's had an experience as the result of believing a particular truth or teaching. Now, that, I say, is the only way whereby you can

test.

You can get two people. They may both say, I'm very happy. They may both say, I used to do that.

I no longer do it. I've been delivered from it. Now, it doesn't follow that because the two men say that, that they're both Christians.

There are other agencies, I say, which can do that. How do I know which is Christian? There's only one test. It's this one test I'm holding before you.

It is what has led to the experience. What is the source of the experience? Yeah, you see, our people who come together because, as I showed you last Sunday night, they've had the same experience. But the thing that strikes us at once about them is this, is that they have had the same experience because they have believed the same teaching, the same message.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day they were added unto them about three thousand souls. You see, it was teaching that made the early church. There would never have been an early church but for a particular teaching.

So, we are bound to emphasize this, that the teaching must come first because it is the teaching that led to the conversions, the change, and therefore the establishing of the Christian church. It was Peter's preaching, which is Peter's teaching, Peter's doctrine. It was that that brought these people together.

They that gladly received his word were baptized. And there are other, we are told in verse 24, and all that believed, what did they believe? The same teaching. Very well, there is the reason then why it's got to be brought first.

But let us ask a second question. Why did these people want this teaching? Why did they gather together every day in that part of the temple that was allowed for them, and there listen to the teaching, and the preaching, and the exposition of truth from the lips and the mouths of the apostles? Why do you think they did this? Well, I think this is tremendously important. You know, we are living in an age when people are trying to say that we've got to scrap preaching and teaching, and what we must have is, oh, here's the word dialogue.

Dialogue. That just means two people talking together, but it sounds so much better as dialogue, doesn't it? Dialogue, discussions. Not teaching, not preaching.

Cut it down, they say. Remember a man said recently at the beginning of this year, we must scrap this old method of twice on Sunday, 11 and 6.30. Once alone is enough. Nine o'clock, and that briefly so that people can go out and enjoy themselves.

We don't want teaching, they say. We don't want preaching. Discussions, question and answer for about 25 minutes or so, as if that could ever lead to anything.

No, my friends, it wasn't like that in the early church. They continued steadfastly every single day. They came, they wanted this apostle's teaching, this doctrine.

Why did they want it? Well, there are many answers. Let me give some of them to you. The apostle Peter, this very man who was preaching on this occasion, later on wrote a letter to a number of Christian people, and this is what he said to them.

As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby. In other words, you see, this is something that is inevitable. A man, when he is born again, becomes a Christian.

He is indeed like a newborn babe. The babe doesn't understand anything, but it's got an instinct in it, and it's an instinct for milk. It wants it, it makes for it.

The milk, of course, it's a proof of the fact that this is a child and not a doll. It's alive and it wants the milk, the mother's milk. Instinct makes it do it, rightly so.

It's exactly the same with the Christian. A man simply cannot be a Christian and have no desire for a knowledge of this truth. It's impossible.

You see, that's why all these characteristics are such thoroughgoing tests of every one of us. It's something instinctive, without going any further. Or let me put it in another way.

You see, a lot of people have suddenly heard something marvelous, which they didn't know before. And this is the most astounding thing they've ever heard. And the preachers have said, there's more, I can't tell it to you all now.

And so they came together, they were afraid of missing something. And you know, I sometimes think that about Christian people. I don't understand some of them.

They seem to want the minimum of teaching. My friends, aren't you afraid sometimes that something tremendous may happen in the house of God when you are not there? It's a wonderful thing to be in the house of God. It's a wonderful thing to be listening to the preaching of the gospel.

Not because I'm preaching, oh no, no, but because it's God's truth, because the Holy Spirit is here. You never know what may happen. And what if he should suddenly come and visit us in the glory of his power, and you were not here? These people were taking no risks.

They wanted all they could get. They didn't want to miss anything. They were afraid of missing something very precious.

This is all instinctive in the Christians. Is it instinctive enough? But come, let me put it like this to you. Why did they want more and more of this teaching? Well, another answer is, you see, that they've become aware of their ignorance.

I've already dealt with that in a sense, but let me put it in a new form tonight. Here were the men, you see, who'd shouted away with him, crucify him. They thought they knew all about Jesus of Nazareth.

Who is this fellow, they said, this carpenter, this Nazarene? Who is he? Who is he to claim son of God and savior, this monstrous thing? Get away with him, crucify him, let's get rid of him. And they thought they were clever. As people still think they're clever by denying Christianity and making fun of the message of the Christian church.

But suddenly they're awakened, they're perked in their hearts, they're convicted. And what they discover is their appalling ignorance. They thought they knew so much, they find they knew nothing.

They've made the greatest blunder, the most tragic blunder men and women can ever make. And they didn't realize it. They were blind.

And suddenly their eyes have been opened. You see, you can't become a Christian without being made humble. Our Lord himself said, except he be converted and become as little children, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

If any man willeth to be wise in this world, says the apostle Paul, let him become a fool, that he may be made wise. The first thing that happens to a man who becomes a Christian is that he's convicted of his ignorance, his darkness, he doesn't know. And once he's been shown that he's terrified, lest he should still be ignorant of certain things that are vital.

So he says, I must listen to that. I want more and more and more. I don't want to be held in ignorance any longer.

I want life. So he comes and he longs for the teaching. Have you realized your ignorance, my friend? Your ignorance about yourself? Any man or woman who thinks highly of himself or herself is just plain ignorant.

How difficult it is for us to know ourselves. It's only this gospel that can really do it. What do you know about God? What do you know about life? We talk so grandly and so bigly.

What do we know? The gospel convicts us of ignorance, and the man who knows he's ignorant is a man who is thirsting and hungering for knowledge. He doesn't want to be held any longer in the thralldom of ignorance, the darkness of ignorance. So they came together daily.

Then thirdly, this tremendous thing that had happened to them, they wanted to understand it more and more. They knew that it had happened. They were different people.

They don't no longer want to hold on to the world, but they want to join these other people. But then the natural question to ask is, well, what is this? What is it that's happened to me? They didn't know. They're newborn babes.

And they want to understand it. They want to have some explanation of it. It's again, you see, quite inevitable.

There's nothing, as I said last Sunday night, that I'm further removed from than that tendency on the part of some to try to persuade people to come and to wheedle them and almost to bribe them by giving a bit of a social or a whistler, just to get them to come and listen anyhow somehow. My dear friends, to the apostles, such a thing would be blasphemy. Do you want to understand what's happened to you? Do you want to understand what you've seen happening to somebody else? Is there this kind of divine curiosity in you? You say, I see that person's got something I haven't got.

What is this? I want to know it. I must go and listen to their teaching. That's the thing.

And then, of course, they wanted to learn more and more about it. They'd come into this new realm, this wonderful life. And again, it's quite natural and instinctive, isn't it, to want to know more of it? When you've got something really good, you want more and more of it.

And they've got this wonderful thing that has changed everything. And they said, oh, what is this? This is only the beginning. We can see.

Let's hear. They wanted to grow and to develop. Like newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby.

But let me give you a still better reason. They wanted to learn more about this truth in order that they might be able to help others. These were ordinary men and women like ourselves.

And they'd got perchance fathers or mothers or husbands or wives or children or parents. And this had happened to them. Their eyes had been opened.

They'd seen the peril of their position, the darkness of their existence. And they're in this new realm and all its wonder and its glory. But their loved ones are still there.

And they're worried and troubled about them. They want to help them. But how can they help them? What have they got to say to them? It's no use going to them and say, I've had a wonderful experience.

That doesn't help the other person. They'll say, well, what's happened to you? How have you got it? How can I get it? And as a newborn babe, you're not in a position to answer those questions. So you desire the teaching, the instruction, the information that the apostles give, in order that you may be able to help others.

This same Peter, again, writing in his first epistle in the third chapter, says, be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that is in you. For instance, somebody says to you tomorrow morning in the office, what were you doing last night? You say, I went to chapel. And oh, they say, why did you do that? Well, you say, I was brought up to do this.

Oh, well, I wasn't, says the other. Well, you say, well, you know, I haven't really thought much about this, but I've always done it and there's something about it I like, you know. But he said, what is this? What do you do then? Why do you do it? What's it all about? If you can't answer his questions, my dear friend, oh, what a poor Christian you are.

What an opportunity you're missing. You see, a Christian is a man who knows, he's thought as to why he is what he is. And he can tell others what they've got to do.

These men cried out as Peter was preaching, men and brethren, what shall we do? And what would have been the position if Peter had turned to them and said, well, I really don't know. I've had a wonderful experience myself, but I don't quite know what it is or I've been brought up in this way and this happens to be my temperament and I happen to like this sort of thing. You see, the thing would have been useless, but Peter can give them specific answers.

And you and I must be able to do this. Your next door neighbor may be in great trouble. The marriage may be breaking down.

There may be some sadness, bereavement, sorrows, some disappointment. A life may have become shattered by something. And there they are, they don't know what to do and they can't find help.

The world laughs at them. The jazz goes on, the music is played, the television continues, and they're left with their own misery. And oh, they're waiting for a word.

These people knew that and they wanted to understand in order that they could help others and show them the way of salvation and of deliverance. Reasons that made them continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the apostles' teaching. But come, let me take you to another aspect of this matter.

There is a definite teaching. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the apostles' teaching. There is such a thing as apostolic teaching, apostolic doctrine.

Now, this is the very point at which all this is not only controverted today, but ridiculed and dismissed. And I must, of necessity, deal with it. I am in this pulpit for one reason only, and that is that I have believed the apostolic doctrine and teaching.

I've got no other teaching. I'd have nothing to say if I didn't just hold before you the apostolic teaching. I don't stand here to say what I think.

I am simply repeating what I find here. I'm expounding the scriptures. Apostolic doctrine.

But I say this is seriously questioned today, and indeed militantly controverted. Now, let me give you one statement of this. It's most extraordinary.

Those of you who worship here regularly will know that I've been doing this, as I say, for several Sunday nights. But it is, you know, as if the world knew that I was doing this. I read to you a piece from a newspaper last Sunday night.

I'm now going to read you out of a little book which was sent me since last Sunday. Just the very thing to introduce this matter that's before us this evening. Here is a book bearing the title, Not So Much a Creed, More a Way of Life.

Meant to be clever, you see. Meant to be clever. But like the program that it imitates, I think I can show you that it's not quite as clever as it thinks it is.

Not So Much a Creed, More a Way of Life. We are right up to date, aren't we? 1965. We are with it.

Very well, what does it say? Well, this is what it says, you see, in the introduction. Jesus taught very little theology. The four records of his life and message say nothing about the fall of men or God's plan of salvation.

He did not require from his disciples the acceptance of any creed. There is no hint of the need for any atonement for sin. He says plainly that forgiveness depends on repentance and on showing a forgiving spirit in one's dealings with others.

He proclaims a new way of life, the way of righteousness, a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He says, I suggest that Christianity will die as a theology and rise again as a way of life. This is a typical 1965.

As a way of life, it has tremendous value and can contribute a great deal to the welfare of the world and the happiness of its people. I hope to deal with that, God willing, next Sunday night. But here it is, you see, modern education in geology and astronomy, in history, and in simple logic has made the old beliefs incredible to most people today.

It has created an attitude of mind which just cannot accept them as true. Does this mean the end of Christianity? Are we about to enter the post-Christian age? And his answer is that it's going to die as a theology and rise again as a way of life. Now, it would be very difficult indeed to find summarized in smaller compass such a blank contradiction and complete denial of what we are taught, not only in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, but in the whole of the New Testament.

What is the answer to this kind of thing? There are probably people here tonight who agree with it. You say, we don't want doctrine, we don't want teaching, we don't want theology. All we want is something to help us to get along.

My dear friend, the answer to that is nothing will help you to get along except this apostolic teaching. What's the answer to this? Well, I don't want to waste too much of your time, but God knows if there's anybody who's held with such nonsense, it is my duty to disabuse your mind and to open your understanding. These are some of the answers to this statement.

According to that statement, you see, the apostles contradict their own lord and master. The apostles are full of doctrine, but according to this, there should be no doctrine. So the apostles are wrong, and the apostles contradict the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there's only one answer to this. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who called these apostles, it was he who taught them, it was he who told them what to preach, it was he who gave them the message, it was he who sent the Holy Spirit down upon them to enable them to do so. That is enough in and of itself.

But you see, there is another answer, and that's why I read to you that 16th chapter of John's Gospel at the beginning. That chapter seems to me to have been written almost deliberately to meet this very kind of objection. They say, and it sounds so wonderful, you see, they say, don't you listen to this man Paul, don't you listen to these apostles, listen to Jesus with his simple gospel, no theology there.

Do you know the answer? Listen to this in John 16 12. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. It is of course perfectly right and true to say that there is less of this pure doctrinal teaching in the Gospels than there is in the epistles.

But they tell you that themselves, and they tell you why it was so, and the answer is this. You read the four Gospels, and you will find that our Lord kept on referring to his death and to his resurrection, and the disciples couldn't take it on a single occasion. They stumbled.

Peter remonstrated with him and said, what are you talking about dying for? This is impossible with you. They all did the same. They never grasped the truth about the resurrection, so that when he was crucified on the cross, they were utterly disconsolate and cast into the depth of despair.

What was the matter? The trouble was, as he says, you cannot bear them now. As our Lord talked about his death and resurrection, they were blind, they were stunned, they couldn't receive it. But he tells them, how be it when he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself from himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.

He will glorify me. Not only that, we've got still more powerful evidence. If you take the trouble when you get home tonight to read the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, you will find that there our Lord, after his resurrection, gave instruction to his own followers and disciples.

They were cast down and utterly disconsolate, and this is how he spoke to them. He said, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

After his death and resurrection, he expounded it to them, he explained it to them, and they were now able to receive it. But when the spirit came upon them, they were able to do so still more. You see, this statement is altogether wrong.

There's nothing right in it. They say that he teaches us nothing about the fall of man. But didn't our Lord himself teach, you must be born again? Why must they be born again? Because he says, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

He says, ye are they, ye are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father he will do. He said, the son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost, lost. That's it.

All this teaches the fall of man. And then we are told that he doesn't teach us anything about the plan of salvation. Doesn't he? Read the 12th chapter of John's gospel.

Father, the hour is come. What shall I say? Shall I say, save me from this hour? No. For, for this hour came I into the world, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.

That's his teaching. He says, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Listen to him.

The son of man, he says, is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. What is this? God's plan of salvation, God's atonement. No creeds, says this friend, and many with him.

But this is pure creed. This is sure teaching. This is sure doctrine.

And you remember, oh, on another occasion when certain people had believed in him, he said, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Read him in his high priestly prayer in John 17. He says, the word that thou hast given me, I have given unto them, and they have believed it and accepted it.

This is teaching. This is doctrine from beginning to end. In other words, even in the gospels, you have the teaching on all these most essential doctrines.

But as our Lord says, he can't give it them fully, because they're not yet in a position to receive it. As he told them about his death that was to come, they staggered. As they looked back upon it in the light of the resurrection, they began to see it.

The resurrection proves that he's the son of God. Why did he die? The only way of salvation. And the Spirit makes it yet clearer to them, and gives them power to preach it and to proclaim it.

There is the simple answer to this monstrous suggestion. This 20th century man with his knowledge of geology and science and so on. My dear friend, there's nothing new about rejection of the gospel.

They rejected it in the first century. Modern knowledge has nothing to do with it. It is the blindness of sin that makes men write and say such things.

But there's infinitely more that I could put before you. Apostolic doctrine. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

And these apostles all preached the same doctrine. Every one of them. They were doing it here.

Read your book of Acts right through. They continued to do it. At times they seemed to differ.

Then they'd have a conference and they'd agree. You'll read about that in chapter 11. You'll read about it in chapter 50.

They were all of one mind, of one accord. And whatever the difference is, they settled them. They all believed the same truth.

And indeed, we've got very specific statements to this effect. The apostle Paul was being questioned and queried in Corinth as to whether he was an apostle at all. This is how he answered.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. And then he reminds them of the content of the gospel. And he goes on to make this claim.

He says, I am the least of the apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all.

Yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me. They all preached the same message. You'll get the apostle saying that again explicitly in Galatians 1 and in Galatians 2. And you get the apostle Peter paying him the scriptures.

They all preached the same gospel. What is it? Well, you see, the apostle Paul again says that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There is no other foundation to the church.

It's not a shifting foundation. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. There is such a thing, I say, as an apostolic message.

The apostles' doctrine, the apostles' teaching, the apostles' instruction. And so it continued. And so you find that in the first centuries of the Christian church, the fathers of the church met together in conference, in great councils.

False teachings had come in. How did they evaluate? The answer was always that which conforms to the apostolic doctrine and teaching. And so they formed their creeds, the apostles' creed.

Not that it was actually compounded by the apostles, but it represents their teaching. The Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, all these great creeds of the church are expressive of the unity of the teaching, the unity of the doctrine. And when you come to the great confessions of the Reformation period, you have exactly the same thing.

Whether it be the Church of England, thirty-nine articles, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, in all the great essentials of this teaching, they are one, they are unanimous, and they are agreed. Very well. The point I am establishing is this, that they came together to listen to and to attend upon a particular teaching.

Not speculation, not one man getting up and saying, I say it's this, and another saying, no, I think it's that. Modern knowledge has taught me this. No, no, an apostolic message given by the risen Lord to the

apostles.

Didn't he arrest Paul of Sol of Tarsus on the road to Damascus? Didn't he reveal himself to him? Didn't he say, I'm going to make you a witness and a minister? Didn't he tell him what to say, the same message as he'd given to all the others? There is such a thing as an apostolic message, apostolic teaching, and that, and that alone is Christianity. What is it? What is this teaching? Here is the vital question. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching.

What did they teach them? Do you know the apostolic teaching? Have you believed it? Have you received it? Do you want to know more about it? What is this teaching? Is it possible for me to tell you what the Christian teaching is? Is it something vague, nebulous, indefinite? Is it something that's got to be new, because man knows geology and certain other sciences? Is it different from what it was in the first century? The answer is no. The message is one and it's still the same. There is no other message.

What is this message? Let me give you the answer in a brief word. The message is summarized in many places in the New Testament. Peter had already given them a summary of it by saying, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.

He had already explained the death on the cross to them. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God you have taken and by wicked hands of crucified and slain whom God hath risen up.

That's it. What's it mean? What is this apostolic teaching? Shall I tell you in my closing words? It's this. It's summarized again in 1 Corinthians 15.

It's summarized in 1 Thessalonians 1 in 2 verses 9 and 10. How he turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God and to await for his son from heaven even Jesus whom he raised from the dead who delivered us from the wrath to come. That's apostolic teaching.

That's apostolic preaching. What's it mean? It's this. This is Christian teaching.

Where does it start? It starts with God. It doesn't start with modern men. It doesn't start with latest knowledge.

It doesn't start with biology or geology. It starts by saying in the beginning God the creator of the whole universe and the sustainer of the cosmos. God in his holy being.

God in his righteousness, his glory, his everlasting life. God and the world that he made and men that he made. Man made in the image of God.

Not a sniveling creature that goes through life just eating and drinking and indulging his sex as if he were an animal in the farmyard. No, no. But upright and righteous, a reflection of something of the divine glory itself.

God, man, the universe and then the fall of men. Man's rebellion against God and sin and shame and havoc and misery and unhappiness and man in need of salvation and the judgment of God upon it all. This is apostolic teaching.

The modern man doesn't like it. No, no. He says not so much a doctrine as a way of life but you can't have it.

This is truth. This is God's message and the son of God is the proof of it. Why did he come into the world? Here's the answer.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. If a man doesn't believe on God's son he will perish.

There's the judgment of God. John 3 16, this is the most wonderful verse in the Bible. Very well if you say so, believe it.

And it's God and man and the fall and damnation and the only way of escape. Jesus Christ, the son of God, this blessed person who was born as a babe in Bethlehem, the incarnation. It's nothing but sheer doctrine that God sent forth his son made of a woman made under the law to redeem them that are under the law.

God visiting and redeeming his people and the son coming what for? Oh to save us how? By taking our sins upon himself. By bearing our punishment. By being smitten by the stripes we deserved.

By dying in our stead. By bearing our sins in his own body on the tree that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness. This is apostolic teaching.

And then the gift of new life in the spirit. The possibility of a new start. Not only are my sins forgiven, I made a child of God.

I've got a new nature. I'm born again. I'm a new man and the spirit of God is in me.

Enabling me and strengthening me. Progressively sanctifying me. What for? Oh to prepare me for the glory everlasting that's awaiting me in Christ.

That's the apostolic message. And that is the thing that these people coveted to hear more and more of. They knew they'd got new life.

They said we need more of it. We are in the world still and the world of the flesh of the devil are powerful and we are weak. Tell us what's the teaching? They wanted to know what it means to be in Christ and in you.

The hope of glory. They wanted to know more about this blessed spirit that can change a man and give him power. They wanted to know more about that world that's to come.

Not this passing evil world. But that world and its pleasures and its joys. Who can teach them but the apostles.

And how do they know? Well because Christ has revealed it unto them. So they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship. And in breaking of bread and of prayer.

Oh my dear friend we've got to leave it at that for this evening. God willing as I say I'm going to return to it again next Sunday night. This is the only thing that matters you know.

I don't know the future of this world. I'm not an expert in politics. I don't know enough about it.

I don't know what's behind the scenes. So I don't waste your time by preaching politics to you. I'm not here to get you to organize campaigns against bombs or this or that.

I'm here to tell you what is delivered to me through these apostles. The only authority I have. And that's their message.

That you and I and all mankind has got to stand before God in the judgment. And that all of us as we are by nature cannot do so. The ungodly cannot stand in the judgment.

He'll be swept away like the chaff as the psalmist puts it in Psalm 1. And this is the thing that matters. Whatever the political future may be. Whatever governments may come or go.

You and I are living souls and we are facing God and eternity. This is a passing world at best. We've all got to die.

Our time is short life's but a breath of vapor. And the supreme question is, how can a man be just with God? How can I get forgiveness for my sins? How can I get a new life and start living in a worthy manner? How can I lose the fear of death and the grave? How can I prepare for that eternity that's coming? And thank God the apostolic doctrine deals with those questions and it answers them. It is the only teaching that does so.

The philosophers don't know. They can talk cleverly. They can't live so well, many of them.

There is nothing under the sun tonight that deals with our fundamental and essential problems and questions save this apostolic doctrine. Oh, thank God for it. Thank God that it's plain.

Thank God it's clear. Thank God that it's been preached through the running centuries. Thank God that it's as true tonight as it was 1,900 years ago.

Thank God it is the everlasting gospel. There'll never be another because this is about what God has done himself in his only begotten son for us men and for our salvation. My dear friends, have you believed, have you received this apostolic doctrine? I can test you very simply.

If you have believed this and received it, you've got new life, spiritual life, and that will show itself in this way. You will be hungering and thirsting for more of this. It'll become the greatest interest of your life.

You'll be interested still in other books, but you'll find, as I say to the glory of God, that I find there are many books I'd like to read. I just haven't got time. I'm too busy reading this and books that help me to understand it.

Now, I'm not criticizing the others. I like to read books on history. I like reading biography.

I like reading about music. I like reading about many of these subjects. I like reading medicine.

I like reading aspects of science, psychology, philosophy, and so on. But, you know, my whole problem is to get the time. This, oh, I find life here.

I find something here not only for my mind, but it moves my heart. It melts me. It moves me.

It fills me with rapture. It strengthens my feeble will. I want this.

And any man who has new life in him, the life of God in his soul, there's new spiritual life, will be like a newborn babe. He will desire the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby. Have you got that desire? If you haven't, you're dead.

I don't care whether you're a church member or not. If you haven't got this desire, you're dead. If this sermon has been too long, I venture to say you're dead.

If the Bible is still boring to you, you're dead, my friend. If you find prayer difficult and a task, you're dead. And therefore, you've got one thing to do.

Go to God, repent, confess your sin. Tell him you realize you're dead. Ask him to give you life anew, to breathe his spirit upon you, and to give you new life from amongst the dead.

And one of the first things you'll find about yourself is this, that this will become central. You'll want to know more and more. You'll have a hunger and a thirst for it.

And you'll put everything on one side in order that you may know this, because this will build you up and prepare you not only for death, but for the glory that awaits you the other side of it. Oh, beloved people, may God give you grace to examine yourselves in the light of this. I'm not asking whether you're a good man or a good woman.

I'm asking you this, are you a new man? Are you a new woman? Is there a spiritual life? Nothing else matters. Make certain. Go to him if you haven't got it, and ask him for it.

He won't refuse you. I have his authority for saying this, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Get hold of that water of life that he alone can give, that'll spring up within you like a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

Thank God. This is Christianity. This is God's way of salvation.

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