

The Preciousness of Christ

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[0 : 00] Who said it? My precious.! Who? Gollum.

Smeagol, Tolkien's fictional character in The Hobbit and his trilogy of the Lord of the Rings.

! And my precious was referring to what?! To the Rings. And that ring had an influence upon Gollum, didn't it?

And it twisted him and controlled him, body and mind. And when Bilbo Baggins took the ring, Gollum spent the rest of his life pursuing it.

After all, it was his precious, you see. And whether we realize it or not, we're pursuing that which we count as precious.

[1 : 00] And it, whatever it may be, is having a shaping, a molding influence upon you, your personality, and your life.

As Jesus said in Matthew 6, 21, Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. With your heart given over to it, with your life wrapped up in it, in the pursuit of it, as it further controls and shapes your life.

Well, that's the case. And that being the case, nothing can be more important than what you treasure, what you value and consider as your precious.

Is it God and his kingdom or is it other things? And getting and keeping the heart to count as precious the things that God says are precious is no small thing.

And it's more difficult because of the work of the world and the flesh and the devil. The devil and all his fallen angels. They're liars. They're deceivers.

[2 : 12] The devil does not want us valuing Christ and his kingdom as precious. And so he tempts you to devalue the most precious things in life. And he tempts you to value lesser and even worthless things as precious to you.

And so he's gone into this world and he's changed all the price tags. And precious things are highly discounted as of little worth. And mere trifles are inflated as if they held great value.

That's the devil with his lies about what is precious. And the world is under the control of the evil one. And they have bought right in to the devil's valuation and value system.

Just observe what people live for. The great indicator of what they count as precious is often what they spend their time and money upon.

What they invest in. The passing things of time. Of immediate gratification that have no value beyond this life. And so the world is rich in things and poor in soul.

[3 : 26] Not rich toward God as Jesus said. With no enduring treasures laid up for them that will never perish or spoil or fade. Rather the world will wake up in hell and realize they live for all the wrong things.

So to see the world running after all these things as Jesus said. Makes it easier for us just to keep in step with them. And to highly value the same things.

And to live for the trifles that are eternally out of date. But you add to the devil and the world your flesh. That indwelling principle of sin.

That part of me that agrees with the devil and the world's valuations of things. And you know then don't you.

Either by the word or by experience. That until you get to heaven. There will always be this part of you Christian. Called the flesh. Called indwelling sin. That agrees with the value system of this world.

[4 : 33] And whenever you would seek something of true value. It will always be there with dozens of alternatives. That promise something immediate.

And draws you away from God. And things truly precious. So due to the world, the flesh, and the devil. It's one of the most difficult things in the Christian life. To rightly value things of true worth.

As John Piper says in his book. Don't waste your life. It's all too easy to waste our lives. On worthless things. So we desperately need God to take us by the hand.

And walk us through this world. And to point out things that are of true value. That's precious John. This is precious John. That's not.

We need God himself to teach us. We only live once. And so we need to get it right in this life. Well that's what God does for us in the Bible.

[5 : 34] He takes us by the hand. And he says. Now not all that glitters is gold John. There's fool's gold out here. Don't seek that. That's not precious. Here's what's truly precious.

Seek it. Give your life to this. This is the one who sees to the bottom of things. He's got infinite wisdom. He can see everything.

That there is. Right to the core of it. And he says. This is precious. This is not. Here are the things. And so the Bible is like a treasure map.

And it leads us to the true enduring treasures. To the things that are really precious. That will make you truly rich in time and eternity. Now Octavius Winslow.

Winslow has done us a service. In bringing together some of the things that God says is precious in his word. And putting it in a book. And today we begin a new Sunday school series.

[6 : 34] Studying the book. The Precious Things of God. The Precious Things of God. By Octavius Winslow. Winslow was born in London in 1808.

When he was seven. His father. A captain in the army died. And his godly mother took her ten children to New York to raise them there. Evidently the morals of New York were different then than they are today.

If you've been keeping up with the debate. Well God blessed her efforts and her prayers. And all ten of her children were born again. Three of her sons became ministers.

And Octavius was one of them. At age 25 he returned to England. And he ministered with God's rich blessings. In pastorates and Leamington Spa, Bath and Brighton.

He was in high demand because of his practical preaching to the heart. And his books bore that same stamp upon them. He was after experiential knowing of God.

[7 : 36] The Bible truths must not only be known in the mind. But in the heart. And in the experience. The life. Of the believer.

He was broad in his fellowship. But he clung to the old Puritan doctrines. In fact when Charles Spurgeon built the Metropolitan Temple. Or tabernacle in London in 1861.

Octavius Winslow was one asked to speak at its dedication service. He died at age 70. But his books live on and feed the souls of many. So we'll be using his book.

The Precious Things of God. To lead us into true riches. And as usual I'll take the freedom to delete and add to the material in the book as desired.

So let's turn to 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 7 as we begin. Because that's where Winslow begins.

[8 : 35] Chapter 1 is entitled The Preciousness of Christ. So that's what we're giving ourselves to this morning. The Preciousness of Christ.

And the text is verse 7. But we're going to back up to verse 4.

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him. The living stone. Rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him.

You also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house. To be a holy priesthood. Offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For in scripture it says. See I lay a stone in Zion. And a chosen and precious cornerstone. And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

[9 : 34] Now to you who believe this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

And a stone that causes men to stumble. And a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message. Which is also what they were destined for. So it's talking about a stone in this passage.

And that stone is the Lord Jesus. And we come as little stones to this living stone. Now notice there's three valuations of Christ in our text.

Three people put a price tag on this Christ in our text. They look him over. And they declare his value. Who are the three?

Anyone? Give me one of them. God? God? A believer? The builders were the unbelievers.

[10 : 32] Okay? The builders of the Jewish religion and the kingdom of God. The Jewish leaders. They are the third. So you have God, believers, and unbelievers.

So what is God's valuation of his son in this text? What does he think of his son? Precious to him. Several times, isn't it?

Verse 4. Chosen by God and precious to him. And he quotes, Peter quotes God's word, God's own word in Isaiah 28, 16.

A chosen and precious cornerstone. So God looks him over. And he says, my precious. My precious. Of Jesus.

Now, that's not the only valuation. What's the valuation that believers place on Christ in this text? Precious also.

[11 : 32] Verse 7. Now, to you who believe he is precious. Isn't it interesting that the believer has the same valuation of Christ as God does?

Why is that? Anyone? Anyone? To even grow a righteousness as we look at Christ as God does the same.

Okay. So we see him as God sees him. God, in fact, opens our eyes to see him as he sees him.

He sees him as precious. And what does he do in the new birth? He opens our blinded eyes so that we see him as he really is.

And we see he's precious. So we learn from God what is precious. We now have, we become partakers of the divine nature, a new nature that is after the pattern of God.

[12 : 32] And it sees the true value of things as God sees things. And it desires the things that God desires. It's that new heart. And so we have the same evaluation of Christ as God does.

He's precious to God. He's precious to the true believer. Now, lest we take this for granted, we're told in the third place the valuation of unbelievers.

What's their valuation of Christ? Rejected. It's a word that was used of metals when it was put on the fire in the furnace to be tested.

And if it proved to be false, fool's gold, it was rejected. So it speaks of something that has been put to the test and proven to be worthless.

And that's what the builders, that's what the unbelieving builders did to Jesus. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected, you see.

[13 : 40] That's the quote. They rejected him. They looked him over. And they said, he doesn't, he's not what we wanted. And they rejected him as worthless. And what did he become to them?

This precious cornerstone. Instead of seeing him for his worth and building their life and hope for heavens upon this precious cornerstone, they looked him over and they threw him on the clinker pile and said, he's worthless.

In fact, he became a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. So they're walking down the path and there's this stone in the way. It's an obstacle to what they want. And they want it gone.

Get rid of it. They rejected it. Isn't it something? The same Christ, precious to God, precious to the believer, worthless to the unbeliever.

Well, remember, unbelievers are coming to their appraisal of Christ with sin-blinded eyes and with twisted sinful desires that value everything upside down.

[14 : 49] Christ is worthless and so rejected. So Winslow comes away from this passage and concludes that an unmistakable evidence of divine life in the soul is that Christ is precious to your heart.

That's the takeaway. You regard him as most valuable and worthy. And so one of the most revealing questions about you is what think you of Christ?

Christ, is he precious to your soul? Now, with that introduction, Winslow goes on. He's precious to believers then because of who he is and what he does.

And that includes his person, who he is, and his work, what he does. You know, some things have value because of what they are. Other things have value because of what they do.

So there's a brick of gold bullion. It can't do much as it is. Maybe be a paperweight or a doorstop. Though I don't think you'd want to leave it lying around the house.

[16 : 04] But its value is derived not from what it does, but from what it is. Pure gold. It's precious because of what it is. Its rarity makes it a precious metal.

That's what it is. But consider that wrench that comes with the jack in your car. Obviously, this is my addition and not Winslow's original material.

Not much worth in it itself. It's a cheap chunk of metal. But driving in sub-zero weather on a deserted country road far from home one night, your car has a flat tire.

And suddenly the cheap chunk of metal becomes precious to you because of what it does. Not because of its value. It's not in what it is as a chunk of metal.

But because of what it does, it will loosen the nuts on your flat tire and tighten them back up on your spare tire and get you safely home to your family that night.

[17 : 09] And in the same way, Christ is valuable both for who he is, his person, and for what he does, his work. And so Winslow wants us to think just for a while the value, the preciousness of Christ because of who he is.

Well, who is he? Well, he's God. That's where he starts. The word, the eternal word, was made flesh and dwelled among us. And that consideration alone takes him right off the chart in preciousness, doesn't it?

I mean, what is God worth? How do you put a price tag on him? And what is it worth having him?

Him for you, with you, in you. And so you can take all the divine attributes and they are true of this Jesus. So he's infinite without limitations.

He's eternal without beginning. Whoever was and is and is to come. He's unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever. He's all-knowing, almighty, everywhere present.

[18 : 17] Every attribute of God. He possesses. And that in itself makes him precious to us.

And Winslow wants us to see that it is because who he is as God that what he does is so precious. In other words, his person is what makes his work so precious, as we're going to get to his work.

But he gives us an example of how his work is made so valuable to us because of who he is. It's because the one dying on the cross is God that his atoning work has such value to cover all the sins of whoever believes on him.

If he's just a man, then his death may atone for one other man, but no more. Oh, but it's his deity that gives his work of atonement such merit and value that it will cover all the sins of all his people of all time.

It's because of who he is that what he does is so precious to us. And the same could be seen for other works that he does for us.

[19 : 29] Without his deity, his works are greatly diminished, if not altogether emptied of their value. But he's not only God. And we should just, we could pause and obviously worship our Savior forever because he's God.

But we must go on. He's also man. Who is he? He's God. He's man. As much man as we are man. He's part of this human race. Bone of our bones. Flesh of our flesh.

A human body. A human mind. A human emotions. A human will. In sinless perfection. Made like his brothers in every way.

So he's man that he might live for other men. After all, it was men who were obligated to keep God's law. And so, as man, he's born of woman.

Born under the law. To redeem us. How? By obeying that law perfectly. And as man, he becomes man that he might die for other men. Because it's man who has sinned.

[20 : 31] So man must die. And so he becomes man for us. That he might die for us. You see how his person influences his work.

It's because he, who he is as man. That he, his death for us has such value. Because he dies as our human substitute. Oh, but it must be a sinless sacrifice dying for men.

Just like one sin or one leak will sink a ship. So one sin would sink our hope. And would make Jesus no savior for sinners.

If he just had one sin in his life, he would have to die for his own sins. Not have any merit to die for someone else's sins. Oh, but he is without sin. And he's a great high priest who doesn't have to offer first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.

Such a high priest meets our need. One who is holy, blameless, and pure. Set apart from sinners. And so he's able to make that one sacrifice for sin. That actually takes away sin.

[21 : 34] You see how his perfect humanity makes his work precious to us. So he's precious to us because of who he is as God.

He's precious to us because of who he is as man. God cannot be tempted by evil. But because Jesus became a man and was tempted in every point like we are, he's now able to sympathize with us in our temptations.

And to do so by experience. He's been here. He's gone through it. He knows what our need is and he has just the help that we need in our time of temptation.

Because he himself suffered when he was a man being tempted. He's able to help those who are being tempted. So he's made precious to us because of who he is. And Winslow wants us to appreciate that.

Just for who he is. Quite apart from what he does. In fact, he says, let's just assume for once that he didn't do anything else. If he had not taken a single step in working out salvation for men.

[22 : 40] Had he repaired no breach. Had he wept no tear. Endured no agony. Shed no blood in the redemption of his church. Had he not conferred a solitary blessing upon our race.

He would still be most precious. Just because of who he is. As God and man. Oh, but he has done all this great work of salvation for us.

And that makes him more precious still. And so he looks not only at his person. But now we're told to look at his work. What has he done for us? And nothing makes him more precious than his work for our salvation upon the cross.

And were it not for this work on the cross, we would be damned forever. So here he is. This precious Jesus. God and man.

And he comes to earth. But if he doesn't go to the cross and die for us, he does us no good. You say, oh, but he comes as the teacher. As the great example.

[23 : 43] We need more than a teacher and an example. Because we don't follow his example and we don't obey his teaching. That's our problem. That's why we need more. Oh, but when we see him there on the cross suffering God's wrath in our place.

Paying for our debt. Opening our prison. Setting us free from death's penalty by taking it to himself. Does not his work of atonement make him even more precious to you.

Than just for what he is as the God man. Yes, to you who believe he is precious. He's precious to you because of his work. So we've seen how what is precious to us really defines us.

Now we've seen that he is precious because of who he is and what he does. Now we move into something of application. Would you live with a sense of the preciousness of Christ?

Would you grow in your sense of his preciousness? Then think much of his person and his work. Let me try to make it a helpful comparison.

[24 : 54] Adam before the fall. Before God created Eve. As good as it gets without a woman. God said it was good. But then God said it's not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a helper suitable for him. I want to focus in on that helper suitable for him. A suitable helper. A help that matches his need.

His female counterpart to complete and complement him. Tailor made by God to enrich him. So he put Adam to sleep.

He took a rib and formed Eve. Woke Adam up and brought her, the woman, to the man. How precious was Eve to Adam then. From the get-go.

Well, you read it in chapter 2. And he's breathless. There's something here that made her precious upon the very sight of her. But how did he grow in a sense of her preciousness?

[26 : 00] How did he grow in what a treasure God had given him? Well, he grew in that by living with her. Day after day. He came to know her better and better.

Both in her person, who she is. And in her work, what she does. And day by day, Eve became more precious to Adam as he came to see what a suitable helper she was to him.

And each time she brought a woman's touch to his house. Each time she brought a woman's thought to the discussion. Each time she brought a woman's emotion to the relationship.

In the daily circumstances of life, he came to see how perfectly she matched his needs. And as he did, he grew in appreciation of her preciousness to him.

This creature is so suited to me. She's precious to me. In much the same way, the Lord Jesus will become increasingly precious to you as you get to know him better.

[27 : 07] Winslow says we must know the Lord Jesus to admire him. And the better we know him, the more precious he will be to us. He says, see the suitability of Christ.

And that's what I think he's telling us. Like Adam saw the suitability of Eve to him. He's urging us to see the suitability, the usefulness, the matchingness of Christ.

Winslow says, I see him to be exactly the Christ I need. His fullness meets my emptiness. His blood cleanses my guilt. His grace subdues my sin.

His patience bears with my weakness. His sympathy soothes my sorrow. He's just the Savior. Just the Christ I need. And no words can describe his preciousness to my soul.

So if you'd grow in your sense of his preciousness, take each one of his attributes and adore him for them. Just as he is in his person.

[28 : 07] But then go a step further and think how that attribute shows just how perfectly he is matched to your need. And how he has enriched your life because of that attribute.

So he's omniscient. He knows everything. Okay. How does that make him precious to me? Oh, and nobody else understands me.

He does. You know, Lord, that I love you. Peter can say, you know. Or his omnipotence, that he's almighty.

How does an almighty Jesus become precious to me? Well, I'm weak and worn out and I don't see how I can make it through another day and this trial and this problem in my life.

What is it worth to know that he is almighty? And he's almighty for me. And he gives power to the weak. Spurgeon says, there's no telling how much of his power he can put in a man.

[29 : 19] Is that not precious that he's almighty? That the one who has you in his grip is almighty and will not let anyone snatch you from his hand? You see how he's precious to you because he's almighty.

And as you see him give you strength to make it through another day and through another trial, he becomes more precious to you. Winslow, it is the appropriation of Christ in the personal experience of every believer that endures him to the heart.

A Christ unappropriated is a Christ whose worth is undervalued and whose preciousness is unfelt. It is as you live with him, as you have personal dealings with him, that you come to appreciate more and more his preciousness to you.

And you come to see what more could you want in a savior than is found in your Jesus. So we need to study his attributes not in an ivory tower sense of just academic study, but we need to study his attributes in real life.

So we may start on the other end of the problem. Rather than just starting with the attribute of Jesus, of his omnipotence or his omniscience, let's start on the other end, my need.

[30 : 40] So I'm faced with some problem that leaves me confused and not knowing what to do. Oh, my Jesus is all in all to me. What is he? What is he? For me, a confused follower.

Oh, he's wise. He's infinitely wise. And he gives wisdom to those who will trust in him and not lean on their own understanding, but acknowledge him and ask him for wisdom.

He'll give it liberally. And oh, he becomes precious to me when I'm confused and don't know what to do, what decision to make. Lord Jesus, give me wisdom.

And now he's all the more precious because of my confusion. It's brought me to him. And so we can go through our lives, you see, and the problems, the needs that we have, and they will point out the preciousness of Christ.

So I'm troubled with guilt because of some sin, whether this week or ten years ago, that is troubling my conscience. And I look to my Jesus and I find he is full of mercy.

[31 : 46] He delights in mercy. He abounds in mercy. And he's faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness if we but confess our sins.

And I've written you these things that you sin not, but if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sin. You see, we look to him in our trouble and we find his attribute, what he is, and the work he does for us to be the thing that endears him to us.

As Winslow said, it is by daily bringing him our sins that we come to admire his mercy and hold him as precious. So with all of his, all of our other problems, there is not a situation in life you can find yourself in, but what it provides an opportunity to learn how perfectly Jesus Christ meets your need.

And that's how he becomes more precious to you. Winslow again, it's by traveling to him. It's by living upon him. It's by living out of him. Dealing as personally with him as he deals personally with you, that he will become growingly precious to you.

So study the attributes of God. They are true of your Savior. But don't study them unconnected to real life. Make the connection. In all your falls and your wonderings, come to adore the precious shepherd who seeks the lost sheep and restores our soul.

[33 : 20] And so on and so forth. Each day's history, this is Winslow again, each day's history, each day's trial, each day's sin, each day's need should endear the Savior to your heart.

Because in each and all those circumstances, you should have a direct, you should have direct and close dealings, daily and personal transactions with Christ. And you cannot cultivate such intimacy with Christ without finding him increasingly precious.

So what he does, what he is. So you can take his attributes and just meditate how precious he is for each one of his attributes.

In fact, I'd give you that as an assignment. Some of you know the ABCs of God's attributes? If you don't ask your kids, they know them. And take that ABCs, an attribute for every letter in the alphabet, and just take one a day.

A is for almighty. And think how Jesus being almighty for you is something that makes him precious to you. And then when you're in any circumstance of life, trace it back to his attributes and who he is for you.

[34 : 42] So we can do that with his attributes. We can do it with his names. One of our Sunday school class came up with over a hundred names of God in the scriptures.

They're all true of Jesus too, you see. He's God. And so, not that there aren't names given to the Father and the Son that are distinctive, but take the names that are given to Jesus and see how those names make him more precious to you.

So his name is Jesus. Why? Because he's the one who will save his people from their sins. Oh, I'm a sinner. Jesus is precious to me because he saves me from sins.

John Bunyan said something that I've just come to appreciate. He says, the Bible was written for sinners. So if you would appreciate Jesus Christ, read the Bible as a sinner.

And I believe that's what Winslow is telling us as well. Woman was not more suitable to the man than the Savior is suitable to the sinner.

[35 : 52] And that's what, one thing that makes him precious to us. So we can take his attributes. We can take his names. We can take his offices.

Jesus. Prophet, priest, and king. And think about his offices. Not in some distinct way apart from you, but get yourself in the picture here.

And I like the children's catechism question. So Christ is a prophet. Why do you need a prophet? Because I am ignorant. Okay? Here I am.

I'm ignorant. I'm foolish. I'm easily deceived. I am childlike. I am simple. And Jesus is my prophet.

And he knows the will and word of God and he teaches it to me. Do you see how my prophet perfectly meets my need as an ignorant sinner? And he becomes precious.

[36 : 48] He's a priest. Why would you ever need a priest? Because I am guilty. Oh, you mean Jesus died for my sins and pleads with God for me?

He perfectly meets my needs as a sinner. He's a king. And why do you need a king? Because I am weak and helpless. And how is he a king?

Well, he rules over me and he defends me from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Oh, this is the one for me. And we begin to prize him, you see, for his offices, for his names, for his attributes.

You were created to need the Lord. You were hardwired to depend upon him even before the fall. How much more after the fall do you need him? after being born sinful and depraved.

And the more you see how perfectly suited this Savior is to your need, the more precious he will become. To you who believe, he is precious.

[38 : 03] So that's where we begin the study today. Winslow takes us right down into the mother load of the mind in chapter one. There's going to be other veins of truth that will be precious, but he starts at the mother load in whom are hidden all the treasures, even our Savior Jesus.

Let's pray. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that these things spoken of you are true of you. Would you open our eyes more and more to the precious Savior that you are to us?

Show us your person and show us your work and amaze us. Thank you that there's enough in you to amaze us for the billions and billions of years of eternity.

Forgive us that we look more closely and value you no more dearly. Come and make yourself increasingly precious to us. Use our fellowship today and our worship today to stir up what a precious Savior we have.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.