

Paul, an Apostle

Galatians 1:1

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TRANSCRIPT:

Galatians Chapter 1:1-5: "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead—and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Oh Lord in heaven, we ask now that You would help us to hear Your voice in the pages of Your Word, that we as Your people might learn of You, to yoke with You in this way, and that we might follow hard after all that You have said to us through Your Word. I pray that You would empower me by the Holy Spirit to speak Your Word, and that Your people would be empowered to hear, to discern, to know what it is that You would have them to do. Oh heavenly Dove, descend upon us, we pray, that the things that we do and say today would magnify You, that our responses to Your truth would build us up and cause us to walk upon that path which You have laid out for us in Your holy Word, for Your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

We began last week in our series on Galatians, looking at the general overview of the book, seeing that the churches that were founded in the southern region of Galatia were founded by the Apostle Paul, and they were met with much opposition from the Jews, particularly early on in the founding of these churches. And we saw how Paul returned to these very churches that he preached, the cities where he preached the gospel in, and they appointed elders, him and Barnabas, in those churches, and then they moved back down to Antioch and in Syria, and there we had the Jerusalem Council that followed in Acts 15. What we also learned is that these churches that were established were facing some serious and severe problems, and the problems were regarding the Judaizers that were infiltrating the church and causing confusion in the hearts and minds of the people of God, making them think that in order for them to be pleasing to

God, they must somehow revert to the old covenant laws and the Mosaic Covenant and the laws belonging to that covenant, and keep circumcision, and observe days and months and years, and also to bring them, as it were, as Paul says, into bondage. And Paul is concerned by such behavior of these Judaizers and how it's affecting the church, in so much that he says that this is another gospel which is being preached unto you; it's causing you to turn away from the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is that gospel of justification by faith alone in His name. And the Bible teaches us this, and the book of Galatians shows us this overview of these very things that are going on.

And this morning, we're going to consider verse number one more particularly and closely as we come into the text here in the book of Galatians. And Paul begins with the words, "Paul, an apostle," and it is very important to comprehend what he means by an apostle and why that is vastly important. You see, the author of this book says a lot about the book. In fact, whoever wrote this book, it is important to know, in the sense that if it was not Paul who wrote it, or if it's just some Judaizer that wrote it, or someone else, we would have problems. We would have questions. We would have to examine whether or not these things are actually part of the apostolic message and of the apostolic truth that was given by Jesus to His disciples. And so, the author is very important. How we think of him is very important. And Paul actually knew that himself. You can look through many different epistles of Paul, and constantly he's reminding the churches that he's an apostle and what that means for the churches, and therefore how they should hear his word as he is one sent from God. And he does this particularly in a very unique way in the book of Galatians because perhaps the error was so severe.

And we must not be deceived that there is, when false teachers seek to bring in false teaching, one of the very things that they most inevitably do is undermine the authority of God's Word and of God's truth. And in this case, it was the Apostles through whom the Word of Christ came to the churches. And so, Paul begins by saying, "Paul, an apostle." An apostle was one who was called to an office; they were the foundation layers, if we could say, of the church, of the prophets and apostles, of which Jesus Christ Himself was the chief, or is the chief cornerstone. They had unique authority given to them by God, by the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, they had unique qualifications that were to establish them in their apostleship, that those might people might know who are those that are true apostles and those who are not. One of those things was that they had to see the resurrected Lord. Another one of those things is that they had to be appointed, if you look at Acts chapter 1, they had to be appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The other thing that we see regarding the Apostles of Christ is that their ministry was marked by a certain success. I know

that sounds quite interesting, but Paul says this, he says, "Are you not," he says to the Church of Corinth, "are you not the seal of my apostleship in the Lord?" What he's simply saying is, "You are the fruit of my apostleship, that I've been sent as an apostle to the Gentiles, you have been converted, the church has been established, and we have seen that God has worked among you." And so, there was a combination of many different qualifications that particularly made Apostles and Apostles. In fact, there were particular signs, if we could say, or particular power that was given to the Apostles, a demonstration perhaps like never seen before. I don't ever think we're going to see a day where a handkerchief is going to heal somebody, but that was true of Peter's ministry. Not saying God doesn't have the power to do such things, but it was uniquely demonstrated in such a way to display God's particular seal upon these men as God had called them to a specific work in the laying down of the foundation of the New Testament Church.

And so, Paul, he says, "I'm an apostle," and he goes on to explain the source of his apostleship, and that perhaps is more important than anything else. Look what he says here. He says, "An apostle," in the parenthesis, this is a very important parenthesis, "not from men nor through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Notice first the negatives: "not from men nor through men." Paul was at pains to make clear to the churches of Galatia that he was an apostle not by human source nor by human authority. It was not like a group of people acknowledged and said, "Oh yes, he's an apostle," and therefore Paul said, "Okay, I guess I am an apostle because those people said I am an apostle." He said it was not by human source nor by human authority that I received my apostleship. He says it is not by a council necessarily, but he goes on in positively to say, "but through Jesus Christ and God the Father." And so, we simply saying it's not through human source, not through human authority, not through human delegation that I write this epistle to you churches as an apostle, but rather it was by divine appointment, by divine authority. He goes on to say, "but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Paul simply saying, "I am not the product of men, but my ministry and my calling and my office as an apostle was directly given to me by God." And this was vital for the church to understand this. It was important. It was of divine source, God the Father and Jesus Christ. Quite interestingly here, this actually is a text that teaches us of the deity of Jesus Christ. Paul establishes that even here. What does he say here in verse 1:1? He says, "It's not through man nor by man or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father." What is he saying? It is not through human source, but through divine source, and who are the divine? Jesus Christ and God the Father. He testifies to the deity of Jesus Christ, and importantly, he does so because he's showing that it was Jesus Christ Himself, the one that God raised from the dead, that actually appeared to him on the road to Damascus and called him by

His grace.

You see, if Jesus Christ never rose from the dead, then did Paul really get called by Christ? Did Christ really appear to him? Did he see the risen Lord? If He's not a risen Lord, then how could he see Him on the road to Damascus? And Paul is saying, "No, it's God the Father and Jesus Christ who God the Father raised from the dead, Jesus Christ the divine one." Not only that, not only was he called by Christ, but it was by divine will. This is also what he's saying. It wasn't by human will that I was set apart as an apostle, but it was divine will. Jesus Christ and God the Father, they are the ones who called me to apostleship. They are the ones who have endowed upon me this office, this ministry, this calling, this gift. And he goes on to go on to say also that it was by divine revelation, as I also mentioned. It was Jesus Christ Himself that was risen from the dead that appeared to him.

Now, without going into all this, the rest of chapter one kind of points out about his experience as to how he was called on the road to Damascus, but at the very least, what we must comprehend this morning is that Paul was very anxious to make clear that the people understood that his apostleship was from God and not from man. And Paul does this right throughout his epistles. Almost all his epistles begin with something like this: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," and in Corinthians 1:1, it says, "through the will of God," not through the will of Paul. It's through the will of God. Romans 1:1, "Paul, called to be an apostle," there you go, called to be an apostle; he's passive, he's being called to be an apostle by who? God. Goes on to explain what that looks like, "separated by who? God, separated unto the gospel of God." Once again, God's hand upon him, God's call in terms of the establishing of his office. First Timothy 1:1, "Paul, an apostle by the commandment of God our Savior." Second Timothy 1:1, "Paul, an apostle by the will of God." And I'm not going to go through all the places in which that is said, but you can understand and see very clearly in the pages of Scripture that Paul is very clearly emphasizing the fact that he is an apostle sent by God.

Why the emphasis? He's establishing his apostolic authority right from the get-go of this epistle, that which was being undermined by false teachers, that which was so important to the health of the church, that if they did not receive him as an apostle of Jesus Christ, one sent by Christ, one called by Christ, one who was doing things according to the will of God, then the church would be in major trouble. How could they believe him if he was one sent by man, through man, and not from God the Father nor from Jesus Christ? Then we just take his words as any other man's words, should we not? But what Paul is simply saying at the outset of the epistle, all that I am writing unto you comes from the apostolic office that God has

bestowed upon me by His grace, and therefore what I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

You see, why does Paul go through so much pain to make this clear? Out of all the other Apostles, you know, John the Apostle doesn't even, I think, once in his epistles have to say, "John, an apostle." Peter does it twice but doesn't go on to elaborate like Paul does. John doesn't, maybe because there's an old man, and everyone believes the old man, you know, you've been around long enough, we know this guy's the real deal. No, it's not that. The reason why Paul felt the need to establish his apostleship, and his apostleship perhaps came under attack more than anyone else's, is because Paul, as he says of himself, was one born out of due time. You know, Paul's ministry as an Apostle and his calling as an Apostle didn't come with the rest of the twelve. The rest of the twelve lived with Jesus, saw the things of Jesus, Jesus called Matthew and James and John the sons of Zebedee, and they were all there before him, and it was evident they saw Him with the Lord Jesus, and it was fine, yeah, of course, these guys are Apostles of Christ, they were with Christ, Christ sent them, it was so clear, they were there receiving the Great Commission. Paul wasn't there. He can't be a true Apostle. That's part of the thinking that when Paul says, "I am a true Apostle, but I was one born out of due time." And what he means by "born out of due time," I was born in an untimely manner; in fact, the word refers to like a stillborn child. You know, a stillborn child is born not at the right time, or if I could say, not at the ordinary time, and what Paul's trying to say is that my apostleship came not in the ordinary time like the rest of the Apostles. I was born out of that due time, but still nonetheless born by the will of God and called by God as an Apostle.

Now, Paul's saying the timing of my calling to the Apostleship is not necessarily the issue. The issue is that I have been called by God. This is the emphasis that he wants the churches to understand. This is the trouble that was facing him. And what wouldn't matter is the abnormality of the birth, if we could say, of his Apostleship. What mattered most to him is that he was called by God, and the people understood that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. This was so important for Paul and even for the churches because Paul speaks about there being false Apostles. Who are false Apostles? You see, if the Apostles of Christ were ones called by Christ, sent by Christ, with specific qualifications that Christ, that they had to have with regards to their relationship to Christ, then we see in Scripture that there are false Apostles. Who are those? Well, they're the ones that are called by man, through man, and not by God the Father nor by the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God the Father raised from the dead. These are false Apostles, self-appointed people that have set themselves up in places of authority over the churches.

You know what's so interesting? The Apostles themselves were not even subject to the churches. Think about that for a moment. The Apostles themselves, they had authority over the churches. Okay, we know that the highest authority in the world today for the local church is the local church, the body of Christ gathering together, whatever they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. But you see the Apostle Paul himself putting people out of the church on church discipline. You see, he himself saying to the churches, "Listen to what I have to say because what I'm telling you are the commandments of the Lord." And you see the Apostle Paul, as and the other Apostles, as having direct revelation from Christ to bring God's Word to God's people. But there were false Apostles that wanted the same authority that the Apostles of Christ had and wanted to control the churches to their own ends. And these were the Judaizers. As Ignatius read to us earlier on this morning, it says, "For such are false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ." And he goes on to explain, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they the children of Abraham? So I am." These were Judaizers that were false Apostles, saying that they were sent, as it were, from God with God's message to the people, and they were causing trouble in the churches.

And we must not be deceived, the people of God, that there are false Apostles still today in the world, still today, seeking to distort and corrupt the truth of God and to gather people under their authority and to work out their own ends in the world, yes, in the name even of Jesus Christ. Such are false Apostles. And so, why was this important? Because there is the reality of false Apostles in the world, and this issue confronting the churches today. But not only that, why was it important, and why was it important that Paul's authority was established, and that I received him as an Apostle, is simply this: because no authority, no remedy. No authority, no remedy. Think about that just for a moment. If Paul's apostolic authority was rejected, the churches of Galatia would reject the very Word of God to them. No authority, no remedy. How would they get themselves out of this deep ditch of Judaism unless they heard the word of the one who was sent from God to proclaim God's message to them? No authority, no remedy.

There are many key lessons that we learn from this concept of Paul being an Apostle and the importance of establishing apostolic authority because the same applies even to us. No authority, no remedy. Confusion, error must be met with the apostolic authority found within the authority of the scriptures. And no authority, no remedy. How can a church navigate its way? How can you navigate your way through the troubles that you face in life apart from there being an established authority, apart from there being a clear word that cannot be questioned, upon which your soul can 100% of the time, 10 out of 10 times, rest upon? How can you navigate your way through the waters of confusion? How can you navigate your way through

the troubles in your life and the questions that you have within your mind unless there is a clear revelation of God that contains the authority of His truth, which is none other than the Word of God? No authority, no remedy.

You see, the problem is, the people of God, that we think that the authority, or at least we act in such a way, that the final authority rests in how we feel. What governs the way that we think, what governs the way that we behave, what governs the things that we do and the decisions that we make in our life, is how we feel. The first thing we do is turn to ourselves and ask us, "How do I feel about that?" "I feel good about that," and we go ahead and do it. Okay, so in one sense, our final authority is ourselves. When push comes to shove, what do we side with? The Word of God or with our feelings? How many times have you found yourself feeling something that you were confronted with the Word of God that spoke truth to you in that situation, and you decided to go with how you felt above the Word of God? Well, let me ask you this: how many times have you even felt challenged by the Word of God? That's a good indicator as to whether you're receiving it, hearing it, or do you not weigh anything up by it?

You see, we can't rest upon what we think or what we feel. That's a shaky foundation. That is not the apostolic authority given to us in the Word of God. Neither can we rest in tradition. How many people continue to do the things that they do because they are comfortable with it because it's their tradition? The last thing they're asking themselves is, "What says the scripture?" "Oh, I'm used to this, and I feel uncomfortable if something is different to what I'm used to, and therefore I must go with what I'm used to." Well, what if what you're used to is all it is, this tradition, and it's not truth? You see, what if the Galatians said, "Yeah, we like circumcision. I mean, a lot of us came out of Jewish backgrounds anyway. Probably like most of the men in this church are circumcised. Hey, yeah, let's keep going with this. That sounds good. That's the tradition that we're used to. We don't mind that coming in. It suits us. We're used to it." I mean, for we know, our fathers have been doing this for hundreds of years before us, not understanding what Jesus Christ has done in the establishing of a new covenant and how they should therefore change their traditions to suit the authority of the Word of God.

This is what the Pharisees did, did they not? The Pharisees were so anxious to maintain the traditions of their father that Jesus said, "You cannot put new wine in old bottles; otherwise, the wine skins will burst." He says, "But new wine must go in new bottles." What Jesus was saying is, "Here, away with your tradition. I have come to establish what the truth of my father really is, and this you must follow, even at the forsaking of your tradition."

A final word, a final authority. We can fall into these traps merely by creeds

and confessions. Although creeds and confessions, they describe to us and explain to us the truth of Scripture, we must be very careful lest we think that the final authority rests in creeds and in tradition or in even confessions. There are many confessions there that do not align themselves solely with the Scripture. There are some that align themselves more; there are some that align themselves yet less. They are good for learning and understanding and even confessing what we believe to be true, but do not rest your soul in that which is printed on a paper unless you have first examined its truth by the authority of the Scripture.

There are many of God's people today that even sit in churches where the truth is proclaimed, but if the truth be known, their heart rests in what a confession says and not in what the Scripture says. They can point you to places in the confession, but not places into the Scripture that explain why the confession says the way it says what it says. What does the Scripture say? This is our final authority.

Some people, they have put their authority in popular consensus. Whatever the vast majority of people think, therefore it might be true. Jesus said, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in there that will be destroyed. But narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it." There is no such thing as popular consensus as being a sure foundation for the establishment of truth, but so many people make popular consensus their authority.

What about those who make experiences their authority? They know what they felt. "There, I've seen things, man. I can't deny what I've seen. I've seen things." You know what Paul says in Galatians chapter 1 verse 8? "Though we, or if an angel from heaven, comes down and preaches any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." I don't care if you see an angel with your own eyes; the authority of the final revelation of God in His word trumps all your experience. But so many people rest their soul upon their experience. "I've felt something," and a lot of people will hang on to their experience all the way into perishing hell, unwilling to part with what they've seen, unwilling to part with what they have heard, in light of the clear revelation of God, and they have a wrong authority. What governs their lives and moves their steps?

And so, the oft-repeated question of the church should be this: you and I, this should be our oft-repeated question. We should sound like a broken record: "What says the scripture?" What says the scripture? So-and-so comes who says, "I feel like this, and I feel like that, and I've seen this, and I've seen that, and you know what, I've been here, and I've been there." You say to them, "What says the scripture?" If this church teaches that, what says the scripture? Popular opinion says this, what says the scripture? I

know a man of God that lives like this, what says the scripture?

You see, what Paul is trying to help the churches of Galatia realize is that his authority is so unique that when he speaks, he speaks as God to the churches. The Apostles of Christ, which you will find no more in this world, the foundation has been laid, the message has been confirmed, the revelation of God by them is complete. John, the last of them, wrote the book of Revelation, and he died. The revelation of Jesus Christ is complete. And what we need to realize and understand is that unless we get back to the authority of scripture and ask the repeated question, "What says the scripture?" we will be in trouble.

In fact, Paul himself even refers to the scripture over ten times. He alludes in this epistle to the scripture. He quotes scripture. "What says the scripture?" Uses illustrations from scripture or to make his point clear to the people of Galatia. "Listen, what I'm saying is, yes, new, true revelation, but it is aligned with that which God has given in the Old Testament. This is not new, a novel. This is the seed of the woman. This is the mystery of the revelation revealed through His Apostles and prophets. This I make known to you," says the Apostle Paul.

And so, the oft-repeated questions to be, "What says the scripture?" But if we be honest with ourselves, the oft-repeated problem is that man is not satisfied with what the Protestant reformers called sola scriptura. Man is not satisfied with the 66 books. Man is not satisfied with words that have been given to us by God in scripture. Man seeks after something else. You ever heard it been said, "We just... Bibles bit far removed from us. It's words on a page. We want someone to speak to us. We want God's voice now and here in some other way where we can trust in and look to someone." This is the way that cults have been established for many years. You know that? Mormonism has the quorum of the 12 Apostles. What are they essentially saying? That the apostolic era has not ended, in terms that there are more Apostles, and there you have them, the 12, the quorum of the 12 Apostles, God's Apostles still here today, still speaking God's final authoritative revelation to people, and therefore, guess what the people in Mormonism do? Oh yes, they read their Bible, but they read the Book of Mormon, and they got an ear out always for what their Apostle, he's going to tell them. Where did their authority rest? In sola scriptura? No, is their final authority for how they think, acts, do the things that they say, the way that they live, the way they're operating their churches, is it the final authority of the scripture? No, because there are other authorities that have been raised to the equal level of scripture.

This is also the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Pope is simply one, according to Catholicism, that is in the apostolic suc-

cession, that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, one who, when he sits in St. Peter's chair and speaks *ex cathedra*, speaks in such a way that is equal to the Apostles themselves and is speaking the authority equal to scripture. And so he speaks *ex cathedra*, and all the people hear the final word of God from the mouth of a man, and they call this doctrine papal infallibility. And this is what the Catholic Church teaches. This is why the Catholic Church has many traditions now inscribed in their practice, in their life, in their catechism, if we could say, because it is based upon not solely on the scripture but upon that which also this Apostle, or the Apostles, the Popes that have come through, that have also said. This is equal to scripture, scripture plus tradition. You won't find the assumption of Mary in scripture. You won't find transubstantiation in scripture. You won't find these things concerning praying to the Saints in scripture. You won't find many, many, many, many doctrines that are believed and held by Roman Catholics that are not found in scripture.

And what I'm simply just trying to say by this is, is this one thing: that when you have another voice apart from the Word of God as an authority or a final authority or one equal to that authority, then all of a sudden, you open the door for many other things, and then how shall you remedy a problem? Where do the people that belong to those systems look when there is a problem? You see, what does the Pope have to say on this? What is the quorum of the twelve Apostles necessarily have to say on this? This also goes on in evangelical circles, quite sadly, even though they hold to the inerrancy and sufficiency of scripture. There are people today in the new apostolic Reformation that believe that God has recalled and put apostles now in the churches in this official way, and basically, the people look to them to hear the Word of God. And immediately, what ends up happening is God's people begin to put the Word of God down, and they want to hear from another person, and instead of being pointed constantly time and time again to the scripture, they tune into their favorite radio station to hear what the man of God has to say.

What does it teach us? That they've somewhere along the line dropped the authority of scripture. They may confess, "We believe the scripture is the Word of God." They may say, "It is the inerrant Word of God and the final Word of God," but in practice, their hearts go after and depend more upon the Word of man than upon the Word of God. And do not think we're any different here in a church that believes the right things. We here in this place can be guilty of the same. We sit here week after week, and we hear perhaps what I have to say, but what determines for you whether what I say is right or wrong? Is it because I'm your pastor that you say your word is right? I would hope you would say no, it's not because you're my pastor that I believe that what you say is right. I hope you'll be as the Bereans that go back and search the scriptures to see whether the things that I say is

so. I pray that you'll be a people that do not leave your Bible dusty Sunday to Sunday, that you pick it up here on a Sunday and come in, and the rest of the week it collects dust, but you would be in the Word of God, realizing that unless I see what God has to say on every matter in my life, I have no hope.

I pray that as God's people, we would see that my problems cannot be remedied by my pastor, nor even by the authorities in my life, but finally and ultimately by the authority of God's Word. I pray that you, as a people, will come to the realization that this word is not the word of man but the Word of God, and that you would understand what it means when Paul says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, not by man nor through man, but by God the Father and Jesus Christ." And then when you read this book, you're like, "Wow, this is one who spoke as God to the people. This is the word then I need to hear."

Jesus says these words to His disciples and to the multitude that heard Him, "Whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, they're like a wise man that builds his house upon the rock." He's essentially saying, "Those people that hear and believe and therefore obey the things that I tell them, they build their house upon a solid rock foundation, and when the waves come and when the winds blow and beat upon that house, they will stand firm." Why? Why will it stand firm? Because they followed what they felt? No, because it was founded upon the rock, the words of Jesus, the sayings of Jesus.

You see, dear people of God, this is our only hope, and if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? You undermine the foundations upon which the church is built, then when problems come our way, we have nowhere to turn to, but we'll explode. We'll think, "This person says that, this person says that." The church at Corinth, perhaps, "I'm of Paul, I am of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I am of Christ." A lot of words from the Lord, but listen to what the Lord tells, and Paul says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are the commandments of God." Once again, getting them back to the final authority for all that is floating around, all that is being said, that it might be judged by that which God has revealed.

Let us not be naive, people of God. There is that in the world today which is of man and through man and not by Jesus Christ. Don't ever make light of the authority of Scripture. Do not say to yourself, "The Scriptures are too hard to understand." No, I don't even know what to believe; therefore, anymore. You know what you have done when you've said that? You've set aside subtly the authority of Scripture in your life. "So it's too hard to understand. I can't believe it anymore." Then what hope is there for you? It's not too hard to understand. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, He's

given you the Holy Spirit. He's given you even pastors and teachers and other brethren to help guide you, and you can look at the Word of God with them and see what the things of God say.

Don't say it's too hard to understand. Don't exalt your traditions above the Word of God. Don't fancy men's opinions over Scripture. It's amazing how many Christians can, day today, can quote what so-and-so believes and what so-and-so believes, but you ask them, "What do you believe? What does the Bible say?" They're more versed, like the scribes were, what such-and-such teacher said, what such-and-such teacher said, what such-and-such teacher said. But when Jesus spoke, He spoke the Word of God, and they said, "He doesn't teach like the scribes and Pharisees. He speaks with authority." And so this should be with us, the people of God.

And let us be encouraged that we have a Chief Shepherd who has said to us that He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ. He Himself, sent by God from heaven to earth, to go on an old rugged cross, to die for our sins, to shed His blood, to pay the ransom that we couldn't pay, the debt that was owing to us. The Apostle and High Priest of our confession entered in among men and died a sinner's death so that we might be brought to God and hear the Word of God, the word which comes to us at the very first by saying, "Repent and believe the gospel."

He has spoken to us in these last days through His Son. Let us hear Him, not harden our hearts. Come in repentance, come in faith, lean upon that solid rock who can save us from our sins and cleanse us forevermore. His name, through faith in His name, we have our hope, we have our assurance. He is the rock upon which the church is built. Will you rest your soul in His care this morning and confess Him as Christ and as Lord?

Let us pray.