

UNIT 21

+

WITHOUT FAITH

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE

TO PLEASE GOD

“You Are the Son of God!”

by Daniel Ritchie

Mistaking a person for someone else is easier to do than many might assume. It actually happens to me quite a bit. It happens most of the time when I am visiting a church, but I have also had it happen to me when I am at the airport or at a restaurant. People will walk right up to me and ask, “Are you Nick Vujicic?”

Let me backtrack for just a second because there are a few things that Nick and I have in common. We both preach and speak for a living. We both have beards. Lastly, we both are missing limbs. I was born without arms and Nick was born without arms and legs.

Given the fact that there are not many bearded preachers who are missing limbs, it would be easy to assume that I am Nick. I always feel bad for people when I let them down by telling them that I am not Nick and I am not mad at them at all. They made an assumption on my identity because they had never met me and they had no idea who I really am.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

We can fall into the same trap of mistaken identity when we allow our faith assumptions to crowd our perspective of who Jesus is. We see people’s mistaken assumptions of Jesus throughout the Gospels. The people of Nazareth could not get past the wisdom and power evident in Jesus’s life because to them, He was a simple boy who was the son of a carpenter (Mark 6:2-4). The Jewish leaders feared that Jesus would topple their position of authority with the power that He both lived with and taught with (John 11:48). The Romans saw Jesus as a threat to their governing power and mockingly labeled Jesus as “King of the Jews” on a sign at the top of His cross at Golgotha (John 19:19).

These assumptions and priorities led people to overlook the greatest news the world has ever known—the saving work of Jesus through His death and resurrection

When we see the Father rightly, we will worship Him rightly.

because of His grace and mercy. It is so important for all of us to see who Jesus is and what He has done for His church. In looking deep into the truth of Scripture, any false assumption about the identity of Jesus is shoved to the side.

JESUS, OUR GOD AND MESSIAH

By peering into the Bible, we see Jesus for who He truly is—the powerful Son of God, the promised Messiah sent for our salvation. When we begin to take stock of who the triune God is and all that He has done, we must respond. Paul painted a clear and simple picture of the grandeur of God in Romans 11:36, “For from him and through him and to him are all things.” This verse reveals the picture that God makes all things, sustains all things, and that His glory is the ultimate aim of all things.

In light of this picture of who God is, we also see that Paul gave the church in Rome the only viable response to such power and grace—because of God’s mercies, we should present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to the Father—this is true worship (Rom. 12:1). When we begin to perceive the power,

grace, and mercy of God, the only right response is to offer all we have as a response. When we see the Father rightly, we will worship Him rightly.

In coming to know who Jesus is, we begin to hear clearly His guiding voice in our lives through the Spirit and His Scriptures. Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd and the church as His sheep in John 10. In John 10:4, Jesus said that His sheep will follow Him because they know His voice. When the sheep spend time with their Shepherd, a trusting relationship is developed. In this relationship, the sheep will respond in faith to go where the Shepherd goes and to yield to the call of the Shepherd.

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NEW LIFE IN JESUS

As we see Jesus for all that He is and place our faith in Him as our Savior, Lord, and King, everything about our lives will be changed from top to bottom. Paul laid out how faith in Jesus changed his entire life as he wrote to the church at Philippi in Philippians 3. He declared that his righteousness did not come from any good work or moral choice he made—His righteousness came through faith in Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:9). Paul's identity and worth were not rooted in any accomplishment or possession. He was able to withstand all sorts of loss and trials because of what placing his faith in Christ won him (Phil. 3:8). He found his identity and worth in the person and work of Christ alone (Phil. 3:9). Paul's life was entirely changed for the better the moment that he placed his faith in Jesus on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9), even as earthly troubles followed him from that moment forward. It was all worth it because of the gain that came from trusting in Jesus as his Savior and Lord.

Jesus was not merely a bold teacher to glean truth from. He was not simply a moral man worthy of emulating. Jesus is the Son of God, the living prophecy, and the fulfillment of the serpent crusher promised in Genesis 3:15. He is the very Word of God who came to this earth so that all who receive Him might become children of God (John 1:12).

When we see Jesus as He truly is—our Savior, our Lord, our everything—we see the only One we can fully rest our lives on.



Jesus is the Son of God,
the living prophecy, and the fulfillment
of the promised serpent crusher.

REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who came to bring good news to all people.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Luke 4

+ **SETTING:**

With a view toward presenting proof of messiahship, Luke presented an orderly account of the life of Jesus through his Gospel. Filled with connections to the Old Testament, the Gospel of Luke recounts the power of Jesus, the Christ, and affirms the prophecies fulfilled in the events that unfolded throughout His life. Jesus began His public ministry in the insignificant village of Nazareth, His hometown. Here an incredible moment occurred. Jesus attended a local synagogue service, as He had many times before. But in this particular service, Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, would claim to be the long-awaited Savior and turn this small town on its head.

DAY 1

READ:

Luke 3:21–4:21

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 4:14-16

NOTES

The authors of Scripture did not throw together a random order of words, sentences, and paragraphs; their works were carefully crafted. The structure and organization of each book points to its purpose. Many books cover a span of years, oftentimes decades, and are not comprehensive. The human author, led by the Holy Spirit, had to choose what to leave out and what to keep and then how to present it. Sometimes they used a basic statement of facts. Other times they communicated through storytelling, dialogue, or poetry.

Luke's Gospel is no exception. After recording the miraculous birth of Jesus, His early life, baptism, genealogy (traced back to David, Abraham, and Adam), and Satan's failed attempt to tempt Jesus, Luke turned to the personal life and ministry of Jesus, starting in His thirties. Each of the literary units up to this point provides proof of Jesus as the promised One and of His authority as the Christ, the Messiah.

As Luke continued his deliberate progression, he took special care to emphasize the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit throughout. Once he began with the details of Jesus's public ministry, Luke wrote that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). Luke then zoomed in to give a snapshot of the preaching ministry of Jesus and recorded Jesus's proclamation to the people that because of His presence, "Scripture has been fulfilled" (Luke 4:21).

The order of events here and these first recorded words are no accident. Luke 4:14-30 is a preview, the thesis of what is to come throughout the rest of the book. Jesus will proclaim the good news. Many will forsake this message and seek to stop Jesus. Yet God's purpose, which includes the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, will be accomplished. No scheme of man can stop His plan.

Knowing Scripture is deliberate and focused on Christ's purposes for the salvation for humankind, who can you share that good news with this week?

DAY 2

READ:

Luke 4:16-21

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 4:18-19

NOTES

The word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. Yet the reality the word represents—one God in three Persons—is all throughout Scripture. Both the Father and the Spirit can be seen clearly throughout the Old Testament, as can the Son through the promise of the Messiah. The New Testament presents Jesus as the fulfillment of those messianic prophecies and continues to show the work of the Holy Spirit alongside the purpose and plan of the Father.

Luke pointed to the work of the Trinity earlier in Luke 3:21-22 as he described Jesus’s baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit and the voice and words of the Father.

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, there is a theme of trinitarian collaboration. Most clearly, Luke presented the life and ministry of Christ Jesus. But when we pay attention, we can also see the empowering presence of God the Holy Spirit, supporting and guiding God the Son every step of the way. Each moment of messianic ministry, every special stirring of the Spirit, led up to the finale of God’s plan.

With this prophesy in Luke 4 brought to light, seen through the lens of the Trinity, we can better understand the significance of this moment. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have brought healing, freedom, and abundance to any who will place their faith in Jesus as their only hope.

How does the doctrine of the Trinity help you understand God better?

DAY 3

READ:

1 Kings 17:8-16;

2 Kings 5:1-14

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 4:25-27

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #36:

SIN AS MISSING THE MARK

One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's standards set for humanity. This missing of the mark is not a simple mistake but a falling short of God's glory through conscious choosing of sin. We may refer to sin as a failure on the part of humans to live according to God's standards, but we must recognize this failure is intentional. We miss the mark when we deliberately choose to cast aside God's intention for us.

The narratives recorded in the Old Testament are important for life and faith. And when they are recalled or repeated in the New Testament, they can have a double sense of importance. But without a good handle on the Old Testament, we miss much of the in-depth meaning within the New Testament. Gratefully, we have tools like cross-references that can help us out. Reviewing Old Testament stories alluded to in the New Testament can help us better understand the nuance and significance of the words recorded in the New Testament. As demonstrated by the crowd's response to Jesus's references, the original audience needed no explanation. They caught what Jesus was throwing.

So, what exactly was Jesus throwing? It is significant that He recalled two stories from the Scriptures. Whenever there seems to be comparison, contrast, or any sort of repetitive wording, using simple lists or charts can help us begin to better understand a passage. Consider crafting a table to make sense of Jesus's teaching in Luke 4.

There is a parallelism between the two stories Jesus referenced. Both told of great need in Israel. Both showed how God did not act on behalf of the Israelites. Both showcased a display of God's favor toward a Gentile. Jesus highlighted the faith-filled actions of the Gentiles and God's grace given to them.

As you read of how God reached out to various types of groups, to whom can you reach out with the gospel in word or deed that is "outside" your normal group of influence?

DAY 4

READ:

Ephesians 4:25–5:2

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 4:28-29

NOTES

Anger can be a right and good thing. When someone wrongs us or one of our loved ones, it is a normal reaction to become angry. The Bible speaks of God's holy and righteous anger toward sin and sinners. Jesus Himself displayed anger toward the hardhearted (Mark 3:5) and even the disciples when they hindered children from approaching Him (Mark 10:14). So if Jesus could be angry and still be perfectly righteous, then being angry is not inherently sinful. It is our motivation behind our anger and what we do with our anger that can lead us to sin.

Several places in the New Testament address anger, and most of those references are commands to lay aside or cast off our anger (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8). James said that the anger of man doesn't produce righteousness (James 1:20). The command in Ephesians 4:25 is not "Don't be angry," it is, "Do not sin," specifically, to not let the sun go down on our anger. Holding on to anger—even anger at the right things—will lead us into sin.

Yet not all anger is righteous. There are certainly times when our anger is sinful. In fact, anger can often be an indicator of idols in our lives. We see this clearly in the synagogue members' response to Jesus. Their god was their tradition, their religion, their special status. These idols usurped the authority of God's rule, and when something threatened their idols, anger spilled out of them—lots of it. Sinful anger rarely stays put. It takes over and drives us to even deeper sin.

So when we encounter anger, we must be quick to release it. If it isn't already sin to begin with, it will most certainly lead us to transgression again and again.

When you get angry, what are some ways you can deal with it in yourself and before God?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything. May God give us cool heads and warm hearts."¹

—Billy Graham (1918-2018)

DAY 5

READ:

Acts 14:8-20

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 4:29-30

NOTES

The transition between Luke 4:29 and 4:30 is jarring. It feels a bit like riding forward, full throttle, only to slam on the brakes. The cyclone of the enraged crowd was about to take matters into their own hands. Yet Jesus simply passed through the crowd like the imminent threat on His life didn't exist. This must have been a miracle.

In Acts 14, we see another mob in another city, resulting in yet another miracle. Paul, after being beaten—to the point that his Jewish assailants thought him to be dead—simply got up, entered the city, and got on with his life's work of preaching about Jesus. This too must have been a miracle.

In a world full of spiritual enemies (and a social network that rarely misses a beat), it is easy to give in to fear. What if I speak up too much and anger the crowds? What if the vitriol spewed on social media gets sent my way? What if the God-haters decide to take out their anger on me or my loved ones? What if God sends me into a dangerous situation and asks me to speak truth?

In this early stage of His ministry, the crowd did not overtake Jesus, but this would not be the last time He encountered an angry gang ready to kill. Ultimately, it would be the same sort of people who put Jesus on the cross. Paul too had and would encounter more murderous mobs. But the thing we often forget is that God is always in control.

God's power is not subject to the savage.

God's sovereignty cannot be sabotaged by the tactics of the throng.

God's grace for His people cannot be dislodged from our days, even when all around us seems to give way.

What are some Scriptures you can cling to when you are tempted to forget God's power and plan?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The tragedy of the world is sin. The one obtruding fact in the world today is the fact of sin. The one galling yoke on human necks and hearts in the world today is the yoke of sin. Jesus came to remove that yoke. Jesus came to break those shackles. Jesus came to set men free, and to put their feet on the solid Rock, Himself, the Divine Saviour. Whoever comes to Him receives deliverance, forgiveness, redemption, salvation."²

—George W. Truett (1867-1944)

POINT 1: Jesus is the Messiah bringing good news to Israel (Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus was _____ by God with the Holy Spirit to bring restoration, freedom, and the Lord's favor to those who receive Him by _____ .



What characteristics of our triune God are reflected in this passage?

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's _____ to His people—He is the _____ , the Anointed One.



If Jesus fulfills God's ultimate promise and purpose, how should we view our salvation through Christ?

POINT 2: Jesus is the Prophet bringing grace to the world (Luke 4:22-27).

The Jews marveled at Jesus at first but wanted to see a _____ because of their _____ , like those before them when God gave them His prophets.



What are some reasons why people might refuse to listen to God's mouthpieces?

Jesus warned the Jews with the stories of the widow and Naaman who, though _____ , received the offer of God's _____ because their saving faith led to faith-filled actions.



How would you describe the relationship between saving faith and works?

POINT 3: Jesus is the Son experiencing rejection by His own (Luke 4:28-30).

KEY DOCTRINE #36: SIN AS MISSING THE MARK

One aspect of sin is missing the mark of God's _____ set for humanity. This missing of the mark is not a simple mistake but a falling short of God's glory through conscious _____ of sin. We may refer to sin as a failure on the part of humans to live according to God's standards, but we must recognize this failure is _____ . We miss the mark when we deliberately choose to cast aside God's intention for us.



Why is admitting our sin so hard to do?

Though the crowd had the end of Jesus in mind, _____ had other plans. It was not yet time for Jesus to die, so no matter the plans of human beings, the will of God _____ .

MY RESPONSE

Because we are no longer estranged from God but are now accepted by Him through Christ, we seek to live in peace with all, forgiving greatly as we have been forgiven.

- **HEAD:** How do the truths of God's sovereignty and grace change how you see and relate to God?
- **HEART:** How does the reality that, if not for God's grace, you would be a part of this murderous mob stir your heart toward worship?
- **HANDS:** What steps will you take today to make the Great Commission a more integral part of your life, knowing God has saved you from sin?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We may note in passing that [Jesus] was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects—Hatred—Terror—Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval."³

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)