

Main Idea: Why should I follow Jesus? His credentials speak for themselves. In Mark 1:21-34, the Lord Jesus demonstrated two credentials which compel us to place our faith in Him and devote our lives to Him.

- I. Behold the powerful words of Jesus (21-22).
  - A. His teaching is central to His ministry (21).
  - B. His teaching is authoritative (22).
    1. He didn’t give human tradition, but divine truth.
    2. He didn’t speak to entertain, but to transform.
- II. Behold the powerful works of Jesus (23-34).
  - A. He has authority over demons (23-28).
    1. He turned a disruption into a display of His supremacy (23-26).
    2. He used miracles to call attention to His teaching (27-28).
  - B. He has authority over diseases (29-34).
    1. He healed Simon’s mother-in-law (29-31).
    2. He healed many others (32-34).

Make It Personal: Now that you’ve seen His credentials...

1. You can trust Him.
2. You must trust Him.

Why should I follow Jesus? That’s the question of the morning. Everyone should follow Him. But why? Here’s why. His credentials speak for themselves. There’s no one like Him. In Mark’s gospel, we see The Servant in Action. And in Mark 1:21-34, we see Him demonstrating two credentials which compel us to place our faith in Him and devote our lives to Him.

*Scripture Reading: Mark 1:21-34*

Imagine you’re standing in the entrance of a fancy restaurant, looking at the brass fixtures and the walnut woodwork, waiting for the moment of opportunity. Then a man in a black tux glides your way, makes eye contact, and says, “Come. Follow me.” And you do what he says, following him to your table and the meal to follow.

Now suppose while at the same restaurant some fellow walks in off the street dressed in a jogging suit and tennis shoes, taps you on the shoulder, and says the identical words, “Come. Follow me.” Would you follow him into the dining room? Probably not. Why not? My hunch is you scanned the fellow and made an assessment. “This guy doesn’t have the authority to do what he is trying to do. He probably doesn’t even work here, let alone know the owner of this dining establishment.”

The credentials matter. Before you start following someone, you better check his credentials.

One day a man walking beside a lake approached two brothers who were in their boat. They were professional fishermen, but this man said to them, “Come. Follow me.” And they did. Simon and Andrew left their nets, their very livelihood, and followed the One who gave the instructions. Moments later the same man approached another set of brothers, also professional fishermen, and gave the same command. “Come. Follow me.” And they also did. James and John even left their father in the boat. They left the family business, and chose to follow the man beside the sea.

---

\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

Wasn't that a foolish thing to do? Some would say so. But these men knew better. They knew that the man beside the sea was no ordinary man. He was someone who had the credentials, so that when He said, "Come. Follow me," you knew that it was the right step to take. Indeed, to not take that step would be unquestionably the worst decision one could ever make.

This is the question, *the* question. *Why follow Jesus?* This is what Jesus called people to do. It's what He's still calling people to do, to follow Him. But if we going to follow someone, truly follow him our whole life, we should have compelling reasons for doing so. We'd better make sure this person has the proper credentials.

Be assured, *He does*. And the gospel writer Mark shows them to us very clearly in his written portrait of Jesus. "The Servant in Action" is the title of our current series in Mark, and we're about to see some powerful action this morning.

Why follow Jesus? Perhaps you've been wrestling with that question. Possibly you've been following Jesus, but the journey's turned out harder than you anticipated and you're wondering if it's worth it. *Why follow Jesus?*

Here's the answer. In Mark 1:21-34, which is the passage right after Jesus calls Simon and Andrew, and James and John, Mark presents two credentials that Jesus exhibited that compel us to place our faith in Him and devote our lives to Him.

Here are the two credentials. Behold the powerful *words* and *works* of Jesus.

#### I. Behold the powerful words of Jesus (21-22).

Let's join the story at verse 21, "And they went into Capernaum, and immediately<sup>2</sup> on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching."

Mark doesn't define who "they" is. Apparently, it includes Jesus, the two sets of brothers that chose to follow Him in the previous passage, and perhaps others who are intrigued by the Master. The new disciples followed Jesus to the lake-side village of Capernaum on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, a place where Jesus spent considerable time in ministry.

Sabbath day came and Jesus led His followers to the synagogue. The synagogue was at the center of life for first century Jews. They went to the temple in Jerusalem a few times a year, but they went to the synagogue in their town every week, without exception, sometimes more than once a week.

The synagogue service consisted of three elements. There was prayer, the reading of God's Word, and the exposition of God's Word. According to Barclay, there was no music, no singing, and no sacrifice, just prayer and teaching. The temple was the place of sacrifice, and there would be singing there, and fellowship meals, and lots of praying, along with the appropriate offerings, during the special holy days. But the synagogue was essentially a place of teaching. You gathered to hear someone read the Scriptures, explain the Scriptures, and pray in light of the Scriptures.

Let's not miss what may at first seem to be rather obvious. Teaching was important to Jesus. In fact, Mark here gives us two insights into Jesus' teaching.

**A. His teaching is central to His ministry (21).** From the outset Mark emphasizes the *teaching* ministry of Jesus. He will do other things, for sure, but teaching is priority. He goes to Capernaum and *teaches*. The very next day Simon and the others interrupted Jesus' early morning prayer time, saying, "Everyone is looking for you (38)!" To which

---

<sup>2</sup> This is a key word for Mark. We see him use this word "immediately" four times in verses 21-34.

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can *preach* there also. That is why I have come."

Jesus came to change lives. How does He do it? He teaches. Again, it's not all He does, but it's central to what He does. And why? It's because sinners will miss the meaning of His actions apart from His teaching.

He later will say in John 8:31-32, "If you hold to my *teaching*, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." His miracles get people's attention, yes, but as we'll see, His words capture their hearts and consequently change their lives.

"This is why I have come," He announces, "so I can preach." And so, He did. We see just how important teaching was to Jesus by scanning Mark's gospel (NIV):

Mark 1:39—"So he traveled throughout Galilee, *preaching* in their synagogues and driving out demons."

Mark 2:1-2—"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and *he preached the word* to them."

Mark 2:13—"Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and *he began to teach them*."

Jesus once said, quoting the Torah, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every *living word that comes from the mouth of God* (Matt 4:4)." Without food, we die physically. Without spiritual food, we starve to death spiritually. We need God's Word, which is why we need sound teaching.

This is why Jesus didn't just teach, but taught and commissioned twelve of His followers to teach. We read in Mark 3:14, "He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might *send them out to preach*."

It's truth that changes lives, God's truth. But truth that has the power to change lives, changes no one until it's heard. And if it's to be heard, it must be taught.

Just before returning to heaven, Jesus reemphasized the need for teaching in His great commission, "Go, make disciples...*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you* (Matt 28:19-20)."

So if teaching was central to Jesus' ministry, what does that say to us? We need teaching, right? Which means we need to make teaching and learning God's Word a high priority in our lives, and in our families, and in our church services, too. And should we ever need to choose a church, it should be a prime factor in our decision. Is this a church that prioritizes teaching the Word of God?

There's the first insight. Jesus' teaching is central to His ministry.

**B. His teaching is authoritative (22).** That's not a popular word, so define it, first, with a story.

A stranger entered a church in the middle of the sermon and seated himself in the back pew. After a while he began to fidget. Leaning over to a white-haired man at his side, evidently an old member of the congregation, he whispered: "How long has he been preaching?" "Thirty or forty years, I think," the old man answered. "I'll stay then," decided the stranger, "He must be nearly done."<sup>3</sup>

Sad to say, that's the way teaching is often viewed today. It's something you *tolerate*. Be assured of this. You didn't merely *tolerate* Jesus' teaching. You embraced

---

<sup>3</sup> [The World's Best Jokes, Christian Clippings, p. 26.](#)

it, or hated it, but you didn't sleep through it. Why not? Because His teaching was *authoritative*.

Notice verse 22, "And they were astonished ['amazed' NIV] at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." When Jesus taught, people listened. That word isn't strong enough. Mark says they were "astonished," a verb (*exeplesonto*) from the root *plesso* meaning "strike" or "smite." It's a very strong word indicating that what Jesus said hit them right between the eyes, so to speak.

There was something compelling about His teaching, something very different from the other teachers of the day. He taught as "one who had authority."

What does that mean? There were a couple of distinctives that set Jesus apart as a teacher.

1. *He didn't give human tradition, but divine truth.* And people weren't used to that, just like they aren't today. When you went to the synagogue, you would teachers who constantly cited other rabbis as their authority. "Well, as Rabbi So-and-So says..."

But Jesus was different. "You have heard that it was said...*but I say to you,*" He announced over and over in His famous Sermon on the Mount. When He spoke He did so as if He needed no authority beyond Himself, *for He didn't*. He didn't cite the supposed experts. He didn't offer people take-it-or-leave-it opinions and options either. Rather, He proclaimed the authoritative speech of God Himself, sometimes by quoting the Scriptures, and more often by making direct, divine announcements, "I say to you!"

Jesus possessed what commentator J. D. Jones calls "the authority of character." Jones explains, "The scribes had the kind of authority that comes from office. But it was not that kind of authority Jesus wielded. He had no office. He had not, as we should say, been trained for the ministry. He had never been ordained. He came straight from the carpenter's shop. And yet when He spoke, men felt there was an authority about His words they never felt in the presence of the scribes, their official teachers. It was the authority of character, of a pure and holy personality. In the presence of Jesus men felt themselves instinctively in the presence of a Holy Person."<sup>4</sup>

There's a second distinctive that made Jesus' teaching authoritative.

2. *He didn't speak to entertain, but to transform.* Oh, He was a brilliant speaker, a master story-teller and illustrator. Who can forget the story of the Good Samaritan, or miss the point of "I am the bread of life"? Crowds sat on the ground listening to Him for hours on end, speechless, sometimes forgetting to eat. Yes, Jesus knew how to hold an audience, without question.

But His aim wasn't entertainment. It was transformation. He was after the souls of men and women, to turn them from their present path that was heading to eternal destruction, and turn them to the kingdom of God. That's why sometimes He said things that offended people, and once He offended them, He didn't back down. He loved them too much to back down.

Theodore Epp, founder of Back to the Bible radio ministry, realized something was wrong when he stopped receiving critical mail. Convicted that he was not challenging the flock enough, he changed his preaching. "I'm afraid that when I'm pleasing everybody, I'm not pleasing the Lord," he later said, "and pleasing the Lord is what counts."

Commenting on this illustration Chuck Colson writes, "This is not to suggest that a pastor is only successful when he is upsetting people! But he must be certain that he is

---

<sup>4</sup> J. D. Jones, p. 27.

first and foremost faithful to the One he serves. He is fulfilling a divine commission when he preaches. Just as an ambassador is entrusted not with his own message but with his superior's message, so the minister is entrusted with the Word of God. Before it is delivered, therefore, every message should be laid at the foot of His throne with one question: "Is it faithful to You, my Lord?" Or as one German pastor would always pray in the pulpit, "Cause my mind to fear whether my heart means what I say."<sup>5</sup>

It was obvious to all that Jesus meant what He said. His teaching was authoritative.

Several years ago I read Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*. It's a book for leaders that assesses the difference between *good* organizations and *great* ones. I found some helpful insights in it. Human teachers can do that, give you helpful insights.

But...there's one teacher who is in a category all by Himself. That's why when you hear His Word being proclaimed, you come away thinking, not, "That's interesting. I'll have to think about that," but rather, "That's convicting! I need to do something about that and right now!"

Why follow Jesus? Here's why. His first credential. Behold the powerful words of Jesus. Now the second.

## II. Behold the powerful works of Jesus (23-34).

On this particular Sabbath day, He did three powerful works, first in the synagogue in the morning, second at Simon's house in the afternoon, and third in the street in the evening.

Notice verse 23 begins, "And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out." It's interesting that the immediate result of Jesus' teaching, in addition to amazement, was division and controversy. *And immediately* there was a man who *cried out*.

Here's what he said. Verse 24, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"

Sometimes people say, "I think a teacher should be positive, and make people feel good. I don't like controversial teachers."

Then you would have concluded Jesus to be a poor teacher. He generated controversy just about everywhere He went. Here we meet a man who cried out. Of course, there's a reason this man cried. He was "possessed by an evil spirit."

The demonic world hates it when people hear God's Word, for a couple of reasons. First, such teaching exposes the devil for who he is, the doomed enemy of God. It also brings liberation to the people he holds captive. From the very outset Mark shows Jesus in conflict with Satan (see verse 13). Why the conflict? Because Jesus came to destroy the power of the devil, and he knows it (1 John 3:8).

I wonder how long this demon-controlled man has been there. Mark makes it very clear the man with the unclean spirit was *in their synagogue*. How many weeks or months or years has this imposter been going through the motions of praying and listening to sermons right next to the people of God?

We tend to associate demonic activity with evil places, like tombs and crack houses, and it's there for sure. But never forget that Satan is a deceiver. In fact, he's a religious being, who once was a worship leader in heaven before his rebellion and banishment (Isa 14:12-14). Now he is a proponent of religion. He actually uses religion to attack God.

See him in the synagogue. See him as he infiltrates, and imitates.

---

<sup>5</sup> Charles W. Colson, [The Body](#), 1992, Word Publishing, p. 121.

You say, “Why didn’t this man show his true colors before this?”

Apparently, because he had no reason to do so. He’s comfortable with religion. He fit right in. That is, until Jesus came.

Think of it this way. There’s a world of difference between going to a place of worship...and going to a place of worship and actually meeting Jesus. That’s true of this first century synagogue, and of church today. Did you come to this place of worship intending to meet Jesus today, to hear His voice, to know Him better, to worship Him?

Wiersbe said it well, “There are people today just like this demonized man; in a religious meeting, able to tell who Jesus is, and even trembling with fear of judgment—yet lost!”<sup>6</sup>

Mark wants us to behold the powerful works of Jesus. In verses 23-34 he shows how Jesus demonstrated His authority over two realms.

**A. He has authority over demons (23-28).** First of all...

1. *He turned a disruption into a display of His supremacy (23-26).* The NIV says, “Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?’”

So the demon recognizes Jesus’ identity. “Jesus of Nazareth,” he says. Is there derision in this mention of Nazareth? There will be by others.

“Have you come to destroy us?” he asks. That’s interesting. So *he* now refers to *us*. Apparently there are other demons present. Why did he ask that question? He knows, apparently, they all know about Genesis 3:15, about the Promised One who is coming, and what He will do. Indeed, they understand the nature of Jesus’ mission.

So one of the evil spirits assumes the role of spokesman, saying, “I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” He knows, all right.

This wasn’t the first time this creature has stood in the presence of its Creator. No doubt he recalls the day he committed cosmic treason and was cast out of heaven. And he’s never been able to stop thinking about that day long ago when the pronouncement was made to his supervisor in the garden, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; *he will crush your head*, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).”

And so he asks, “Is it time? Have you come to destroy us?” And then acknowledges, “I know who you are.”

How did Jesus response? Notice verse 25, “But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’” In the NIV, “Be quiet!” [lit. ‘be muzzled’].

Why did Jesus silence the evil spirit? He was speaking the truth, wasn’t he? Perhaps this time, but that’s the problem. Even a liar speaks the truth a lot of the time, even most of the time, but since he’s a liar you don’t know when to believe him. Jesus knew that the witness of evil spirits would only hurt His mission, for it would only confuse His hearers. If Satan can’t keep the truth hidden, he seeks to make the truth seem so bizarre that people reject it when they hear it.

Verse 26 tells what happened. “And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.” Interesting verse, and it makes a couple of realities perfectly clear. One, demonic forces don’t give up without a fight. And two, demonic forces are no match for Jesus.

---

<sup>6</sup> W. Wiersbe, p. 113.

*Be silent!* says the Master. *Come out of him!* With those two brief commands, Jesus set a man free from his bondage. What power! Jesus is here giving a preview of His kingdom-age power, and specifically, of what He will do when He comes to earth a second time and destroys the evil one and his hosts once and for all.

Some read the gospel accounts and conclude that Jesus died because He underestimated the power of the evil one. But they're not reading very carefully. Mark records incidents like this one to show that the evil one is no match for King Jesus. Jesus didn't die because the evil one defeated Him. He died intentionally and in so doing He defeated the devil. As Hebrews 2:14 explains, "That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."

So Jesus turned a disruption into a display of His supremacy. Furthermore...

2. *He used miracles (like this encounter) to call attention to His teaching (27-28).* Mark says in verse 27, "And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'"

First, they were amazed by His *words*. Now they are amazed by His *works*. And notice how His works bring attention to His words. The people saw the miracle He did and said, "What is this? A new *teaching*...."

So His works are not an end, but a means. He does what He does so people will listen to what He says. It's His teaching that they need most, that *we* need most.

Verse 28 tells us what happened. "And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee." Amazing.

So...why did these evil spirits obey Jesus? You say, "Because He is the King, and He gave them a command."

Yes, but why then does He give us commands that we refuse to obey? Think carefully now. James 2:19 says, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" Why do the demons shudder? Isn't it because they knew something about Jesus we tend to forget, that the One who is the *Savior* is also the *Judge*?

Jesus said in John 5:22, "For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son."

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."

Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."

The "we" in the previous passage seems to refer to Christians. We Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, not to determine our destiny (Christ settled that on the cross), but our reward or loss of reward (which He will determine on the basis of how we lived for Him).

What about non-Christians? We're told about their judgment in Revelation 20:11–15, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and

small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.<sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Yes, Jesus is the judge, and we would do well to ponder that more often.

So, His works indicate that He has authority over demons. His authority extends to a second realm...

**B. He has authority over diseases (29-34).** Mark records two miracles of healing in this section, both emphasizing the great compassion of the Savior for those in need.

1. *He healed Simon's mother-in-law (29-31).* Verse 29 says, "And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John."

According to Jewish custom the main Sabbath meal came right after the synagogue service at the sixth hour, that is, noon. Mark says that the group left the synagogue and headed over to the house of the brothers Simon and Andrew. Upon arrival, they encountered a problem.

Verse 30 explains, "Now Simon's mother-in-law [this indicates Peter was a married man, a detail mentioned also in 1 Cor 9:5] lay ill with a fever [perhaps she was the one who was to fix the meal; which means, we have a problem, a house full of people and a sick cook], and immediately they told him about her [that's a good thing to do with any predicament; tell Jesus about it]."

Consequently, verse 31 says, "And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them." Note the Master's actions. Jesus *came, took, and lifted*. With merely the touch of His hand, the fever left, such is His power. In the previous account He *spoke* and the evil spirit came out. Here He uses a touch. There's no pat formula with Jesus.

And once healed, what did the mother of Peter's wife do? Take time to regain her strength? No. Mark says she began to *serve them* [AV 'she ministered unto them']. Not only was the fever gone but her strength returned. She went from the bed to the kitchen instantly.

The healing led to service. If God heals, it's so a person can serve longer or serve more efficiently. If God chooses not to heal it's because He has other purposes in mind, for His glory *and* the good of His people (see Romans 8:28-29).

Friends, we can learn from this woman. Serving is one of the best ways to say thank you to the Lord. Indeed, we're saved so we can serve. Serving, or showing love by meeting needs, is an evidence of salvation, according to 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers."

This is the power of our Savior! One touch and a sick woman is restored. It didn't take long for word to spread. This miracle happened mid-day. Mark records a second that followed hours later.

2. *He healed many others (32-34).* Verse 32 says, "That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons." The multitudes waited until evening because the law said it was illegal to carry any burden through town on the

Sabbath day. That would have been work, and work was forbidden. The Sabbath ran from sundown on Friday evening to sundown on Saturday evening. Jewish law said the Sabbath day was over when three stars came out in the sky. So the people of Capernaum waited until the sun went down on that Saturday and then converged on Jesus.

Verse 33 says, “And the whole city was gathered together at the door.” What a sight! The whole city standing at the door of this house. Why are they there?

Several years ago, *U. S. News & World Report* carried a story about Kevin Carter, a man who encountered human suffering firsthand. For a decade, this photographer captured vivid pictures of repression and strife in his native South Africa. In 1993, he went to famine-racked Sudan and came upon a starving toddler stalked by a vulture. He photographed the scene—an image that won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize—then chased the vulture away. As the child resumed her walk to a feeding station, he lit a cigarette and wept. A few months later, at 33, he killed himself with carbon monoxide pumped into his pickup truck. Explained his father: “Kevin always carried around the horror of the work he did.”<sup>7</sup>

It’s a hard thing to see people in pain and be able to do nothing about it.

Why did the people in our story bring the hurting to Jesus? For a very simple reason. They knew He could do what they couldn’t do. He could do something about their problems.

And He did. Verse 34 says, “And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”

In His three years of public ministry Jesus healed literally hundreds and hundreds of people, perhaps thousands. He gave sight to blind people. He restored hearing to the deaf. He caused legs and arms to work again. He even raised the dead.

Here Mark says the *whole town* gathered at the door, and Jesus healed *many* and drove out *many* demons. Lots of people can talk about problems, but Jesus made a difference, not only with powerful words, but with powerful works.

He still makes a difference. Sometimes He does it by removing the affliction, at other times by granting sustaining grace to endure the affliction, with the assurance that in time, in *His* time, He will remove all affliction from this world.

“Come to me,” He says, “all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).”

This is why we should follow Jesus. Because He makes the difference, and the reason He makes the difference is because of He has the credentials. *Powerful words* backed up by *powerful works*.

But this is just the beginning of the story of Jesus, and it prompts us to ask an important question. What’s the purpose of power? Why does God give us abilities, and positions, and places of authority, in other words, *power*? To find the answer, look no further than Jesus. He has power. What does He do with it?

You say, “He heals, and people applaud Him.”

Yes, that’s exactly what happened...at the beginning. But then what happened? What did Jesus do next with all His power? Keep reading this gospel account and you’ll discover the shocking answer.

---

<sup>7</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, August 8, 1994.

The Powerful One refused to use His power for Himself, even when weak and wicked people nailed Him to a cross. Who does that? Who has power to alleviate suffering, but refuses to alleviate His *own* suffering, indeed, He embraces that suffering, He foretells it, He anticipates it, He does intentional things to bring it upon Himself?

Jesus does. It's why He came. It's why the final six chapters of this book focus on the final week of His life. The Powerful One Himself will later say, "The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)."

This is Jesus' greatest work, the one He accomplished on the cross when He gave His life to pay for the sins of rebels like you and me, a work He validated by walking out of His tomb on the third day after He died.

There's a significant lesson here for us. Hear His words again. *Come. Follow Me.* We are to come and follow Him to His cross. That's where His path leads. And once there, we are to repent and believe in Him. And He will forgive us, and save us, and set us on a new path.

And what is this path? It's a path where we continue to follow Him, where we use the abilities, positions, places of authority, the *power* He has given us, not to be served, but to serve others. Even if it costs us our lives.

We hear a lot about abuse these days. Oh, how we need this reminder. This is what power is for, to serve, and to serve in such a way that the people we serve will see Him clearly.

Make It Personal: Now that you've seen His credentials...

1. *You can trust Him.* There is none so trustworthy as the One who left the glories of heaven to come to earth on a rescue mission, who died to redeem sinners like us from our hopeless existence. There's none like the One who humbled Himself in order to enter this world and confront demons and diseases and ultimately death itself.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever *believes* in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Yes, you can *trust* Him. And if you do He will give you life that is abundant and eternal. He can do all this because He has the credentials. You can trust Him. What's more...

2. *You must trust Him.* Since He has the credentials, we cannot ignore Him and certainly cannot escape God's wrath apart from Him. Acts 4:12 makes it clear, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

My friend, not only can you trust Him, you *must* trust Him. If you care for your soul, I urge you to do so today.

**Closing Song: #97 "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" (all four verses)**

*All hail the power of Jesus' name!*

*Let angels prostrate fall.*

*Bring forth the royal diadem,  
and crown him Lord of all.*

*Bring forth the royal diadem,  
and crown him Lord of all!*