

Reality of the Divine in Christian Experience

by Duncan Campbell

The Christian experience is a supernatural experience where God's presence is felt and His power is manifest in one's life, and it is characterized by a deep sense of faith, hope, and love.

Duration: 48:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:8-9, Colossians 2:2-10

Topics: "Conversion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a young man who was deeply moved by the work of God. This young man's cry for Jesus to make him real led to the conversion of a police sergeant's wife and the subsequent conversion of many others. The movement spread to different parishes, with young people proclaiming that Jesus is real and urging others to turn to Him. The preacher emphasizes the importance of experiencing the ultimate reality of God through sanctification and references biblical passages that speak of the transformation of the heart.

Transcript

And now will you come with me to Paul's letter to the Colossians, and we shall read part of chapter two. Reading the first seven verses. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them, I feel to fear, and for as many have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ.

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joining and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As we have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith that ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

I would direct your attention especially to the words of verse six. As we have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and grounded. The purpose that is on my heart this evening is that of a message on the reality of the divine in Christian experience.

The reality of the divine in Christian experience. God's real in the midst of human personality. So our thought will center around the words, in him.

And we shall consider what it really means to be in Christ. These are days when we move in the midst of much that is shallow and unreal. We shall endeavor to show the things, if God may help us, what it really means to be a Christian.

Is a Christian just a man who makes a decision and endeavors the best he can to live up to it? Or is a Christian a supernatural being who has had a supernatural experience and is so supernaturally altered that godliness will characterize every part of his being, body, soul, and spirit the moment he is born again? That's the Christian experience that many of us believe in. A New Testament Christian experience. Now those of you who are familiar with this part of New Testament stories will remember that the apostle had a great and a holy concern for the young converts of the church at Colossae.

You will also remember that the believers there had their lot cast in a city that was wholly given over to idolatry. Indeed, all but its depression to a life lived where the streams of vital Christianity run flow was involved in their being there. But we discover that in the midst of such trying circumstances at this particular time there could be found within this city faith and faithful brethren.

One naturally asks, what was the secret of their faithfulness? How could they with honesty and sincerity be regarded as the saints of God? Now it seems to me that we have the answer in the words of Jesus Christ. He, Colossae, was the seer of their trials and the field of their testing. Christ was the seer of their results and in Him they were more than conquerors.

I remember many years ago when I was a student in Edinburgh hearing the late Professor Clow give an address on the faith in Colossae. And here are words from that great address. The faith in Colossae carried about within a private atmosphere, an atmosphere that was not of Asia Minor but of heaven.

They found their locality in God. My dear people, that is the secret of effective Christian witness and Christian service in Christ. A Christ-centered life.

My dear people, that is without question the only secret of Christian experience. Now you will notice that in this portion which I read, Paul is giving them counsel concerning their behavior and their walk and growth in grace. Ah, ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.

So walk ye in faith. That suggests to me that growth in Christian experience implies life. The Colossians here have received Him just as Jesus did not evolve in history, He came into history.

He does not evolve in me. I am not made such by baptism or by confirmation or by anything organized or arranged by man. They do not produce life.

Oh, we want to be clear about that. Just as He did not evolve in history, He does not evolve in me. He comes in suggesting that their experience was Christ-centered and Christ-conscious.

Now this to Paul and to them was a unique experience, a miracle, indeed a unique work of God. Faith is represented as receiving Him as a life of faith, just means receiving Jesus. I can remember this evening all so well.

That night when I received Him, I had been to a dance and a concert. I left the dance under terrible conviction of sin, walked three miles to the farm, went out to the bar and fell on my knees among straw prepared for the horse in the morning, and cried to God for mercy and God save me. God came into my life.

It was a miraculous experience. It was a supernatural experience. I could only explain it on the basis of vision.

And of course, a Christian is a supernatural being. If he is born again, he has had an experience that can only be explained on the basis of vision. Oh, if that truth were proclaimed in these days of shallow thinking, days when evangelism is producing too often harvests of infidels, we want to proclaim that a Christian is a person possessed by the light of God.

And I'm sure Oswald Chambers is right in stating that Christian experience just means this. God the Holy Ghost bringing the personality of God to be so incorporated in my personality that I suddenly discovered that a power has taken possession that was never there before. And of course, it just means, it implies, a sense of realization.

Jesus asked me, If you buy that little book, you will find a testimony in it by a Mistress Hay. She's the wife of Dr. Hay. Both of them were converted in the Revival.

Both of them are laboring now in Thailand under the auspices of the China Indemnization Fellowship. I can well remember the night that Ava Cloud, that was her name then, came to know the Savior. She was asked three or four years after that, after graduating in Glasgow University with honors, she was asked to address the General Assembly, that seven or eight hundred ministers.

And in course of her address, speaking of the reality of God, she said this, That night something came to me that could not be explained on the basis of the human. My dear people, have you got that? Have you something tonight that cannot be explained on the basis of the human? Miracle? Supernatural? God? Oh, it implies a sense of realized faith. I have found him.

I have found him. Oh, that is language that takes you beyond mere decision or human resolution. I have found him whom my soul loves.

Oh, how few there are today who in the hour of decision have become conscious of a new and overpowering reality. This sense of Jesus. This consciousness of God.

I'm not sure whether you have heard anything about the movement among young people on the island of Louis again. I had a letter from a minister just a few days ago telling me of the number that went forward for the first time to the communion. And most of them young people.

Some time ago, during an address given by Miss Morrison, as you have here some time ago, God the Holy Ghost moved into the midst of the convention in the town. And within a matter of minutes, at least seven young people were crying to God for mercy. The meeting continued till half past eleven.

By that time this gracious consciousness of God gripped the souls of those young people. And after the meeting they went out to the streets of the town to try and win over young people to Christ. And what was their battle cry? What was the truth that they proclaimed to young people whom they met on the street? Oh, Jesus is real! Jesus is real! And then you must flee from the wrath that comes upon you.

And as a result of that witness, on the streets of Stornoway, a movement began that is now moving in ever so many parishes. Now I spoke to a minister at the General Assembly in Edinburgh. And I asked him, now what is the secret of it? We haven't had any special meetings, any special efforts in your parish, yet young people are being saved in their schools.

And that was the case, he told me that, saved in their schools. Do you know what he said? It all sprang from the reality of the Lord Jesus in the lives of young people who found Christ during the revival. My dear people, have you got that? It sprang from the reality of Jesus in the lives of young people who found Jesus during the revival.

The Holy Spirit had entered and they were born of God. Oh, tell me, tell me! Is that your experience? Is that your experience? Or are you moving under a self-created illusion? On the basis of having made a decision, does your life correspond to the decision you made? Bearing about that call, bearing about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest through my mortal flesh, not through my soul, not through my emotions. Oh, God moves there, thank God for his moving in the emotions.

Man is essentially an emotional being. And when God moves into his personality, every aspect of personality is caught up in God, including the emotion. A minister left a meeting during the revival saying that he was sick listening to so many people crying.

Just you think of it. He was sick listening to so many people crying. Do any seldom see tears today? Men, women under deep constriction of pain cry to God for mercy, the emotions move.

Ah, but this is something deeper. Bearing about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest through my mortal flesh. I met a young man in Ireland some time ago.

And he said something to me that remains with me to this very hour. He was speaking of a certain farmer. And he says, one morning, I saw God walking about the farmstead in dongery.

What? What did he mean? God in dongery? It just meant that that farmer was bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus and the life also of Jesus may manifest through the body coloured by dongery. Oh, my dear people, may I ask again, is this your experience? Can you say with honesty and with sincerity, I know his mind, this presence? I said repeatedly to the students younger in the college that this realization of Jesus, this consciousness of God in my personality, this nearness of the Saviour, ain't as great a verity as any other fact of human consciousness. And I would say against it, on a subjective side, the way of modern thought beating me, I know his mind.

Once I was blind, now I see. Once I was dead, now I'm alive. And I know it.

Oh, tell me, brother, tell me, sister, is that your experience of Jesus? We need to proclaim this truth today when we are being offered a Christianity that is evil, as an accommodation to an age that is unwilling to face the implications of Calvary and listen to the voice of the Master of the Christ. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow me. I heard a young man give his testimony some time ago.

I was addressing a conference of young people in a certain conference center here in England. Now I was startled by what he said. He said, I have discovered since my decision that the Christian way of life can best be explained as a song mingled with happy laughter in some country glade with the birds singing aloud.

I listened to it and felt a shiver going through my whole being, the element of battle, of fight, of separation, of self-denial was eliminated. A song mingled with the sound of happy laughter. Thank God there is happy laughter in Christian experience.

Thank God there is a song. Then he could cry, he put a new song in my mouth. Of course the Christian is happy.

Laughter, right at the center of his whole, at the center of his life. There's a battle. I have fought a good fight.

I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. The enemy is there to be met, to be defeated.

It's a battle. It means separation. It means self-denial, that he must think that he stands and take heed lest he fall.

It's not the song or happy laughter that keeps me there, but the saving grace of God, the dynamic of divinity at the very center of my life, Jesus expressing himself as the mighty conqueror. Oh, my dear people, is this your experience? Are you absolutely certain that you're born again? Oh, the number of people. The number of people.

I was in an Anglican church some time ago. Thank God for the men who know the Sagan Master from the days, the most evangelical church in England. I may be wrong, but I don't think I'm far wrong.

But I was in one such church. And one evening God moved in in a very remarkable way. I made no appeal.

I felt that we had gone beyond making an appeal. Something had happened in the church that really suggested no need of an appeal. But the rector who was chairing the meeting gave out a hymn.

It's a hymn that I had in my mind for the closing moments of this meeting. Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come. Jesus, I come.

And he paused there and said this, I wonder who is coming. All complete. Then a lady rose from the middle of the church.

She was a matron in a local hospital. She walked up the aisle and she said to the rector, Can I kneel here at Janelle's in front of the community table to be followed by seventeen others, including a virgin? And I can still see that dear man coming up to the rector and saying, I've been a virgin for eleven years. Tonight I realize that I'm a stranger to saving grace and I want to know Jesus.

And there, before midnight, I believe eighteen souls, I would say between the ages of twenty-five and perhaps fifty, came into vital relationship with Jesus and transformed the church. Oh, tell me friends, No, I feel this deeply tonight. I feel it deeply that there are scores and scores of people who are living under a self-created illusion because of something that happened, something that they did.

It may have been in the church here, it may have been in your assembly, but oh, tell me this, after the Mass of God, do you remember that story? Tell that dear woman with the issue of blood, remember what he said? She knew in her body that she was healed of that plague. And we agree. We say, yes, of course, she knew it happened.

But did you notice this? That he also said he knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him. In my very Bible it says that power went out of him. When did she know that she was healed of that plague? In that supreme moment, when power left him that possession.

Miracle. Of course, miracle. Is that your experience? Oh, may God help us to face this truth with honesty and with sincerity.

A young man, this happened during a gracious move in a certain Presbyterian church in Scotland in passing some years ago. This young lad, as we tell him, who is now lying on the isle of the church. He graduated out of the Vatican and he's now a parish minister in the city.

But I remember the night that that lad was crying with fear among others on the isle of the church. Not on their knees, but on their faces. On their faces! And he cried, Oh, Jesus, whatever it costs, make me real.

Oh, Jesus, whatever it costs, make me real. You know, through that cry of that young fellow, the wife of a police sergeant in the city was converted. The following days she went among her friends in the city and brought over twenty of them.

And between nine and half past eleven that night, twenty-one of them were saved. Because of this cry for reality, and I believe a revival starts for us when God finds us people that are real, that are real. But you will notice that Paul suggests that growth implies advance.

Walk ye in faith. Now, it is of interest to note two words that he uses here. Rooted and built.

Rooted and built. Now, first of all, might I suggest that in the word rooted you have the subjective aspect of salvation, the subjective aspect of sanctification that speaks of the great work of the Holy Ghost as done in the deep regions of my personality. In the deep regions.

My dear people, that is where the Holy Ghost begins to work. Right down, right in the midst of chambers where it polluted the old empire. All the words of Paul and there is a cry for deliverance, there is a longing for cleansing.

I remember when that happened to me under very, very strange circumstances in the midst of a cavalry charge in the First World War outside of Amiens. The last cavalry charge of the British Army. The real, a real charge.

I was wounded and I'm lying on the ground. I'm bleeding profusely and I believe I'm dying. Though I was conscious, conscious of my need, whilst I was born again, I knew I was saved.

But I also knew that nothing unclean could enter. And I knew, I so often heard my father pray, without holiness no man shall see God. And I felt at that moment, I'm holy, I'm holy.

All the carnal mind, the corrupt, that cried for deliverance and cleansing. In a miraculous way, a trooper of the Canadian horse dismounted after the charge was over and he lifted me on the horse's back and galloped to the nearest casualty clearing station. On that horse's back, believing that I was dying, I prayed, God make me as holy as a saved sinner can be.

Again, Father's prayer, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be. Listen, dear people. Oh, you may not believe in a second definite work of grace in the soul.

You needn't argue, or endeavour to argue the earth of that. I believe it. And I believe that it's taught in the word of God.

And I believe what Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones who said recently, the man who proclaims that you get everything is teaching error. And you will regard him as probably one of the greatest theologians in Britain today. On that horse's back, it happened.

Right into my life, down through the avenues of my personality, into the chamber of hell, for to this thing holds a hell's empire. Where a hell was there to deny and defy every good operating principle in my life. A hell resident within that was more than a match for me.

God's way of aid and broad deliverance and cleansing. And a hell in the Holy Ghost that I've never known before. Do you know the vast evening in the casualty clearance station I tasted for the tough times and holdings of revival? And in an hour, seven Canadians were proudly born again.

Yet they didn't understand a single word that I said because I was placing God in Gaelic and not one of them knew the language. Oh, my dear people, this is God. The miracles are in God.

Three of them. Our Presbyterian minister in Canada today. The subjective aspect of the whole thing.

And in this connection, we discover what it means to move into the ultimate reality of God in sanctifying operation. What is it? Well, you have it in verse 10 to be complete in Him. You see, Paul is there teaching the young believer that there is a completeness in which God now receives nothing but tension.

Oh, you say, but is that possible? My dear friend, do you read the New Testament? Do you read the Old Testament? A new heart also will I give and a new spirit will I put within. And I was in a way the stone he harnessed behind the flesh and it will give you a new heart. I'm sure that Charles Wesley was right when he penned the words, He well can't not cleanse from every stain thy diet and my faith.

But thank God he can cleanse. Oh, he can cleanse. He can cleanse the blood of Jesus.

Oh, brother, make much of the blood. Make much of the blood. I'm so glad that my Bible doesn't say the blood of Jesus Christ comes dry.

Nor does it say the blood of Jesus Christ suppressed. Suppressed, keep it down. Starved.

No. These are words that have been coined by man and frequently used at our conventions today that I make bold to say they have no place whatsoever in the vocabulary of heaven. Oh, let's keep to the scriptures.

Let's keep to the word of God that the blood of Jesus Christ God comes cleansed. Uncleansed from all sin. From all sin.

Oh, what a savior. What a deliverer. I tell you that experience revolutionized my life.

Indeed, were it not for it I wouldn't be here today. After a year and a month in hospital I went out to talk about Jesus in the villages of Argyll. Thank God for an experience that brings emancipation.

And I tell you after years of experience I can stay free so long as I walk in the light. So long as I maintain the attitude of absolute surrender to the will of God. So long as I bow before my savior recognizing his lordship over my life.

I'm one with him in cleansing and in power on the basis of his redemption. When I say that I'm not preaching absolute perfection or sinless perfection. That belongs to him and to him alone.

But I am preaching because I believe in conditional perfection. Conditional perfection. If we walk in the light because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses.

I'm cleansed from all sins. I love to talk about Barnabas. You know what he said about Barnabas? It says of him that he was full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost.

What a man. What a personality. If he was full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost he couldn't be filled with anything else and he couldn't have a cause.

Because when God says full every, every personality is possessed by God. And God says he's full. That's holiness.

That's sanctification. That's power. Jesus walking free.

Ah, but there's another thought here. Built up in him. Now here you have the object of sanctification.

And it speaks of something visible. Something that indicates a change from worldliness to godliness. From sinfulness to separation.

After all is it not true what McCain said that a Christian is just a person that makes it easy for others to believe in God. There's something seen. There's something visible.

There's something now appearing in the village, in the home, in the church that cries aloud this is the work of God. Tell me friend, is that true? When D.L. Moody was in Edinburgh he was assisted by the late Dr. Henry Drummond. A man that was mightily used of God in those days.

And Dr. Henry Drummond addressing students in Edinburgh University said this. This is the stupendous victory and mystery of regeneration that mortal man should suggest to the world God. Have you got that? That mortal man should suggest to the world God.

Oh tell me brother, tell me this. Is your life, is this life of mine suggesting God? I remember one night when five young drunkard desperate characters were saved in a parish church during the revival. Three of them are ministers today.

One was inducted recently. Three of them that I'm referring to they came to the church drunk. Drunk.

Two o'clock in the morning they were sober and saved. Three of them are ministers today. How was it that that happened? A young bus conductor on the bus saw the state that they were in.

Knew that she was a companion with them in the ways of sin of fortnight prison. But now saved by the grace of God she pities them. And addressing one of the young men said this.

I'm sorry to see you in such a state. And that young man will tell you today that it was something that he saw in the face of that young girl that cried aloud that it is the work of God that moved him to say to the other four we'll forget about the bar and we'll go to the church. And they went to the church and the five of them were saved.

Three of them ministers. The secret and mystery of regeneration that mortal man should project to the world. Oh, and just this one word of truth.

The condition on which this life is made possible. Christ Jesus the Lord. You will notice that the new element that has entered was the lordship of Jesus.

King of my life I crown thee now. Oh, you'll say, but that's the truth that you preach at your Bangor Convention. And at your conferences for the deepening of spiritual life the lordship of Christ.

That's the truth that they proclaim at Chesed. Yes. But do you believe that any soul can be born again that is not prepared to recognize the lordship of Christ? I don't believe, and I say this on the basis of the word of God.

I don't believe that one single soul can be saved until he's prepared to recognize the lordship of Christ over his life. That means self-denial. It means following Christ.

It means obeying Christ. It means separating from the world. Pardon me, you said Jesus was fooled, part of the pastor's heresy.

Do you mean to tell me that a person can be saved who is not prepared to do that? No more than the devil. Oh, he can make a decision. He can have his emotions stirred.

He can sing choruses. He can join this group and that other group. But he's a giant of the devil.

Unless he's born again of the spirit of God. If the devil gets him there, he'll make a Sunday school teacher of him. Of course he will.

Oh, he's a master, right? He'll even make a minister of him. So long as he can keep him from having a supernatural experience of the new birth. Oh, my dear people.

Paul said, Ask ye of the devil, receive Christ Jesus the Lord. Paul was seeking him, recognizing his lordship over your life. His lordship over your life.

I was listening to an outstanding missionary, one of the men who escaped death in Congo. He was shot, fell as though dead. His companion standing beside him got the bullet through his heart, dead.

We were listening to this man, Edinburgh, a missionary in the West. And I was stirred and moved to the depth of my heart when he told us that since that awful massacre in Congo, we have only had two missionaries offering for service, and two of them were women. And I believe that the reason for the slowness and the unwillingness of young men to offer themselves for Christian service today is just because they refused to acknowledge the lordship of Christ over their life.

They didn't recognize it when they made their decision. Consequently, Jesus is not the center of their life. Oh, young people.

I'll appeal to you, young people. Are you prepared to recognize the lordship of Jesus tonight? Are you prepared to say, God, if I haven't been real, make me real tonight. If I haven't been fully surrendered, enable me to surrender everything tonight.

Whatever it costs. Go through with God. As we have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, the world needs me.

I believe this truth was proclaimed and accepted by young men and young women. Thousands, thousands wouldn't be streaming to hell at this moment in the foreign field, or streaming to hell in our native land, because the life also of Jesus is not made manifest through our mortal flesh because we refuse to recognize his lordship. Oh, may God help us.

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