

(Keswick) 1976, Full Salvation

by Festo Kivengere

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing the fullness of Christ in our lives, and provides a shortcut to achieving this through going directly to Jesus through the cross.

Duration: 41:28

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Matthew 6:33, John 1:14, John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 3:19, Colossians 2:8

Topics: "Keswick Convention"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the cry of his heart for believers to experience the fullness and completeness of Jesus Christ. He shares his personal testimony of finding simplicity, forgiveness, and joy in Christ. The speaker highlights that God does not play games with our needs and meets us where we are, offering His blessings through Jesus Christ. He encourages Christians to seek balance and completeness by placing Jesus at the center of their lives, allowing all other things to flow in service to Him and others.

Transcript

First heaven is full salvation, and after we've sung the hymn, Stephen Alford is going to lead us in a word of prayer. Now let us bow our heads and just quieten our spirits for just a moment as we join together to seek God's blessing. Our gracious heavenly Father, we bow in thy presence in the precious name of the Lord Jesus.

First and foremost to thank thee for the way thou hast answered prayer today. We thank thee for the good weather. We thank thee for that wonderful thanksgiving service and celebration of victory.

We thank thee for the sense of hunger and thirst. We thank thee for the song that has just come into our hearts, and with David we say, thou hast put a new song in our mouths, even praise unto our God. And now we come to this evening service just as hungry as ever, and we praise thee for the words we've given expression to in song, full salvation.

We remember the words of our Saviour who said, I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly. We're bound to ask ourselves the question afresh tonight, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? We thank thee that in Christ we are complete. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and we're complete in him.

We thank thee that we can bring the small vessels of our poverty-stricken lives and dip them into the ocean of his life, and we leave that life undiminished. Indeed, we could almost adapt the words of thy great servant Charles Wesley and sing that in the fullness of his blessing, God's blessing, there is fullness undiminished. And we praise thee for this.

We ask thee that as we bow under the sentence of thy word to learn the conditions for entering in, that here tonight Jesus Christ may be made King. To this end, Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord. So we pray thee that in every heart tonight, Christ might be sanctified as Lord.

Come upon thy two dear servants. We thank thee for them and for what we've learned of the Lord Jesus in their lives throughout the years. Anoint them with fresh oil, and may they speak with simplicity and clarity and humility and authority.

And may this tent be visited with the power of the Holy Ghost, because we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. We want to praise the Lord for we are coming towards the halfway of this great time of centenary at Keswick.

And if you are like me, by the time you get to Wednesday, and we've been here together, and there has been so much truth given beautifully, clearly, simply, and yet profoundly, that sometimes you are swimming in a whole ocean of truth. And you just don't know exactly where to begin, or what next should you do, or what to take. I want to tell you that I speak in the name of my dear brethren, who have been given the opportunity of sharing, that all you need do is fix the attention of your needy heart upon the person of Jesus Christ.

And if you do that, whatever holiness there is in heaven, whatever sanctification any sinner forgiven can ever receive, whatever blessing back into the fullness of life, it's all yours. For it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in him. This is not an oversimplification of a complicated problem.

God does not play around. If you came to Keswick needy, thirsty, defeated, tired, exhausted, would it please God to give you four days of exercise before he met your problem? Wouldn't you call him a tantalizing God? But in his graciousness, and his condescending love, and his understanding wisdom, he put the blessing where the needy can reach it. And you couldn't put it nearer than in the person of Jesus Christ.

For the Word became flesh for flesh, particularly for fallen flesh. In Jesus Christ, the hand of mercy, the hand of love. Now you say, what do you mean, first by the hand? Do you realize that God has a hand? First he has got the hand of righteousness, which judges a sinner, and makes me tremble when I know I'm a sinner.

But yet he doesn't come to me that way. Having shown me his hand of righteousness, before which I tremble with guilt, then he shows me the hand of mercy in Jesus Christ. And so you see, this evening is going to be very practical.

We have surveyed all the grace of God. In fact, we can't. We've touched the fringe.

We've just picked a few sands from the ocean. Jesus is eternal, and his grace is eternal. It meets all the needs.

Tonight, I just want to touch on something which I think is the cry of a very heart, because it is the cry of my heart. Since I came to know him, since I tested of the good things, the simplicity of the walk, the quickness of being forgiven when you come with the burden, the restoration of joy when the devil is accusing you with 101 sins which you have actually fallen into. You know, many times, although the devil is the father of lies, but many times he accuses us of the things we have done.

He's not foolish to accuse you of what you haven't done. He knows it won't catch on. He usually accuses you of the things he knows.

He knows you've done, because those catch on quickly. And so you see, tonight, we came longing for what the Bible and what the Keswick message usually calls fullness, in inverted commas, full salvation. In other words, to be saved in such a way that life becomes complete.

This is what salvation is all about, not only forgiving of certain actions of broken moral law, and then you are left, as it were, in a hollow with many holes to fill, which you try to fill yourself, and of course you can't do it. Full salvation simply means to me, and according to the Bible, that life is made complete. And so I wanted just to give a little topic, which is the way things are done here.

In Africa, I don't give topics. I just speak about Jesus and sinners pick him where they can. And the Spirit of God knows where you can pick it up.

Don't make a mistake about that. He knows. So anyway, tonight, the thing that has been coming into my heart as I was praying, and what I want to share with you, I call the beauty of fullness.

The beauty of fullness. And I read the passage in Scripture, from a man who knew what it was all about, taught about the Spirit of God, and he witnessed to believers. Of course, he was taking it from where the Savior left it.

In Colossians chapter 2, we read these verses. We are going to read from verse 8, just a few verses only. The beauty of fullness.

And I know we came here all longing to be full, to be complete, to be fulfilled, so that then we can walk in this unfulfilled life in this world. So Paul writes and says, verse 8 of chapter 2 of Colossians, See to it, you brethren, that no one makes a prayer of you by philosophy, and there were plenty of them at that time, as there are plenty of them at this time, and emptied the seed according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. These were the things which were at Colossae.

The Christians had all these tremendous philosophies, and some of them had a religious tincture. Spirits, agnosticism, no more and no more. Religions of feeling and emotions were very rampant among the Greeks.

And then he concludes in the way he does always, and not according to Christ. For in Christ, the whole fullness of God chose to dwell in a bodily form. And you too in him are complete.

And you too are complete in Christ. Not in philosophies, although they may be very, very attractive. Not in religious feelings, although these are with us.

Not in certain doctrinal tastes and attractions, although these are very good in enlightening the soul. Sometimes, of course, they can confuse the soul. But he says, please don't become a prey of all these things.

Don't you hold on them as if they are going to make you complete, and forget Christ, in whom all the fullness of deity chose to dwell in a bodily form with the limitations of humanity. And you, being human beings, are complete in him who limited himself for you, who took the fullness of God which could have perhaps led you into despair, because God is eternal and I am only limited. And if you present before me all the unlimited fullness of God, I am likely to give up in my limitations.

So God, out of his eternal wisdom for you and for me, he put limitations on himself, and he became man, and he put the fullness in the limitations of man for men. No man in this tent, no young person, no woman, no anyone can say it is too hard for me, it is too complicated for me. Let me tell you, it is as human as you are.

It is just at that level, because what is it that became incomplete? Let us approach it in two ways. First, the incompleteness of life apart from the fullness of Christ. We are talking about the beauty of fullness, and I say fullness simply means when life is complete.

And life can only be complete in him who became man for men, so that incomplete men may become complete in him. Well now, let us look at the other side. Before you and I step into this tremendous person called Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, for flesh, what about my life and yours? It remains utterly incomplete.

The prophet, even in the Christian experience, lack of realizing this point makes Christians half-baked cakes, burnt on one side and cooked on the other. Most of us have suffered from this. Or you meet them in the church, they look like angels.

You meet them at home, they are devils. And yet they are born again. Yes, you meet them with their beautiful Bibles, big Bibles, Scotland Bibles, and all that.

They couldn't be more evangelical in terminology. But when it comes to real living the evangelical life, the life of the evangel, the life of good news in the home, what do you find there? Oh, they are rough. Words are tough.

Characters are mean. Faces are difficult. Words are cutting like a knife.

And yet they sing for salvation. Do you realize that that is how we pain the blessed comfort? Do you realize that this is to despise the finished work of our Redeemer who became flesh in order to set flesh from its misery? So that he may redeem you and redeem me from incompleteness. And when life is that half-baked cake, and particularly now I'm talking about people who are morally correct.

Oh, some people are so morally correct that you can't come anywhere near. They scare you to death. They are too good.

You come near, you feel a kind of chill. Their holiness makes you cold. There's no attraction.

They are so holy that they are clumsy. And I do, let me tell you that I'm not pointing a finger. There have been times when I have sat in my home, when things are not right between my dear wife and she's sitting here.

And I take my big Bible as a preacher, and now as a bishop. And I become so holy that I'm clumsy at all. Things are not quite right.

The attitude is not like my Lord. There is a tremendous amount of incompleteness which is witnessing that I'm not like him. I am a half-baked cake.

Very, very well baked in the Bible, half-baked in relationships. That is what I mean when life can be complete even when you are born again. When holiness, instead of being the portrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ, oh my, I will be coming to that point.

But how incomplete, how half-baked, how miserable we are when we are like that. Incomplete in ourselves, and we continue, and we plod, and we probe, and we seek for fullness where it doesn't exist. And we keep bypassing him in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell for you and for me.

Remember the fullness which is in Jesus is not there for himself. He was ever full in heaven. He didn't have come upon the earth in his fullness.

He didn't need it. He was always full. There was no need in him.

So when you hear it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in him, remember it's for you. And that's why he puts these human limitations upon himself, in order that you and I, in our utter incompleteness, may come. May come as we are, because he knows us exactly as we are.

You don't have to pretend. You don't even have to put on a different kind of face. This is our problem.

We wear these pretenses, and masks, and facades, and the language is there, the hearts are different, and the characters are mean, and we dare not open our mouths just in case they discover who we are. He knows who we are, and you can feel at home this evening. The beauty of fullness is there for us, ugly as we are, when we are incomplete.

Because when we are incomplete, we really are not what God meant us to be. Bless God, when you are born again, the Spirit of God continually protests against this incompleteness in you, because he knows what is there for you. It is his work.

He is the agent of fullness. He comes into the world of empty hearts, and empty lives, and miserable, broken people, in order that he may mend, no, recreate. For when he comes, the broken piece becomes completely whole anew.

So you see, we are in good hands, aren't we? You didn't know that? You are in good hands tonight. You are in the hands of one who actually knows you from A to Z, and loves you thoroughly. Now you can never beat that.

Others love you because they think you are wonderful. Jesus never loves you on those terms. Others may love me because they think I am a bishop, and therefore I must be a great man, and I preach, you know.

Jesus never loves me on those terms. It would be all over. He loves me as Fester, whom he knows from A to Z. He knows my miserable failures, and he knows how I pray with my miserable failures too, when I hate my sins and I love them at the same time.

When I want to repent of my sins and I say I may hug them, and I pretend I don't like them, and yet I like them, and I am ashamed of the fact. Romans 7, you see the same, don't understand what I am doing. I hate, I love the same thing I hate.

Am I or another person, am I split in two? Thank God he knows me exactly as that, and he deals me with that. That is what excited that Samaritan woman at the well. A man who knew all the miserable actions of my mess, and at the same time treated me as a lady.

No man had ever treated me like that. He spoke to me on the point, because he penetrates truly, but he shines with beauty, so that he who has been exposed to the truth may never despair. There is no despair before Jesus Christ.

Of course you can reject him like Judas, but even when Judas was about to die, when he was about to commit suicide, he made a confession. I am guilty of one thing, I have betrayed innocent blood. He looked back and there was nothing he could accuse the master of.

He loved him, and loved him, until he rejected love and died. Foolish is beautiful. So you see first of all, we looked at this terrible misery, and I am not going to dwell on it.

I am not going to try and analyze. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to tell you how miserable you are. I have only told you how miserable I become at home.

And it takes quite a while for the Holy Spirit to take me to hospital, so that I can have some treatment. It takes a while because I am reluctant, I hesitate, I don't like my wife to know me like that. I prefer to be known as a respectable gentleman in the Christian sense of the word.

And yet I am miserable. And it shows in my heart, it comes out in my words. My attitudes are confused, my words are hard.

And then the Spirit of God, patiently, persistently, I don't know why. I don't know why he should do that. Why should he stick with me in the thick of it? He is holy, and I am not holy when I am mean.

I am the opposite of the Holy Spirit when I am jealous. I am just opposite, and yet he sticks with me. This is what the New Testament calls the love that will never give me up.

And he brings me round into the presence of the Lord Jesus, which I refer to as the hospital. This is where sick men and women are treated, and physicians qualify to do it. I did not come to call those who feel they are well.

I came particularly for those who are aware they are sick. No one has ever come and left in the same condition. If you have done it, you went to the wrong place.

No one, it has never happened that anyone could come before Jesus Christ and go away as he came. But there may be some of you who say, I have been to Keswick so many times, I go there in the same condition, I come out the same. You have been in the wrong place.

You have come to Keswick but not to Jesus. You have come to speak on the platform. You have not been in the presence of him, the beautiful Son of God, the Almighty God who came particularly to fulfill the unfulfilled, to complete the incomplete, to make perfect that man.

Now I stopped on the way. What do I do? How do I come out? When the Spirit of God diagnoses your incompleteness, there is nothing which makes me incomplete except my sin. You can be sure of that.

It doesn't have to be what you call gross sin. There are no categories in the New Testament. Once it is sin, it is sin.

That's all. You don't even need a theologian to tell you what it is all about. Your heart is the best theologian.

The misery, of course the Holy Spirit is there. He convinces you something has gone wrong. You are now incomplete.

You are not like Jesus and you are not what you are meant to be. Your Christian experience has dried up. Prayer is meaningless.

The Bible doesn't speak. Brethren are miserable to you. You hate them.

When I am cold back home, we have some shining brethren here and there. And we love fellowship because Jesus has been wonderful. But when I am in my incompleteness, when something has come in and has interrupted the flow of the power of Jesus Christ and the love of God and sin has caused darkness, I hate the brethren.

I am using a rough word. I don't really, you know, not enemies. But I simply can't enjoy meeting them.

I feel as if they will embarrass me with their joy. When they sing, I feel miserable. When they give their testaments, it's as if they are pointing a finger of judgment.

They are not. Bless them. I am just like that.

In Africa, we have got a proverb that where there is a leper, you never do like that, your finger. If you do like that, the leper thinks you are imitating him. He will be angry with you because there were many sick people and they said be careful whenever there is a leper, don't fold your fingers because he will take it wrong.

This is what happens when you are guilty. In your incompleteness, you can't enjoy fellowship because your fellowship with your father, the fellowship with Jesus has been interrupted and you have not yet been dealt with. Therefore, you may cry, you may pray, you may do everything, every exercise, every technique and you remain empty, incomplete in yourself.

So you and I hate the incompleteness, don't you? Do you want to go on as an incomplete, half-baked Christian? Sometimes, you know, you look wonderful and the other time, you look terribly mean and you don't know what to do about your meanness. In fact, you can't do anything about it but you can bring it to Jesus. It's as simple as that.

In fact, this evening, if you want quick work, there is a shortcut. You don't have to go round in circles seeking. You have to go direct to Jesus by the way of the cross.

This is where we all go. Until we knock on the gates of splendor, there is no escape. The Holy Spirit will never take you anywhere else.

He will always take you where the blood can be applied. And when that blood is applied upon any crooked character, upon any habit which makes you a slave, do you know what happens? There is a melting. There is a wind which breathes and the limbs become alive.

And the man who was miserable begins to shine. And the husband and wife who couldn't keep it together begin to love one another. This is what Paul is talking about.

And I want to finish this little talk by saying, when a life is complete, where? Where do we find the completeness? In Jesus Christ. How do we find the completeness? By simply exposing ourselves as we are to the power. The agent of fullness is the Holy Spirit.

Whenever you hear the fullness of the Spirit, what does that mean to you? It means one who takes you by the hand, introduces you into what God has put for you in Jesus Christ. That is the teaching of Jesus. When he comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will lead you or guide you into all the truth.

And he will make me shine, glorify me. Because he will take the things which belong to me and he will declare them to you brightly. Where are you tonight? Are you with me in the storehouse? Do you begin to see the shining beauty of the Son of God? Oh, how beautiful Jesus was.

No clumsiness about him. Pure as the light, purer than the light. Ever perfect.

And yet, you know, always normal. You meet him in Galilee. You meet him at the well of Syca.

Absolutely normal. There is a kind of holiness which makes people very clumsy and very abnormal. They become not themselves because they are all the time squeezing and striving and killing themselves and digging in.

My, what a miserable crowd. You know, binding and tying ourselves in knots of confusion. No testimony.

When you are like that, you can't testify. You are just tied. You are bound.

You are tongue-tied. Until the Spirit of God again comes and presents the beauty of the risen Savior in front of you. Do you know Jesus was wonderful? He is so beautifully shining that wherever you met him, it was there.

Tired and yet comforting. Hungry and feeding the hungry ones. Dying on Calvary, he attracted a criminal in despair and the criminal said, you are a king.

How do you put that together? One bleeding in sweat and blood and utter despair and loneliness and another man in utter bitterness of death. He says, you must be a king. Here is the beauty of the completeness of Jesus which was a challenge to any circumstances.

We need Christians tonight who are going to say, I am tired of this misery of being a half-baked Christian. Tonight, I want a balance. I want to come to him who can balance me.

How do you get the balance? Paul puts it beautifully. Jesus Christ in the center. And when Christ takes the central point, do you know what happens? All other things become normalized.

They flow in service to him and to other men. Then people find it easy to talk to you. They can come and talk.

They can help you. You become helpable. You become a man who can be blessed, a woman who can be blessed by others.

Before this experience comes, before the comforter comes to take you and present you as you are into the fullness of Jesus Christ, everything is in chain. Repentance is strange. You look back to 20 years.

There are many Christians who think they repented 20 years ago. What happened today? What happens when you miss the boat? What happens when you cross another brother? You just swallow it and put on a pretended big smile? Or do you face it in the light of the Spirit and take it to Calvary for cleansing and shake your brother's hand asking for forgiveness? If that happened, you would be agents of medicine in the tired world. And it has happened tonight.

Revival begins when saints repent. This is when revival begins. It doesn't begin in the AI.

It doesn't begin even when preaching is simply an enlightening exercise. Under the Spirit of God, your eyes may be opened as I preach now, as I speak, and as my brother speaks. And then, what is the purpose? The purpose is that when you hear Jesus calling you from your incompleteness into his completeness, from your brokenness in the bad sense of the word, the good sense of the word is when a sinner is broken, he becomes complete.

When Jesus melts the heart with his love, then the heart is beautified with his grace. There is nothing more beautiful than Christians full of Jesus Christ. They become infectiously attractive.

You hate them and love them at the same time. It happened in the Acts of the Apostles. The crowd was shining with reality and the people really honored them although they dared not join unless they meant business, of course.

This is what happened to me when I was coming from wandering and misery and I came to these Christians. The Christians in those days back home in Uganda, they were full of Jesus. They talked about him naturally.

They witnessed about the exercises of the Spirit in their homes. They spoke naturally about the gifts of love and so on. Jesus was everything in them.

They attracted me and yet I feared them tremendously. I simply kept away from them and yet I was breaking apart. I needed someone to bring me gently and Jesus did the bringing and the Spirit witnessed that I was whole.

Then the sins were forgiven. Then the brethren became wonderful. Then it was a new day for me and it is going to be a new day for you tonight if you present the kind of character, the kind of attitude, the kind of disposition you have before Jesus Christ, the one who is full for the empty, the one who is perfect for the imperfect.

When he comes, the fishermen shone with glory. In Jerusalem, first of all, they thought they were a bit drunk except that they didn't look that way. But anyway, they looked so fresh, so free, flowing, not according to the Jewish tradition but according to a new liberty which had pierced their hearts, forgiving their sins, breaking their chains and Jesus was just beautiful.

There is nothing more beautiful than a coordinated life where the intellect and the mind and the physical body and the spiritual awareness and sensitivity are all moving harmoniously because Jesus is in control and the Spirit is guiding. A life like that is just a heaven to meet. Day by day we learn more.

I don't mean to say, I'm not saying completeness is not the same as being perfect. In the wrong word of the word, in the wrong sense of that word, to be perfect in the way we understand it now can be wrong. This is a perfect thing.

A Christian is not like this because St. Paul says we are continually being transformed by the Spirit of the Lord into the image of the Son of God. And he's going to do a beautiful work here if you are ready. In fact I felt, looking at you as you were singing, heartbeats, all expecting to leave this tent, shouting until Kezek will tremble with the power, the power of men and women released from incompleteness, enjoying the completeness of Jesus Christ.

Then we can go and tell the world, in a few words men can catch the vision, something has happened. Why are they shining? Why do they look normal and yet they look super normal? They are too human and yet they look super human. Somebody said to one wife in Africa said, now tell me what charm did you use? You and your husband used to quarrel.

Yesterday I saw you singing. Can you tell me the charm that you used on your husband so that he could sing with you? They believe in charms back home. And this dear African Christian lady said, come along I'll tell you.

They went into the kitchen and she poured her heart, gave her testament how miserable she had lived, how she had actually crossed her husband, how she had blamed him for everything. She said, Jesus has come, showed me my misery, forgiven my sins. I told my husband in repentance my husband has accepted him.

Jesus is our charm. You can take him for the asking. And that woman was a Muslim and she was born again right there.

And we don't know, we did not know what was going to happen. But she went and told her husband about it by repenting, broken, asking for forgiveness. And the following Sunday the Muslim husband brought her into church.

Very unusual. May God bless you. As you open your heart with all the incompleteness the spirit has pointed to.

And just remember the key, cleansing is there for you. Completeness is there in Jesus for those who are incomplete. The word is on your lips, Lord I am incomplete.

Lord I am unfit. Lord I need you. And as you say those words, a miracle of grace will take place because the spirit of God is going to do a beautiful work in you and then we can praise God together.

May God bless you.

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