

Maintaining the Wonder of Christmas

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[0:00] Romans chapter 11. In Revelation, we've been talking about the churches in Revelation as we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord.

And this has been a great encouragement to us just thinking about our life and what the direction of our life is all about. It's the Lord Jesus.

And those letters to those churches are for all of us. Whoever has them here, let them hear. What the Spirit says to the churches is just encouraging us about finding our first love and making sure that's the priority of our lives.

And just pursuing the Lord in a manner of thoughts. And we're going to continue that as we go into this next year for today. Taking a step back just to look at this Christmas time, this Christmas Eve today.

And just keeping in mind why we celebrate and how we as believers in Christ can maintain the wonder of Christmas together.

[1:07] Because I really think we live in a age that really needs to know this. Especially as followers of Christ in this generation. I was reading a blogger site that was referred to me.

And it was this mommy blog site. I don't typically read mommy blog sites. Just get that out. But somebody referred this to me. I read this site. And it was talking just about Christmas.

She says, It is now officially my favorite time of year. I am a Christmas fanatic. As soon as the turkey and dressing are turned into leftovers, the Christmas decorations come out.

I decorate everything in sight. Ceiling and floor. We use Christmas plates. Drink from Christmas cups. And dry our hands on Christmas towels. As a kid, Christmas was sacred.

We acted as if it belonged to us. And that everyone else who celebrated had to adopt our belief system. Now that I have left my faith, Christmas is 1,000% magic.

[2:14] Everything from Christmas carols on the radio, assuming Christmas cartoons and shopping trips, are magical. At 47 years old, I'm finally able to experience the holiday in all of its childhood wonder.

Everything is prettier. Everyone is happier. Everything is more wholesome. I'm no longer worried that listening to a secular Christmas song is making Jesus sad. Why?

Because Christmas embodies what Jesus taught. It gives us the freedom to feel like kids. To catch snowflakes on our tongues. And rattle our packages under the tree to figure out their contents.

Christmas, after all, is all about wonder. It's about suspending reality and eating cookies. So if you were raised to believe Christmas should be reserved for celebrating Jesus, let me welcome you to a new way of thinking.

This Christmas, I will celebrate Jesus, she said. But not in a religious sense. Not in an evangelical box. But in the truest sense.

[3:22] I'll do it by embracing the magic of the season. This is an example of deconstruction.

It's what's happening often in our generation of people that have been raised in a church environment, but have not had a genuine salvation experience where they were transformed by Jesus.

It's a form of religion that denies its power. And it is a movement that is really spreading in our generation.

Even among Christian leaders. I was just reading an article talking about this, and it was just pointing to even Lecrae.

Some of you know who Lecrae is. Some of you are like, I have no idea who that is. And Lecrae, Christian artist in these past several years, has come to this place of deconstruction.

[4:25] And if you think about this, you've seen this in our country in more political ways, in a historic kind of deconstruction, where George Washington's mural is manged over because he owns slaves or something.

Or something like that. You know, it's just kind of a denial of history and kind of a repainting of history. Now we'll put a George Floyd statue up in place of founding fathers.

But in Christian circles, deconstruction is doubt and disillusionment that has become the new enlightenment. It's more authentic to share your doubt than it is the confidence of your faith.

That's a mark of our generation. We watch thoughtful Christian leaders break free from invisible shackles. Like they've been free, all of a sudden liberated, and now all of a sudden you see this kind of woke movement among evangelicals.

So Lecrae, when it comes to Lecrae, Lecrae embodied this in one of his recent songs. He was a kind of hip-hop rapster kind of guy, and he was hanging out with Christian leaders, like John Piper and others, Tony Bauckham.

[5:43] And he was on those stages with these guys, but he's come through this deconstruction. And this is what he said in his song. He said, Find your way, find your way.

Find your way back home. No time won't take too long. Put it behind you. You can still find your way. I deconstructed long before people knew what to call it.

I know that's scary for some folks, so hold on, let me pause it. Take you back to how it started.

Maybe you relate. Maybe you ain't never met me, but you know my pain.

Focused on Jesus in Atlanta, fresh from Tennessee. Wasn't legalistic. Catch me with a cup of Hennessy. That's legalistic. I would speak at churches, hang with leaders, such you know.

Judah, Piper, Keller, Tony Evans was clutch. I was so involved, never thought I could follow y'all.

Right before the fall of 2015, I was all off.

[6:48] It involved killing Michael Brown, had me feeling down. Tweeted about it, Christians called me a clown. I was losing ground. And Vody was a hero of mine.

Met with him plenty of times. This time when he spoke, it cut me deeper than I realized. Doubled down, spoke about my pain. I was met with blame. Shame on you, Craig.

Stop crying. Get back to Jesus' name. Cut me deep. I was losing sleep. God, ain't these your sheep? Why they hate me like they do?

Maybe grace is really cheap. Maybe this is all a lie. Maybe they don't love me. They just love it when I say things they want to hear in public. They're like following God means turning on black people.

Is black evil? Why do they hate and attack people? I'm vulnerable and cautious. I'm reading Baldwin and Tanishi. They got me thinking. Now I'm all in. I ain't know if God is real no more.

[7:50] Every day we get killed and I can't heal no more. I started slipping in the darkness. I'm feeling heartless. Christians got me traumatized. I don't know who God is.

Drinking liquor for my therapy. Smoking the marriage tree. Maybe I should get divorced. I don't know why she married me. What's the purpose? What's the point? Nothing matters.

I'm just madder. I'm just Adams. Ain't no Adam and Eve. Where's the Xanis? Let me Adam. Xanax. And that depression kind of grows.

This is the age we live in. It's an age of deconstruction. It's why you see some of the things you see where people can talk about spirituality. It's kind of weird because they're really not worshipping Jesus, not transformed by Jesus, not honoring His word with their life.

We're going, Hey, what is going on? We've all been through some stuff. Our country's sure been through some stuff. Things that will cause you to pause.

[8:56] Things that may even bring pain in your life personally. I've been through a thing or two in my life. Jesus is not a Christmas elf.

And you're not going to find it on my shelf. It's the places I can't ever run. It's all I got. I couldn't even read this thing in good rhythm, you know.

But the reality is, Jesus is more than that. And He's worthy of our worship. And He's worthy of our praise. He's worthy of our adoration. He's worthy of our nights and our days.

He's worthy of our sickness and our health. He's worthy of our yesterday. He's worthy of our tomorrow. As Charles Spurgeon said, He said, I can ultimately thank God for every storm that wrecked me upon the rock of Jesus Christ.

There is not a single thing in my life. There is not a single thing in our country that ought to rock us from the solid rock of Jesus Christ. Because that's what we see in Romans when we come to this passage, really, is the end of the theological truties, which is the first 11 chapters here of Romans, where He is laying a foundation of Christology and soteriology.

[10:15] We are diving into the deepest passages of Scripture where salvation is expounded for us. And in this, He comes to a moment at the end of that, where He just breaks out into doxology and prays.

And it's a moment at the end of all that, where He's now going to transition into chapter 12, where it starts to become very practical in application. Where in chapter 12, do you recall the verse that many of you have memorized?

I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. Practical. You're going to live out this theology of Christ in your life.

The reality of who He is is so potent and powerful that it changes you, gives you something to live for, gives you something to stand on.

And this is where we come at the end of chapter 11 in this doxology. And I think, for me, it's really the reasons why we can praise Christ and maintain the wonder of Christmas, Christmas in the past, present, and future.

[11:26] So if you found your place, Romans chapter 11, I'm going to read in verse 33. Stand together as we read this. Romans chapter 11, beginning in verse 33.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord? For who has been His counselor? For who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

Father, may you bless the reading of your word today and as we maintain the wonder of Christmas in our hearts and minds and in our lives and in our families, pray today that you would just reignite for us the passion of why we love Jesus so much.

[12:42] Why we have planted our life on the solid rock of who He is. why we rely on the finished work of what He's done and how we can stand through any storm of this world or of this life until He comes again.

May you just help us to maintain the wonder of Christmas. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Father, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. So this is the inclusive doxology. It's really packed into the last line that He prepares us for it as He's leading up from verse 33.

But verse 36, of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. This is the doxology. It's a praise of God. And He gives the duration of it.

How long should this adoration, how long should this worship be in motion? Well, it's to whom be glory forever. Amen.

[13:50] The glory, the wonder that is due to Christ in this life is the wonder that should be maintained forever. It's going to be maintained from the moment you recognize Jesus as Savior and Lord of your life.

As soon as your eyes are open that you're illuminating to the truth of the gospel and realize that it is Christ Jesus who died for your sin, covered your sin on the cross of Calvary, rose from the grave on the third day.

This Christ, when you recognize Him, the person of Christ and His work and realize that this was the application of God's love for you, this is calling calling for your worship and your praise and your adoration for the rest of the moments of your life in this world and for eternity.

We all maintain that kind of wonder. Paul gives three reasons Christmas, I think, should not lose this wonder. Three reasons that Christ didn't lose his wonder for him.

He's been talking about the sovereignty of God, how God works out salvation for us. We don't have to worry. You don't have to be strong enough to save yourself.

[15:07] You have to trust in a God who is strong enough to save you. He's been talking about working out salvation on our behalf.

He speaks of it here in terms of judgments and His ways. The decrees of God, the plans of God can't be thwarted. His ways that we can't ruin Him.

It's the ways of God, His judgments, His plans for us. He's describing the fact that in the depth of all of these things about God, we can know Him, but we can't know Him exhaustively.

We'll never know the final answer in this life about who God is, but we will know Him sufficiently in how He has revealed Himself in God's Word. You can't know everything about God.

You're never going to know everything about God because you're not God. But you're going to know enough about God because of what He's revealed about Himself in His Word that you can know Him sufficiently.

[16:09] And knowing Him sufficiently, it draws from you praise and worship for your life. He speaks of riches there. The riches of God.

And the riches of God are something above that you can give. You can't give enough riches. You can't supply enough that you'll out-give God.

God is more than that. And it's not just riches, it's wisdom. He's above all your counsel. He doesn't need your input. Isn't that good? He doesn't need your input.

I think sometimes we think God needs our input on things. He doesn't need our input. He doesn't need it from blogger, wine-drinking mommy, and He doesn't need it from him, Paul Lecrae.

He doesn't need it from you. He doesn't need it from me. He doesn't need our knowledge. He's above everything that you can think or imagine.

[17:10] Who has known the mind of the Lord. Who has been His counselor. Who has given a gift and expect a return. And then He quotes Isaiah 40, 13 to say that God alone is actually the architect of all of this.

He's the architect of the universe that you're standing in, but He's also the architect of the salvation that you have in Christ if you have Him. He's the designer.

Can't add anything to Him by believing in it, and He can't take anything away from Him by rejecting it. Completely unaffected by us.

And He deserves our wonder. Three reasons. His final verse, from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Reasons that Paul maintains His wonder.

First, because only Christ gives a powerful foundation for all things past. Notice he says, of Him. Of Him.

[18:14] He's speaking of the wonder of the past work of Christ. He's created all things according to the scriptures. He is deserving of our praise. That ought to leave you in a state of wonder when you consider that Christ is engaged in creation.

We are of Him. Our salvation is of Him. I think of Christmastime and you think of all of the characters during Christmastime and you can't help but think of like one character that just embodies meanness, right?

Think of all the Christmas characters that you think of. One really embodies meanness. He's spending time in a mountain fortress just outside the city.

He suffers from infections, caused some kind of abdominal swelling and may be infected with gangrene, right? He must stop Christmas from coming, but how?

And who, of course, am I talking about? The Grinch. Wrong. Not the Grinch. I'm talking about King Herod. King Herod is this evil figure, despicable character that's described in history and in the scriptures.

[19:36] He has a fortress in Bethlehem where he spends his time outside the city. He is suffering in history, but according to historians, from some abdominal infections that leave him swelling in his abdominal area and suffering from gangrene.

And he is left asking the question, I must stop Christmas from coming, but how? And he then puts to death the male children in the city of Bethlehem. Why would he do such a thing?

Because even Herod understood the scriptures that pointed to the fact that a king was coming and would sit on the throne that Herod did not deserve. Herod is a proselyte in the Judaism.

He's not even a Jew. And he's sitting on the throne of Israel. And he knows that if someone would identify the rightful king that he would be ousted.

So even Herod understands the scripture enough so that when the Magi come to him and report to him that they're looking for the child that's to be born king, that he recognizes that this is the Messiah who's coming to Israel.

[20:52] And how did the Magi know? Of course, the Magi also understood the scripture because they were taught by Daniel the prophet. The Magi were all trained in this school of thought and so they come to this place in history now where the fullness of time comes.

It's all based on a foundation of what Christ was supposed to be from the past of him. Isn't it funny how we like to make things look old?

But we all like old things. I mean, some of you have got holes worn in your jeans at the factory. But if you wear holes in your jeans, you'll probably throw them away.

If you have got furniture that has at the factory chains and bolts and things put on the end of something so that they can beat these little indentions into it so that it looks like it's aged.

But if you've got some old furniture in your house that gets rubbed too much and the finish comes off, you're ready to get rid of it. We like the look of old things, but we tend to throw old things away.

[22:08] Even in talking about fonts and things like that as Carly and I were talking about doing booklets and things for the church and even putting stuff on posters and stuff, what kind of font do you use?

And I was like, well, man, I want to have more of a modern font. I want it to look right. I want it to look like it's kind of classy or something. And she's like, my generation don't really want that.

I want something that looks old. Something that looks more established. Why is that? There's something built into us that really wants to be a part of something lasting.

That we're fulfilling some kind of destiny. That we're standing in the stream where others have gone before us. There's just something built into our DNA that really does just want that.

I think as we come to the scripture, we're just reminded that we are standing as believers in Christ in something that is a fulfillment of times past. The prophecy of Christ's coming is the reminder that he has been the plan from the beginning.

[23:15] We are of him and through him and to him. As he describes this, this implies Christ's creative work. And of him also implies his redemptive work.

Galatians 4 tells us, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.

It's something of the past that is being fulfilled in Christ that we find solace in. We find confidence. The reality is this is not something new.

This isn't a fad. It's not something that's going to fade away. It's something that was the plan from the beginning of time. That God the son was going to come and be the redeemer for us.

When he was born of a woman in his virgin birth, this for us is something to praise him for. It's something for us to point to in the past to say, I'm not in something new and something that's going to fade.

[24:23] I am standing in the truth of God that is forever from eternity past and will be forever in eternity future. God bring us to a point of wonder like Paul where he said in Colossians 1.5, it is the hope that's laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth. Or in Colossians 1.16 where he said in another doxology, he said, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authority, all things were created through him and for him. It's of him. The hope that we have in this universe is of Christ. And that foundation in Colossians, he goes on to say, and he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning of the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and

through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on heaven or on earth making peace by the blood of his cross.

The author of Hebrews said it clearly in Hebrews 1.2. He said, God has spoken to us in these last days by his son. He appointed heir of all things.

[25:54] So when Paul is referring to this in Romans where he says it is from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. He's referring to it being of him meaning Christ is the foundation of all things.

Christ is the foundation of the world that we live in. Christ is the foundation of the salvation that you can find only in him. That's why we don't detach from the Old Testament when we're preaching the gospel.

This is why in Luke chapter 2 verse 28 this is why Simeon is still anticipating the coming of Christ because he knew the scriptures. In Luke chapter 2 28 it said he took him Jesus the baby up in his arms and blessed him and said Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all people a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Wonders Simeon stands there holding Christ in absolute wonder because he understood that he is the fulfillment of all that was said by God in the past.

[27:19] It's of Christ. This is why Anna in Luke chapter 2 verse 38 it said and coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel because she understood all things are of him.

Christmas has lost its wonder because in Christ we have a foundation in the past of all things of him to him and to him will be glory forever. And then number two we can have wonder like Paul did not only in the past but also because it's only Christ who gives us powerful implications for the present is through him and to him.

And he's speaking of the wonder of Christ in his present work upholding all things. He's working all things together. He's mediating our salvation. Paul is he's been speaking of regeneration for Jews and Gentiles and he's declared them disobedient.

He said God has declared all of them Jews and Gentiles together as disobedient. so that he can show grace to all that he might have mercy on all he said.

Everybody needs Jesus and they all need it equally. It's the wonder of salvation and it's through him. It's to him. Our faith is directed toward him.

[28:53] Our repentance from sin turns us toward him. It's as early Luther said he said a faithful God does not expect you to do what you cannot. He supplies strength.

God reveals himself in all his glory and he's revealed himself in the son and when you see the son for who he is you're drawn to him and only God can give you those kind of eyes and that kind of heart.

My existence is through Christ. It's he who created me. Hebrews 1 2 says it's through whom he also created the world and he upholds the universe by the word his power.

He doesn't have to act if you just think about this. He doesn't have to act to end all things. He just has to stop holding it together. And in a moment the universe just flies apart.

It's held together by the word of his power. My existence is in Christ right now. my salvation is through Christ. He made the world.

[29:59] He's upholding it even in that verse in Hebrews he goes on to say that he purged through himself our sins. And it's Christ whom God has appointed to be heir of all things.

He's the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the words of his power. After making purification for sin he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

My salvation is through him. And my sanctification is through him. 1 Peter 4 11 whoever serves is to serve as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.

So that everything may be done to glorify Christ Jesus. As he said to him be the glory and dominion forever and ever even.

It's not just the past but it's got to work in the present. He saved me and he sanctified me. It's the God who created me that's walking with me.

[31:07] It's not just of him. It's through him and to him. This is going to be your life in Christ by the glory of God.

It's going to be through Christ. God's not just going to be the God of the past. He's going to be God of the present. He's going to fulfill everything that the scripture says in 1 Thessalonians 5.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's past, it's present, and into the future. What Paul said was he who calls you is faithful and he will surely do it. Aren't you glad you have Christ not just in the past but in the present?

I mean, at Christmas this is the wonder of it. I think of this past Monday I did a funeral. You know, I've got relationships with a lot of older people in this town, so that's just going to be a part of my ministry here as long as I'm here.

[32:15] There's going to be people who pass away, and because we've been friends and because I've been connected with them in some way, I'll be a part of the funeral. That is the least favorite part of my ministry.

I'm grateful to be a part of those things. I love being a part of it. Boy, it's an emotional drain. because a lot of my friends die. They're old.

I'm friends with a lot of older people. Marilyn right passed away a couple of weeks ago. And this is one of the first funerals that I preached where someone left a testimony to be shared at the funeral. That doesn't happen very often. Most of the time people die and they're just never ready. It's something you're going to do, you never get to. She wrote this several years ago and said, I want this said at my funeral.

And so I, she had all songs picked out. She had the whole story that was like mapped out for me. It's not often, it happens sometimes. But I've almost never read a testimony to be read.

[33:25] And it was awesome. I'm going to read it to you. It's not very long. But here's what she said. She said, many years ago, well she said, dear son, Susan, my doors and friends, many years ago my greatest fear was dying.

Today is the fulfillment of my life on earth after my new earth. It is my earnest prayer that whoever hears this and doesn't already believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will spend some diligent hours of research on the prophecies concerning his birth and life and the facts concerning his resurrection.

It's like, man, I mean, she said, you must realize the hopelessness and finality of death if there is no eternal life. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, he was just a good man and wise teacher.

More than 600 people saw his resurrected person. Even his disciple Thomas put his hand at his side to satisfy his skepticism. Indeed, he had very foolish disciples if they were willing to die horrible deaths, insisting to the end of their lives that Jesus was the ruler of Messiah if they knew it was just a hoax.

No man has ever had such an impact on history as he did in his 33 short years on this earth. Every facet of his sinless life, every word that he spoke bears witness to his life.

[34:55] For me, the Bible was sort of a dubious history book with no unifying timeline or theme until I began to study it. Gradually, I discovered that it does indeed have a theme.

God pointed through his inspired word to his son in the Old Testament over a hundred times, written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, that Christ would come to save sinners like me. He gave precise, exact facts which surrounded the birth and life of his son, Jesus Christ, which cannot be doubted or denied. All this is confirmed by the words and the works of his son, Jesus Christ, who came and died for my sins that I might live forever.

There are those among you whom I want to see again. There are also those among you who have made a conscious or unconscious choice to reject Jesus Christ.

the Bible says in Matthew 7, there will be those there in that day to whom the Lord will reply, I never knew you. If I had continued my life as I spent the first 40 years, I never would have known you

either.

[36:04] I was so preoccupied with my own agenda that I had no time or inclination to bow my knee to my creator and his plan for my life. When I reached the point of desperation, when I had no answers and it looked as though one that I loved more than my own life would be lost forever, I literally fell to my knees and asked Jesus to come into my life.

The following morning, my miracle began to unfold. Answers to prayer came from a person I didn't know who lived a thousand miles away. My problems were not instantly solved, but I became instantly aware of a hymn.

A hymn that was guiding me that I had never known before and assurance that I wasn't alone.

As I read through that testimony, I was just stunned in some ways because she was so theologically thorough in her testimony and I've only known her as an 86-year-old who maybe in the latter years wasn't in her sharpest form.

And she would say that by her own admission. But when I read through that testimony, I thought, man, I couldn't preach the gospel even more clearly than she just preached it. I'm going to preach that thing.

[37:34] And so I was able to share that testimony and tell you, it was just a powerful thing. Because she didn't just speak of Christ as though Christ did something in the past alone.

But she spoke of the Christ who was with me in this life. The Christ who came and changed me.

The Christ who came and directed me. The Christ who came and guided me.

This is what is revealed to us in Scripture in John 1.1. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And in John 1.14 he continues to say, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth.

In all his radiance, he died according to the past so that he would be with me in the present. present. And with me on into the future.

I don't lose the wonder that I have in Christ because of this reality. Hebrews 2.17 Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful, faithful, high priest in service to God to make propitiation for the sins of his people for because he himself has suffered but tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted.

[39:02] This is the whole point of the incarnation. He became flesh so that he would dwell among us. He became flesh so that he would be an adequate sacrifice for sin.

Because of Christ, I have my existence. It's because Christ I have salvation. It's because of Christ alone I can be sanctified. God is the first cause, God is the effective cause, and God is the final cause.

It's not only the past, it's not only the present, but God gives me powerful consolation for the future. Forever. Forever. It's a long time.

It's been to the wonder of this future world. That's why we've been going through Revelation, because we're talking about his coming. The reality is our lives are to be lived for his coming.

Our lives, the rest of our days in this world, from the moment we come to realization of our need for Jesus, and we're transformed by a relationship with him, the rest of our days are going to be spent preparing for his coming.

[40:27] I'm getting myself ready, I'm getting things ready, I'm getting others ready for his coming. And so I'm going to live in my first love of Christ, and I'm going to keep that fire burning, so that the light of Christ is shining brightly.

And I'm going to live for him no matter what the cost, because I know he's coming, and there's nothing in this world that compares to knowing him. The past speaks of foundations, the present speaks of presence and mediation, and the future speaks of hope.

It will carry me through anything that comes, and you have to keep that in mind in Romans as these believers are beginning to undergo the persecution of Negro. I mean, this is a difficult time.

to him be the glory forever and ever. It's all for him. Paul's reminding them that the hope is in Christ.

It's what Christ told his disciples over and over again. John 14, he said, my father's house are many rooms, and if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

[41:40] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and I will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also, and you know the way to where I'm going. And like Thomas, so many people ask the same question, Lord, we don't know the way.

Jesus said, I am the way. You don't have to be creative about hope. Sometimes people have hope and think that it's crazy.

Crazy. I read a little thing, this history account that was talking about this guy, he received reprieve from a death sentence from a king because he promised the king that he would teach his horse how to fly.

And so the king actually gives him reprieve, you have a year to teach my horse how to fly. I mean, this is awesome. And basically, as the guy explains, he says, well, the king could die in here. man, he's going to die in here. Or I could die in here. But even if that doesn't happen, who knows, in a year, maybe the horse will learn to fly.

[42:55] People trust in the craziest things. Watching the shark tank, and you see the ideas that people come up with for business.

And we watch them, and it's like, these people are asking questions of the person who brings their product. Yeah, we're making sustainable houses for cats, or whatever.

It's like something weird. And you see Mr. Wonderful, he's like, this is the dumbest idea I've ever heard. You're a cockroach. He says all these things for me. And one of the other people tries to be nice.

Well, tell us about it. And I'm like, oh, it's all these things outside. It's cold. And so we sold our house. And we quit our job and poured everything in sustainable houses for cats.

And he's like, you did what? And if you only imagine this conversation with Brandon. Brandon, I didn't tell you I sold the house because I came up with an idea that's going to be for a few of us.

[44:03] We're going to make sustainable houses for squirrels and deer because they're cold in winter. And so I quit my job. I sold all our houses. I sold everything.

And you know what Brandon would say? She'd say, man, that's great because you're going to need one of those houses to live in this winter. Wait a minute. here. She says, you are crazy.

The things that people trust in, the things that people will abandon everything for. Paul said, this isn't what I've abandoned for. I've abandoned for something that's going to receive glory forever and ever and ever.

It's the word of the psalmist in Psalm 146, three, but not your trust on fences. Who are you trusting in today? Are you trusting in people? Because if you are, at the end, you're going to be disillusioned and your faith is going to be deconstructed.

You're going to wonder why it's just crumbling under the pressure as you get older and the difficulties of your life are becoming more and more. And you're wondering if you don't have anything to hold on to.

[45:10] It's because you weren't trusting in Christ. You were trusting in man. And as you put your trust in man, it's going to fail and it's going to deconstruct.

Amen. The psalmist said, put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. And on that very day, his plans perish. Trusting in man? The scripture warned us in Jeremiah 17, thus is the Lord cursed, is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.

He is like a shrub in the desert. He shall not see the good that comes. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land.

You put your trust in man? Expect deconstruction. You put your trust in wealth? Matthew 6, 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, for moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal.

[46:19] But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, for neither moth nor rust destroys, where thieves do not break in and steal. For where

your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You can't trust in wealth. You can't trust in worth and achievement. Ecclesiastes 1, 2. For all this vanity, what does man gain by all the toil which he toils under the sun?

How many people have come to the end of their life, realizing that they've thrown their life away, because they've poured it all into their job, all into their achievements, and got nothing in the hand to speak of?

They're going to be constructed at some point. Your idols, Scripture says you shall have no other God before me. Exodus 20, verse 3.

You shall not make for yourselves an image of anything in heaven or earth below or waters beneath. You shall not bow down with it or worship it, for I, the Lord, am your God. I am a jealous God.

[47:21] Is it going to be false teachers that you put your trust in? Teachers that you've thought knew everything and have some moral failure or some lapse of judgment and just blows you away?

And all of a sudden your faith is going to be deconstructed because of this one person? 1 John 4, 1. Dear friends, do not believe every spirit that tests the spirits, whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

We'll end up deconstructed. Echerthon Thomas Brooks said it clearest. He said, the safest place to lodge our trust is in him we can never deceive.

Around us a child is born. Son is given. Isaiah said that the government shall be upon his shoulders His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

[48:42] The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. So when you come to the birth of Christ and the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary, she says about His conception in Luke 1.32, He will be great and He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there will be no end.

It was to remind us. The wonder in Jesus is not just from the past. It's not just for the present. But it will be on into the future until He comes.

No end. Charles Spurgeon preached his first sermon. He spoke like this.

He said, The highest science, The highest science, The loftiest speculation, The mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, Is the name, the nature, the person, the work, and the doings, and the existence of the great God, whom we call Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind and contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity, so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity.

[50:16] Other subjects we can compass and grapple with. In them we feel a kind of self-contentment and go our way with the thought, Behold, I am wise. But when we come to this master science, finding that our plump mind cannot sound its depths, And that our eagle eye cannot see its height, We turn away with the thoughts that vain man would be wise, But he is like the wild donkey's colt.

And with the solemn exclamation he must say, I am bowed yesterday and no doubt. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts of God.

We shall be obliged to feel, Great God, how infinite thou art, And what a worthless worm I am. But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it.

He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and him crucified, And the knowledge of the Godhead and his glorious trinity.

Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, Nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, As a devout, earnest, continued investigation into the great subject of the deity.

[51:33] And while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is in contemplated Christ a balm for every wound, In musing on the Father there is a quietness for every grief, And in influence of the Holy Ghost there is a balsam for every sword.

Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself into the Godhead's deepest sea. Be lost in his immensity, And you shall come forth, As from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated.

Spurgeon said this at page 23. And on his deathbed, At the end of his life, He said it this way, He said, Tranquil and happy, though very weak, My theology remains very simple.

I can express it in a few words, And they are enough to die. And after a pause, He slowly said, Jesus died, My name.

He held on to the same hope, At the end, That he had to begin. He held on to the wonder of Christ's past, Experiencing God in the present, And carried that hope into the future.

[53:00] Amen. He said, If there is anything that is gracious, Generous, kind, and tender, A lavish, and superabundant in love, You will always find it.

Christ. In the age of deconstruction, The author of Hebrews speaks, And he said, We have this as the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, Where Jesus has gone as forerunner on our behalf.

For as we sing so often, My hope is built on that rest, Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest rain, And holding me on Jesus' name, When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace, In every high and stormy hail, My answer holds.

Father, as we come to you,