

W473_Saul_that_is_called_Paul_9.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open Book. Under the covering title Saul, who also is called Paul. We are considering this Apostle. As an earthen vessel is described himself as such. He says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. We value the earthen vessel for himself, but we value him also, and perhaps more so for the treasure that was poured into him. And the thought before us in this series is it's all very well to have an earthen vessel like this containing a wonderful treasure. But if you put it on a shelf and admire it, you're not doing what God intended. He intended that you should dip into that treasure. That you should remember that unless you become acquainted in heart and mind with the wonderful message that this man was entrusted with. Well, it's so many wonderful words. And at the end of it. Now, the first thing that we would perhaps ask ourselves is what is the greatest element? What is the greatest treasure that you can think of associated with the Apostle Paul? And I hope that every one of us would immediately say the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So you will say to yourself this morning, Oh, that's where we're going to start. And of course, that's where you'd be wrong, because I'm now going to ask a question How do you know anything at all about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is he? And immediately you ask that question, you come back to the fact that we have to remember that if it were not for the written word of God, we should know nothing at all about the living Word of God.

[00:02:04] So in spite of the fact that there is a company of God's people at this meeting this morning, and every one of them were already sure that this book has been given by God. We've got to start there so that everyone that listens to this recording should have no doubt that we do not depend upon tradition or upon our own ideas of things. This earthen vessel comes to us primarily. Emphasizing the fact that God has spoken and we must make all our doctrine and all our practice and all our hopes in harmony with its teaching. I looked up a passage in Romans, the third chapter. You need not turn to it because for the time you do, perhaps I should have finished it. What advantage, then, hath the Jew or what profit is there in circumcision? Now, that's a question, isn't it? And there may be many answers to it. Think of all the great sacrificial teaching there is in their types and shadows. The tabernacle and the temple. But it says here much every way, of course. But chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. So the chief thing is in the estimate of this man.

[00:03:24] That the greatest honor that God could put upon men and that wonder most wonderful riches you can conceive is that he has spoken. We have a standing witness. In the city of London that everybody who passes this chapel, if it only cares to notice, will see that it says the chapel of the opened book. And then a smaller board underneath says, We preach Christ in all the scriptures. Christ matters most, but the scriptures are the vehicle and we dare not set aside the vessel. Otherwise we shall lose its precious contents. So I'm going to start at the beginning. I'm going to speak to you people this morning and you know all about it before we start. But I want you to be willing to share with others who may have been disturbed by some of the great people that have stood up in pulpits and they seem to be tearing the book to pieces. Let's be, as it were, old fashioned enough to come back again and let it speak for itself and see what we learn. So we turn straight away to the classic passage in two Timothy three, where the apostle himself comes down with no uncertain sound as to his estimate of the book that we are now using. Two Timothy three 1617 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Now, the first thought as you look at that should be this. The word scripture is the word graphe, which has entered into our ordinary language.

[00:05:20] Photography, lithography, a graphic description. And it means something which is written. Something which is written is the word scripture, naturally. You say? Why are you emphasizing that? Because it says it's given by inspiration. Now, on the surface, if you look at that word in the English, it means to breathe and it does so in the original. Inspire. Perspire. Respire. They've all got their emphasis upon breathing. So now would you face these two statements together? That which God breathed is that which is written? I don't know whether you had in your young days at school. Some lessons called dictation and some lessons called composition. Now, in dictation, you were not allowed to invent the story yourself. It had to be exactly as it was dictated. Composition, you were allowed a free rein to see what you'd make of it. Well, the Bible isn't a composition of learned men. It is men who were dictated to by the Spirit of God, and they were just the channels through which God spoke. It is not Paul's idea that we are reading in Timothy. It's God's idea coming through the earthen vessel. So. While us. As I say before we start, everyone in this little meeting is already assured by their own studies and acquaintance with the book that this is the Word of God. That's where we begin. Friends, when we dip into this earthen vessel, we discover that although he was

most wonderfully inspired himself and sustained against great odds all the way through, there is a consciousness that we have an inspired word as the basis of all our hopes.

[00:07:24] Should we look at? Two, Peter? That is to say, here's another vessel. He has a message, particularly to the other type of people, the people of Israel. But we can read what he says to two Peter chapter one, verse 20. Oh, verse 19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy. Well, that's comparison, isn't it? If you say you have a more sure word you've been looking at something with which you can compare it. So we go back. Verse 16, We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But were eyewitnesses of His Majesty. There were eyewitnesses, but he hasn't come yet in that sense. Oh, no. But it was anticipated for he received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven. We heard when we were with him in the Holy Mount. What do you remember? There was Peter and James. And John and I saw the vision of Christ with Moses, the law and Elijah the prophet on either side.

[00:08:49] Would you say that Shorty is enough? But, says this man, we've got something even better. Would you believe it? Friends? The book. The Bible says that you and I have got something even better than the vision that these men saw. So he goes on to say, We have also a more sure word of prophecy. So the Bible itself is telling you its extreme importance and value. Whereunto you do well that you take heed in your hearts. You notice the word in your hearts is right at the end. As far as I interpret this passage, you take heed in your hearts as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. The contrast between the Word of God and its surroundings. A dark place. A light that shines in a dark place. Until the day dawn. It had anticipation of that rising of the sun, of righteousness. When the Word of God will be completely fulfilled in Him. Until the day dawn and the day star arise. The day star will not arise in our hearts. The day star will arise. But do take heed in your hearts. And then he says, knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. No prophecy of the Scripture is of its own unfolding. How did it come then? For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man. Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel didn't suddenly say to themselves, I think I'll write a book.

[00:10:36] I think I'll write a little prophecy. It was borne in upon them. They couldn't help themselves, and it was given them by God. For the prophecy came out of old time by the will of man. But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Now we could be moved in various ways. But this is an extraordinary movie. I would like you to see the reference in the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 27, where this very word is used and it's used in connection with a storm at sea and a shipwreck. It says. I don't want to read too much of it. Uh, could anyone see what? What number? 17. 17. 15. Oh, that's 15. Thank you. Here it is. And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind. We let her drive. Now, can you see that picture? The sailors. Navigators are helpless. They can do nothing. They are in the grip of this terrific wind. And they let her drive. And that's the word that's used in this passage in First Peter. And were moved by the Holy Spirit Spirit not gently, but irresistibly. So here's something that is coming out of this earthen vessel. A positive emphasis. Not an apology, but an emphasis upon the fact that God has spoken. And this is found in what we call the Bible, the scriptures that which is written, that which he said, that which was recorded.

[00:12:45] Without turning back to Psalm 22. Most of you know, it starts with the words, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And it goes through. A curious experience. The man who wrote that. They pierced my hands and my feet. And the last word of the psalm is he hath done. The word. This is in italics. And he hath done. And it is finished. Or practically the same in those languages. Now put yourself in the position of the believer at the time of David. Here he has written a psalm. And they have read it. My God. My God, why hast thou forsaken me? They cast lots upon my vesture. What does that mean? Well what it them says all that means to say that his kingdom was divided up into portions and he lost it. They pierced my hands and my feet. But don't you see? Long before Christ came. Here is an anticipation that's beyond the idea of accident. Of the crucifixion of the Son of God. How that inspiration. That was written by someone who was moved, carried along by the Holy Spirit and put down words that he had to consider afterwards. It says that the prophets, after they had written, they considered their own writings as to what the spirit of God that was in them did signify when He testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.

[00:14:34] So, friends, we are in this marvelous position. We have every evidence to believe that in this book, which we call the Bible or the Holy Scriptures, we have a translation of the very will and Word of God. And that is where we stand in this chapel.

We may not pose as being great scholars, but I think we've got a certain amount of ordinary gumption. And the one that's speaking to you has been considering this book for how long? I can't quite remember. 60 years. And the more it is read and the more it studied, the more the conviction grows that this is a book that's given by inspiration of God. How is it that this statement in that part of the book should find its companion in this part of the book with no apparent collusion, and yet there it is. We never find it missing. We never find it contradicting. We find it helping forward. A wonderful story of redeeming love. Take, for instance, now one prophecy. Bethlehem. Ephrata. Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah. Out of thee shall come. A prophecy in Micah's prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah. You notice it says Bethlehem Ephrata because there's more than one place called Bethlehem in the land of Palestine. So it's specific. It's that particular Bethlehem. Now you come to the New Testament. And Joseph and Mary. You say they are living at Bethlehem? No, they are not.

[00:16:27] They are living at Nazareth. Some distance away. And Mary is with child and she is soon to give birth to that child. And nobody in the sober senses would put his wife in that condition on a donkey and take him for several miles journey. Whether it was good weather or bad. So how is it possible that this word of God is going to be fulfilled? They are. They are leaving Nazareth. He must be born at Bethlehem. Well, God has the control of even the Roman Empire and the Roman Empire. The Emperor sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed. And so it was brought about by the Roman power that the Nazareth Nazareth family had to pack up and move to Bethlehem for that was their town because of their tribe. And so in spite of the apparent problem, it's fulfilled to the letter. Fulfilled to the letter. And he was born at Bethlehem. Supposing we look now at 1 or 2 passages that are in some measure a challenge. Go back to the Prophet Isaiah whenever 2 or 3 from that passage that that prophet. Isaiah 46. Isaiah 46 verse nine. Isaiah 46, verse nine. Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like me. In what way is this being emphasized? Declaring the end from the beginning. That's God's challenge. He says, You may have your prophets and some of them bring it off.

[00:18:37] But not like me, he says. I tell you the end from the beginning without hesitation. As I remember reading some time ago, a year or two back. It was remarked in the newspaper that there was a man standing on the corner of the street here selling all Moore's Almanac with all its prophecy for the year. And if you didn't like that, there

was another man standing at the other street with somebody else's edition. Old Moore's Almanac again. You pay your money and take your choice. Not like this. Here is God saying. And. What was I. What was I looking at now? 46. Nine? Yes. Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none else. Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times. The things that are not yet done. Saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. And it had to do with heathen kings as well as with the person of Christ and others that came. Chapter 41 for another challenging statement with regard to this question. Chapter 41, verse 22. Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen. This is the challenge again. Prophecy foretelling what will happen in the days to come. Let them show the former things what they be that we may consider them and know the latter end of them or declare us things for to come.

[00:20:22] Show the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are gods. Ye do good or do evil. That we may be dismayed. And behold it together. Behold ye are of nothing. And your work of nought. An abomination. Is he that chooseth you? I have raised up one from the north. And he shall come from the rising of the sun. Shall he call upon my name? And he shall come upon princes as upon mortar and as upon as the potter treadeth the clay. Who has declared from the beginning that ye may know, and before time that ye may say he is right righteous. Ye there is none that showeth ye there is none that declare If ye there is none that heareth your words. It goes on to keep emphasizing that the fact of prophecy centuries before the event takes place is infallibly written in the Word of God and is fulfilled practically to the letter. While we have Isaiah look at chapter 44, verse 28, 44, 28, thus saith Cyrus. Said thus saith of Cyrus that saith of Cyrus. I'm sorry. I'm picking up a statement in the middle of it that speaks about Cyrus. He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure. Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have Holden to subdue nations before him.

[00:22:15] And I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the to lead gates and the gates shall not be shut. And so on. And this prophecy was fulfilled. You may remember that when Cyrus, the Persian approached the city, the gates were shut. But they diverted the water and they walked right straight through into the city. And so you see, nothing can stop God forecasting what is to take place. And the more you study prophecy, the more you become convinced that this this book has been written by someone who knows the end from the beginning and cannot be turned aside. Chapter

45 one. Of course, I've just mentioned about Silas. He was a Persian king and didn't know much about the people of Israel until that time. Now in the John 7:15 there is a reference to the Scriptures in a particular way. John 7:15 It is in verse 14 now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying how knoweth this man letters. Having never learned. You see the word letters. There was the reference to the scriptures. How does he know this? Have he never learned? Well, of course, he said the spirit of the Lord God is upon me. And you will notice that this Son of God was linked with the written word of God. You might have thought that if anyone could have spoken without a book, it would have been Christ.

[00:24:13] And you look at the Gospel according to Luke, where our savior enters into the temple. Into the synagogue. And. It says they gave unto him. Now, where am I looking for that? Chapter four. Thank you. Good to have a monitor, isn't it? Yes. Chapter four. And he came to Nazareth, verse 16, where he had been brought up. Notice that? He went where they knew him as a child and his parents as humble people. And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up. Not to speak, but to read. Here is Christ himself opening the book. And there was delivered unto him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. And he preached, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And then he began to say to them in verse 21 this day, Is this scripture fulfilled in your ears? There was the Son of God.

[00:26:01] Whose name was the Word of God himself when he went into the synagogue. He opened the scroll and he read what was written. That endorsing the book, isn't it? Or will you think again when he was taken by the evil one to be tempted? We don't quite understand all that happened. We only look on in marvel. But he permitted the evil one to take him and say to him, If thou be the Son of God, come on, these stones that they may be made bread. Now, Christ could have blasted that one with a word. But very meekly, he said it is written just a word of God. And he took him again. And three times the temptation was given and three times he said, it is written. Friends. It's a remarkable thought. He did exactly the same as you and I could do. We

can say to the evil one in his temptations. It is written. And that is the infallible word of God. The Scripture which we have in our hands to this day. We are told that Moses wrote the book more than one passage. We find that he is spoken of as writing. As. Shall we now turn to the 24th chapter of Luke's Gospel. For there again, we have an exhibition of our Savior's relationship to the Scriptures. The 24th chapter is a remarkable one in this sense that Christ is now the risen one.

[00:27:58] The 24th chapter, the risen one. And how will he speak of the scriptures? Well, let's look. Chapter 24, verse 25. He's speaking to those who are now perplexed because they've heard all sorts of stories about the possibility the tomb is empty. And he said unto them, verse 25. All fools. And slow of heart. It's not very easy for us to call anybody a fool. And I'm sure our savior never used the word except that it was right. How foolish for any one of us to doubt the power, the wisdom, and the Word of God. O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ought not Christ to have suffered these things. That would turn them back to great chapters in the Old Testament, especially, say, Isaiah 53. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory. And then came a Bible study, which I suppose every one of us envies. All to have been there at that moment to hear him opening the book. And here it is. And beginning at Moses. Beginning at Moses. In spite of all the people may say as to Moses and his place and his teaching concerning creation and whatnot, beginning at Moses. And all the prophets. He expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. It's one thing to be a Bible student. It's another thing to see in almost every book an unfolding of the person and work of the Son of God.

[00:30:03] They speak of him. At the game in verse 32. And they said to one another, did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us, by the way? Yes. It was sufficient for him to talk to them, by the way, to make their hearts burn within them. But they added a bit more to it while he talked with us, by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures. None of us can stand in the place of Christ. None of us can take his place. But if we stand before men and open the scriptures, we apart the way in the same department as it were. And the nearer we get to the opening of the scriptures, the more will men's hearts burn within them as they begin to perceive the purpose of work of grace. And again, in this same chapter, verse 46. 44. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses. Now, this sounds like they're endorsing

the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. And that's the three fold division of the whole of the Old Testament, the five books of Moses, the many books of the Prophets and the Psalms. And asylums include all the poetic books like The Song of Solomon and such.

[00:31:53] So our Savior endorsed the whole of the Old Testament canon and then said to be understood. He understood correctly. You will find they speak concerning me. We we don't need to have that proved in many cases, the Passover that Moses wrote about the Song of Solomon, that he speaks about the beloved one and so on. We leave that for the time being. Added verse 46. They are verse 35. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. That is a little correction, I think, to you and me. It doesn't follow that because you can speak Greek like a native or Hebrew. That you will be an infallible teacher for. Alas, some of those who are tearing the book to pieces today are very proficient in the ancient languages. But of course that's a necessary adjunct. We don't despise it by any means, but it says here. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the scriptures. He opens their understandings and some very simple and lowly folk have a fuller conception of what Christ is than the greatest professor in the colleges. Not that we are speaking against him unnecessarily. And he said unto them. Thus it is written and thus it Behoved Christ. Notice. It was written. And he said that the two things, thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ. He was in harmony with the word.

[00:33:40] He came to fulfil it. As you remember a passage which says that all things might be fulfilled even in the day of his agony on the cross, he said, I thirst. What a what an idea there is in this person of Christ to honor that word of God down to the last syllable. So it says here, and he said unto them, thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. Well, that's what I felt we must do first thing in dipping into this earthen vessel and taking out from that vessel some of the treasures that were put in him. For our sakes, I hope you haven't been disappointed, because I know I'm speaking to the converted, that you already know that the scriptures are true, given by inspiration of God and of our Savior. Endorse them. But you may be thankful that somebody perhaps might listen to these simple words given to you this morning and for the first time have that interest quickened to search and see if these

things are so. So may the Lord set his seal upon the testimony and may we never waver with regard to the fact that our Savior's very name is the word of God living and he endorsed the Word of God written.