

(1986 Prairie Series) 5 - Church in Action

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the transformative power of the resurrection and the active role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for ministry and evangelism.

Duration: 1:09:35

Topics: "Prairie Series"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a boy near Hamburg who had a deep desire to know Jesus Christ but didn't know how. The speaker explains that God intervenes when he sees someone who wants to become a Christian but hasn't been told how. God directs a Christian to pick up the person and lead them to Christ. The speaker then goes on to describe how this simple act of picking up a boy on the side of the road led to the establishment of multiple centers around the world where people can learn about and experience a dynamic relationship with Jesus. The sermon concludes with a reference to Acts chapter 8, highlighting the church in action and the role of believers in spreading the message of Christ.

Transcript

Well, thank you so much. I need hardly say that it's been a tremendous joy for me to be here with the with you these days it's been a wonderful week and I want to thank you for the Tremendous fellowship that I personally have enjoyed as also Rick school who's been accompanying me. He's the son of the director of our work in Sweden and he Acts as my mule he sort of carries my baggage and writes my letters and Nope Where are you Rick? There is stay up Thank you very much He's bumped into a quite a lot of folks here and I'm thankful for his tremendous help He records the messages and takes care of all kinds of other things and does his best to keep me out of mischief with no great success.

I Have a fantastic wife. Her name is Joan and She comes from the north of Ireland I Thank God for her for seven years before I met her Because I was so busy engaged, you know traveling all around the British Isles that I didn't have time to look for a wife So I just said Lord We're created in Christ unto good works Which God has before ordained that we should walk in them Which means quite obviously that if I'm to have a wife in your divine purpose, it's already settled in heaven You've already made the decision. There are no issues for you to face The only thing is I don't know where she is, but you do and that's really all I need to know If I'm to have a wife, of course, if I'm not to have a wife, then it doesn't matter too much.

I Mean if you want me to go to South America, you know float down the Amazon get eaten by crocodiles I probably don't need a wife unless she's going to get eaten at the same time But the thing was That by

circumstances that I won't bother to tell you I landed in her home And we saw each other about three times before we got married Because you see the world was at war and I didn't have time So it was a very brief courtship and very inexpensive because all my letters were paid for by the British government being in the army but We spent about five months together during the first five and a month five and a half years of our married life In the service of King and country. We've improved a little bit on that not an awful lot but She really has been fantastic totally identified in the ministry that God was pleased to entrust to us heavily involved and We seek to get together now and again I'll see her tomorrow for a few days and we commute around the world and you know make a date sometime where we're gonna meet and We're both delighted at the incredible privilege that God has given to us to be Separated so often from each other in his service. She writes to me and says when there's no blessing come home Trouble is there's always blessing But it's wonderful, isn't it to have a wife so completely identified and I rejoice in all the rich ministry that God has given to her.

She's just come back from England a couple of days ago and we have four children and all our sons are boys and Mm-hmm Sometimes you can't tell these days, but mine are My wife accepted Christ when she was seven years of age and my oldest boy Chris I'm happy to say he accepted Christ when he was seven years of age His catapult broke and he came if you know what a catapult is. It's an engine of war You know elastic and a piece of paper or even a stone Hmm Magnificent if the teachers back his turn Because he doesn't know where it's coming from But his broke and so in the process of mending it for him I talked to him about the Lord Jesus and that's when he received Christ Well, he's in his early 40s now some you may know he married Cliff Barrow's oldest daughter Bonnie and They have three little boys and they live in Ravencrest Chalet, which is my home to in Colorado Estes Park and Mark and Peter the next two boys they received the Lord Jesus when they were five and Mark today He directs our international headquarters in England Cape and Ray Peter has a sort of world parish. He directs the Spring school, which is our fall school in New Zealand Until Christmastime then he organizes Evangelistic camps and then operates at our center in Australia Then shoots back usually through the United States and Canada stopping it Some of our centers on this part of the world before going back to lead our spring school in England Maybe takes an evangelistic team all over the British Isles before returning to New Zealand.

So he has rather a wide parish and He's just come back from Israel my fourth boy He's now 21 you'd hardly believe that two years ago I still had a teenager He was three years on our maintenance staff in England, but is with us at this moment in Colorado getting more experience in construction So that he too can be part of the team We are so delighted that they're all as excited as we are about the Lord Jesus and we thank God for these boys so That's of course been a source of real joy to our hearts I was converted as I told you last night at the ripe old age of 12 Peter the last boy he was only four all the family were away at that time save he and myself and Much to my surprise at the end of the evening meeting. He said We ought to pray and read the Bible Well, that was a pretty smart suggestion and surprised me somewhat He hadn't shown too much evidence of being particularly pious at that age So I took him on my knee and we read a few verses from the Bible and I explained about the Lord Jesus coming to live Within you sharing his life every moment of every day But he couldn't do it until first having died that our sins might be forgiven. We invite him to come to be our Savior Well, he listened very very care.

I said do you know the Lord Jesus lives inside you? or no Wouldn't you like to? well, he said yes, so we pray together and I deliberately didn't say anything to his mother They always had a little devotion, of course at night and I thought if this is truly of God's Holy Spirit Life will be manifest and sure enough that evening. He blurted it out He said Jesus lives in my tummy Well That's the inside for a small boy I'm happy

to tell you that his theology has risen by about 15 inches And now he knows where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. So that's been a great joy for us Torchbearers.

Well God laid this upon our hearts when I returned from World War two and a beautiful place up in the northwest of England A hundred and seventy acres of lovely parkland near the English Lake District about 70 miles south of Scottish border 150 miles say from Glasgow 60 160 from Edinburgh beautiful location and We've had about a hundred and twenty five thousand young folks staying with us there But it's sort of buddied out into different parts of the world so that we have two in Austria two in Switzerland one in Spain Switzerland France and in Austria and here in the United States in Colorado there in Estes Park in Texas between San Antonio and Kerrville and a beautiful location on Thetis Island in the Straits of Georgia between Vancouver and Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island and in Australia And we have a school as I indicated in New Zealand and now a new one that we've just established in Indonesia between Jakarta and Bandung up in the mountains We have many schools in places like Malaysia Burma and Hong Kong and We thank God for these delightful opportunities.

There's a jungle base 150 miles from Bangalore in India elephants and all and That's a marvelous opportunity to reach out to the countless millions of that needy country 700 million as all of you know I'm sure and 70% living them in little villages so many of which there in particular where we are in the jungle utterly pagan but they reach out to those needy people for whom the Lord Jesus died and we have a an administrative headquarters and Bible school outreach in Manila in the Philippines and We're just about to establish a new base in Japan and The object of course is Bible camp ministry so that thousands of kids can come and be confronted with the total claims of the Lord Jesus Having come to Christ as a boy in a boys camp needless to say that's very much laid on my heart and so we've ministered to these young folks all over the world and Then as a an offspring as it were of the Bible camp ministry the short-term Non-vocational Bible schools and every winter we have about 800 students in residence from about 30 different countries in these different locations And then a couple of hundred added to that during the spring and summertime in special short-term Bible schools so that about a thousand students 18 years and age and upwards come and Participate in that Bible school program not a vocational training.

We're simply teaching Christians what it means to be a Christian Is if you produce preachers you're not necessarily produce Christians, but if you produce Christians you always produce preachers so that's more economical, so we do it that way around and we thank God for the thousands of young folk that come and some of them have been here this week and Some are in residence now of course during our spring school You may say How do you start these centers? What's very simple? All you have to do some 30 years ago is drive down an autobahn in the south of Germany With a somewhat loaded car and a lot of baggage.

I had my wife with me and if you have your wife with you always have a lot of baggage, and then you see a boy hitchhiking and You're strongly Sort of desirous of picking him up But you look at the car, and you feel the springs And you know how many people are aboard and you harden your heart and drive on But about 300 yards later you're strongly impelled to go back and pick him up Because you see that boy who lived near Hamburg had a deep desire in his heart to know Jesus Christ, but didn't know how What do you think God does when he sees a boy on the side of the road? Who wants to become a Christian, but nobody's told him exactly how to become a Christian It's very simple God watches all the cars going by until he sees one with a Christian in And then he says stop pick him up in the if the driver's too stupid Too idle too much of a hurry or thinks the cars too laden that he drives on then 300 yards late He shouts a little louder. I'm glad I heard the second shot Went back picked him up took him to the place where dear friends

were allowing us to spend the night in their home And they graciously gave him accommodation and that night Peter accepted Christ he was raised from the dead he became a Partaker of the divine nature the Lord Jesus came to invade his humanity Exactly what it means to be a Christian a living finger on the hand of God marvelous Well he came to our home point of fact and was with us five years, and we gave him a wife I Mean you can't do much more than lead a boy to Christ give him his training introduce him to his wife And then give him a job. I mean apart from burying him.

That's about all you can do But you know before that as a teenager boy. He went up to His home and led one of his school chums to Christ Well that boy went to Bible school met a sweet Spanish girl and as a result of that he now directs our Center in Spain on the Mediterranean coast near Valencia then Peter came first to Capernaum and then Having been deeply impressed with the need of the young folks in Austria. He went on assignment on our staff to a place called Schladming and We seconded him to a Lutheran church where God first Marvelously used him amongst the young folks now we have a beautiful old castle built a thousand years ago Which we've dusted and rehabilitated and thousands of kids have been there, but in the meantime while he was in Schladming There was a knock on the door and a boy came with a letter from his mom and dad who were Lutheran Christians And they said we understand in this letter that you're a German young man come to Austria to lead boys and girls to Christ well We have four sons and none of them are converted, so we're sending out all this boy amps with this letter.

Please lead him to Christ Well that was a nice invitation so right there on the doorstep. He led him to Christ now Ernst in the meantime went back later and led his three younger brothers to Christ and his mother to Christ He's just come back after five years in Micronesia the islands off the mainland of Indonesia But having led his three brothers to Christ the older of those three boys when he was still a teenager came to one of our summer conferences and Then hitchhiked back through England France Germany to Austria Now in the meantime of course Peter Had become the director of that big castle there in upper Austria Schloss Klaus So now we've got two centers just because a kid was standing on the side of the road you see now in the meantime While that boy his the older of his three younger brothers was hitchhiking back through England France Germany and Austria He stayed overnight in a youth hostel in Paris and while he was in that youth hostel he met a Buddhist student from Japan and Being you see a living member of the body of Jesus Christ his lips gave utterance to what the Lord Jesus had to say to that Buddhist student learned that he wanted to go to England he was sort of Hitchhiking around the world and so that young Austrian boy said if you go to England call it Capon Ray which was pretty smart Because he knew what would hit him Once he got there, and it did We were building a new conference hall And he worked and got so interested asked whether he could stay another three months and did during which time he accepted the Lord Jesus He came through our Bible school. I had the joy of baptizing him in the lake at Capon Ray in England he went to Bible training Institute in Glasgow and He now is our national director in Japan and it has just purchased some land so then we can establish a new center in that Country you see it's so simple All you have to do is pick up a kid about 33 years ago on an autobahn in Germany you see lead him to Christ He leads somebody to Christ who establishes the center in Spain He leads his three younger brothers to Christ one of whom hitchhikes through England Germany Paris leads a Buddhist Japanese boy to come to England to find Christ so we can have another center in Japan isn't it simple I Mean could you organize that I? Mean could you sit down in committee and see you know plan it all happen of course you couldn't You see the Lord Jesus said out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water and the beautiful But thing about a river is it flows? You can't push it Nor can you channelize it if you do if you want it to flow in a certain direction You've got to dig the channel then it isn't a river.

It's a canal That's man-made And it's always changing course It's always unique you can never keep it the same shape if you want to keep a river the same shape You've got to freeze it, but then you haven't got a river. You've only got a block of ice The best thing to do is let it flow and cut its own channel and over all these years Since 1947 God has been cutting the channel and all over the world circling the globe today We have 17 centers with thousands of kids boys girls men and women So that they might be introduced to that living dynamic relationship to the Lord Jesus that allows him to be God in the man Well, that's just a little panoramic view of what we call torch-bearing nothing nothing novel about it nothing unique there are countless other agencies that God has been pleased to bring into being and We enjoy the sweetest fellowship with such and it's our privilege being interdenominational interorganizational international simply to be a fellowship that serves as Best God would have us know the interests of every true believer worldwide, and that's our privilege to serve others What we've been talking about the Christian life in these days Especially as it was evidenced in that early group of believers Men remember who were incorrigibly happy utterly unafraid and nearly always in trouble Who knew what they believed believe what they knew acting on the assumption that it was true and let God prove it who were sent and when But they weren't always that way and we have been discussing that for the last couple of nights Something had to happen to get them out of Matthew 16 into Acts chapter 5 Matthew 16 forbidden by the Lord Jesus to tell anybody that he Jesus was the Christ yet Acts chapter 5 Though beaten and flogged forbidden to say anything in his name Rejoicing that they were allowed to suffer shame for Jesus they ceased not to teach and preach that Jesus was the Christ What was it that made the difference? the resurrection the resurrection After a death at first they did not want a resurrection in which at first they had not believed But in rediscovering the Lord Jesus as he appeared to them in the upper room.

They've got a new joy new Bible new message New responsibility and a new enabling now said the Lord Jesus I'm going to lift the prohibition and you're going to be my witnesses to the ends of the earth But before you embark upon those new responsibilities Tarry in the city of Jerusalem because I haven't yet returned to be with my father so that I can come in the in the person of my other self the Holy Spirit and Occupy your humanity as that new body The father is going to give me so that your hands will be mine to work with your feet mine to walk with your lips mine to speak with eyes to see with ears to hear with hearts to love with remember That's the Christian life Well, how did it work out Well, I thought we might dance at that just for a few minutes tonight turn to Acts chapter 8 the church in action the church which is his body Chapter 8 verse 1 Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen Stood by bear saw his blood run in the gutter heard his bones snap as he was stoned to death and Saul as for him verse 3 he made havoc of the church Entering into every house and hailing men and women he committed them to jail which Of course was the very best thing that could possibly have happened for the early church Because at that stage they were tempted to settle down and get comfy But that wasn't the purpose which they had been redeemed Because God didn't send his son simply to come into this world that men might get out of heaven into heaven But that he our risen Lord Jesus might get out of heaven into them That they indeed might be that Humanity in which he would continue to do that which he had begun to do and teach that which he had begun to teach as he Came to seek and to save that which is lost And it was never his intention that the church should get comfortable in Jerusalem.

So he put a cat among the pigeons Therefore they that were scattered abroad when everywhere preaching the word Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ Unto them What's the difference between preaching the word and preaching Christ? Well, no difference We saw that last evening there's no dichotomy between the written word and the living word or between the living word and the written word That was the mistake the theologians made they detached the written word from the living

word and that Remember from last night was the mistake that the disciples made they detached the living word from the written word and for that reason to the Theologians the Bible didn't make sense and other cycles Jesus didn't make sense But now you see the Lord Jesus having opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures whether they preach the word or they preach Christ it was one of the same thing they knew they couldn't preach the word without preaching Christ and then you they couldn't preach Christ without preaching the word and Philip in Samaria was marvelously owned of God as he bore testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is one who laid down his life that we might be Reconciled to God know the power of his divine indwelling and there was great joy verse 8 in that city And then when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord verse 25 They returned to Jerusalem and they preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans in other words after that great citywide crusade in Samaria they had subsidiary campaigns and the villages around and by this time, of course Philip's name made news And everybody was out to hear the great preacher citywide evangelist and then verse 26 The angel of the Lord Spoke under Philip saying arise And go Go toward the south And to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza which is desert To the citywide evangelist whose name made news the Spirit of God Came to give instructions From the head to a member of his body go I Wanted to get on a donkey and go for a ride in the desert And of course many of us at that stage would have been tempted to argue What do you think I'm gonna do in the desert I'm the citywide evangelist I Mean nobody knows me in the in the desert, but around here everybody knows me They all come up to hear me preach what I'm gonna do in the desert.

Who are you a bunch of goats But you see Philip didn't argue Why didn't he argue very simple He was a man being filled with the Holy Spirit Or you say, how do you know he was filled with the Spirit Well, the answer to that is equally simple it tells you in the next verse When God said go He arose and Went In other words he was sent when What happens when you're sent and when You put And if you know who sent you know who put you know it's God who sent you and God who put you nothing can frighten you and You don't even bother to ask questions Because you realize now there are no decisions for you to make as A living healthy robust full-blooded member of the body of Christ.

There are only instructions to obey So he went a donkey ride in the desert And as he arose and went behold a man of Ethiopian eunuch of great authority on the candidacy queen of the Ethiopians who had the charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem for the worship was returning and sitting in his chariot reading of all things in the middle of the desert The prophecy of Isaiah and the spirit then said to Philip go near join yourself to that chariot and Philip ran He had to run otherwise he'd have missed his text But he arrived dead on target What do you think what do you think in the middle of the desert an Ethiopian Eunuch was reading chancellor's text a man of great authority on the Queen candidacy.

What do you think he was reading? Says verse 32 the place of the scripture which he read was this He was led as a sheep to the slaughter like a lamb dumb before his shearers who opened in on his mouth in his humiliation His judgment was taken away who shall declare his generation his life is taken from the earth The gospel according to Isaiah the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief The cost of our peace laid upon him by whose stripes we healed I Said Philip to the eunuch verse 30 understand as thou what thou readest He said how can I Except some man should guide me I Need a voice I need somebody to tell me I Said the eunuch to Philip verse 34 I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this is he talking about himself or is he talking about some other man? Say what a fantastic opportunity Philip there in the middle of the desert All the God sent him was get on a donkey and go for a ride in the desert. No other instructions God didn't tell him why and Philip didn't even have to know He only had to go when God sent

him with a hilarious expectation of Something that would happen that would be to God's total satisfaction That's how we know that he was a man being filled with the Holy Spirit Of our Lord Jesus. We're told Luke chapter 4 in verse 1 Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit Was led by the Spirit into the desert The evidence that our Lord Jesus every moment of every day from the moment of conception was being filled with the Holy Ghost was that he Was told by his father what to do and did at all times what he was told.

I Do only those things that please him So Philip verse 35 and we were discussing this over lunch one or two of us This is one of the most magnificent lectures on homiletics. You could find anywhere Said the unit to Philip of whom speaketh the man this So Philip verse 35 Opened his mouth and that's the best thing to do if you're going to say something And you think it's very elementary but a lot of true Christians need to learn how to open their mouths But remember this only open your mouth if you've got something to say When the disciples before they wanted the cross or dared to believe in the resurrection With all their enthusiasm wanted to serve Christ. He said keep your mouth shut Because they didn't know what it was all about But now you see Philip with the others Have rediscovered the Lord Jesus in the fullness and power of his resurrection as the one whom they crucified but God raised from the dead Began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus If he'd come from one of our liberal Theological seminaries today he'd have probably apologized for the prophecy of Isaiah and he probably said well You know, there are at least seven different theories about its authorship.

We're not absolutely certain that it's authentic Fat lot of use of he he would have been in the dead But then you see he never would have received the instructions to go Beginning at the self same scripture he preached unto him Jesus Because these are they that testify said the Lord Jesus of me He was wonderfully saved almost took Philip's breath away as they were on their way they came to a certain water and no doubt Philip had explained that the beautiful picture then as now of our Identity with the Lord Jesus as those judicially executed in the person of another is to go beneath the water Testifying to the world. I want you to know that the person I was and you have known me to be In all my sin and need has been buried with Christ And I give you public notice that you can say goodbye to the person you knew me to be And when you come out from the water No doubt Philip would explain to the eunuch in this beautiful picture of what happens when a person on the grounds of redemption Enjoys that spiritual regeneration that puts God back into the man when you come up into the water You're testifying to the world that you being identified with Christ in death He now the risen Lord has come to share his life with you and you share his resurrection And you give public notice to the world mom dad brothers sisters school chums fellow students workmates fellow drivers My associates in the office my customers and clients I give you public notice that the person I used to be you can consider buried and now you have the absolute right in that I have shared the resurrection of my Lord Jesus to expect of my hands what he would do to expect from my Lips to hear what he would say and to expect with my legs to see him going where he wants. That's baptism It's baptism.

I'm crucified with Christ Nevertheless, sir. Nevertheless, I live here not I Christ lives in me. So I give you public right to see Christ behave That's a Christian because remember a Christian is somebody who cannot possibly happen apart from Jesus Christ Well while he was explaining this they came across some water and said the the unit to the to Philip He said what hinders me to be baptized? Well Philip said if you believe with all your heart, of course you may Well, he answered and said of course, I believe I Believe that this Jesus you've been telling about is the Christ the Son of God I was just waiting for somebody to come and tell me what that meant Fantastic say how hard was it for Philip to lead that man to Christ?

Well, he couldn't help it I Mean did he need an all-night prayer meeting to twist God's arm to bestow some blessing upon that? Well, of course not I Mean if he in the middle of the desert asked God to bless that man God is so what do you think I put you there for? That's why I told you to get on the donkey and go for a ride Because I've come to seek and to say that which is lost this man went all the way to Jerusalem to find God and found nothing but sterile dead religion But God doesn't leave a man in the lurch He tells a healthy member of his body to get on a donkey and go for a ride in the desert so simple When they were come up out of the water the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip he came by donkey went back by air And the eunuch saw him no more He went on his way rejoicing That was the church in action say who organized it Who put Philip at that precise precise moment in time in The place where he would encounter a man reading his Bible all about a Savior who was wounded for his transgressions and With a heart hungry to know Who it could be and how he could know God who organized that Well the Lord Jesus you see he's the head of the body And all he's asking of you and me men and women boys and girls who know that we have been redeemed in his precious blood And that he's come by his Holy Spirit and well our humanity all He wants of us is our sensitivity to his direction so that we are told what to do And do as we're told be being filled with the Holy Spirit In the meantime we're told chapter 9 and verse 1 soul breathing out threatenings and slaughtered against the disciples of the Lord Went to the high priest desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues if he found any of this way whether there were men Or women he might bring them bound to Jerusalem That's all of times arch enemy of the early church dangerous man But on the way to Damascus there was a light brighter than the Sun at noonday, and we discussed this on Wednesday night And he was flung sightless to the ground heard a voice in the Hebrew tongue saying soul soul why persecute is thou me Who are you Lord?

I'm Jesus Whom thou persecuted hard for you to kick against the praise soul of Tarsus capitulated Said he Lord verse 6 chapter 9. What wilt thou have me to do and The Lord Jesus said arise and go Go into the city and it shall be told you what thou must do and he went Ended up in the house of a man called Judas in a street called straight And verse 10 tells us that there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias and to him said the Lord in a vision Ananias he said here.

I am and The Lord said unto him arise and Give you one one guess what do you think he said? Go Go Go into the street, which is called straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one cold soul of Tarsus behold he prayed He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him Then he might receive his sight go You see to Philip God said get in the donkey and go for a ride in the desert To Ananias one of his disciples another healthy member of the body of Christ on earth said he I want you to knock on a door down the road a Little house-to-house visitation Well Ananias wasn't at first all that enthusiastic He said Did you say soul of Tarsus God said yes, so let us And imagine Ananias said are you sure you've got the name, right? God said yes, I've got the name, right Well, are you sure I'm the best person to go I? Mean would you have been all that enthusiastic to knock on the door where you knew soul of Tarsus arch enemy of the early church With letters of authority to throw into jail everybody who dared to name the name of Jesus. Would you have been all that enthusiastic? Ananias answered verse 13 Lord. I've heard by many of this man how much evil you have done He has done to thy saints at Jerusalem here He hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call in your mind on your name and you want you want me to knock Batman's door Right Get on The Lord said go thy way he's a chosen vessel unto me The last person and an ass maybe you would ever have supposed would become a Christian But he's a chosen vessel unto me To bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel for I will show him how great things he must suffer For my name's sake I haven't offered him health wealth prosperity or anything else.

I've just Recognized the deep longing of his heart in his fanatical pursuit of religion Doing it with the utmost sincerity thinking misguidedly that he was serving God I hated what he was doing, but I loved his motive and Knew that if only he could come face to face With truth he'd obey him and did So go I Said go And Anna and I stopped arguing do you know why? He was a man being filled with the Holy Spirit, how do we know that? What tells in the next verse 17 and a nurse When That's what it means to be being filled with the Holy Spirit That's what it means to be a healthy member of the body of Christ exactly what you expect of your hands When you tell them to do something you expect them to do it If you want to eat your food, you tell your hands to pick up the knife and fork and they do Well, what do you expect? What would you anticipate the Lord Jesus would expect of us when we dare to say I'm a Christian a member of his body Subject to his headship sharing his life. He dwelling within me that Humanity the father has presented to him on earth today so that he can continue Through me to do his ancient work seeking and saving that which is lost. What do you expect? That he would anticipate if I dare to say I'm a Christian well when he tells me to go I go The only evidence that I'm a healthy living robust full-blooded member of his body Enjoying the sheer adventure of sharing his life on earth on the way to him And an ass went his way entered into the house and all he had to do when he went into the house where there was housed the man who so shortly before Had been the arch enemy of the early church was to put his arms around his neck and say brother Saul The Lord even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost Say how difficult was it for an honest? To bring blessing to this man who had been the arch persecutor of the early church We couldn't help it All he had to do was to be told what to do do he was told and fling his arm around his neck And We made the Christian life complicated Are you Christian Then if whose body are you are you a member Under whose jurisdiction do you operate? Who do you recognize as being the head of that body that you say you belong to? Are you allowing other people to play God in your life other than Jesus Christ Then probably the Christian life you will be very exhausting Because in all probability with the best will in the world you'll be trying to live a life for him that only he can live through you Only a glance at the tenth chapter because the story is well known to you.

It was the devout man He was a a Roman officer very very fine man. He was a major Centurion of one of the most famous regiments in the Imperial Roman Army It's believed that this regiment was that regiment that finally was stationed in Chester in England And there's a museum with their chattels and things they left behind Cornelius he was a good man wasn't a Christian But he was devout he prayed to God always Extremely generous and gave much arms to the people probably the one who built the synagogue for the Jews although he was an officer in an enemy occupying army Everybody loved him and The Jews had the highest regard And then God sent an angel About the ninth hour of the day He was somewhat surprised and The angel brought the message thy prayers and thine arms are come up for a memorial before God now send men to Joppa Call for one Simon whose surname is Peter. He lodges with one Simon a Tanner whose house is by the seaside He'll tell you what you ought to do God sent this servant of his and said your prayers and your arms haven't been despised God never despises the goodness of a good man But God was kind enough Recognizing the symptoms of a soul quest of a man hungry for God praying day and night fasting Doing good things because he wanted to know God God doesn't despise a man for that But in answer to his prayer he gives him a warning This time to be on the lips of Peter to tell him what he ought to do And You see because Cornelius was such a good man.

He got saved good men like Cornelius always got get saved not because they're good But because they're good enough to know that they're not good enough You see it's only men as good as Cornelius that are good enough to know that they're not good enough And he wasn't even ashamed to tell his servants and

the soldier that he sent as an escort But he was sending for a man who would let them know how they could be saved In the meantime remember God was warning Peter up on the roof having a quiet doze while somebody was getting the food ready He saw the vision a sheet lowered by its four corners with unclean beasts and God said arise Peter slay me And he protested that's dirty stuff I'm a Jew. I can't eat that stuff. You know, I can't eat that stuff God said call not thou common that which I have cleansed three times it happened and While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said under him a whole three men seek you Arise therefore verse 20 and get thee down and what's the word? Go Go with them Doubting nothing I sent them So you see to Philip God said get on a donkey and go for a ride in the desert to ananias God said go and knock on the door down the road To Peter.

He said I want you to spend a day in a doghouse a House of a dirty Gentile dog These men have come to fetch you I Sent them And Peter stopped arguing Do you know why he stopped arguing Because he was a man being filled with the Holy Spirit, how do you know what tells you the next verse 21 Peter Went God said go and Peter went To Philip God said go and he went to ananias God said go and he went to Peter said go and he went and when you're sent and went you're always poor and you're always put in the place where God wants you to be and Blessings inevitable I wouldn't waste God's time asking me to bless in the place in the place where he put me If I'm absolutely convinced at any given moment that I'm in a place where he put me what possible Service could be rendered by my saying God, please bless me. God would simply say what do you think I put you? Therefore, don't you credit me with any intelligence? You're a member of my body I'm the head of that body and if you go when I send you you're put in the place where I want you Credit me please with enough intelligence to know that I'm going to do something that will be to my eternal satisfaction Even if it isn't to anybody else's That's the hilarious expectation that you have the right to have so long as you're prepared to be sent and Be numbered amongst those who win Nothing sensational about it. There's nothing much sensational about going for a ride on the back of a donkey in the desert Nothing very much sensational about knocking on the door down the road Or going with a couple of servants and a soldier escort back To the house of a Roman officer nothing very sensational spectacular, but essentially miraculous When Cornelius finally welcomed Peter he said thank you for coming We are here all gathered and he had filled the place with his friends Not to hear your opinions But to hear what God has to say through your lips what a marvelous congregation And before ever Peter had done preaching God had seen the faith in their hearts that embraced the message Acts 15 God knowing their hearts cleansed them through their faith and witnessed giving them the Holy Spirit and Cornelius and his friends in Receiving the Holy Spirit from God in response to their faith as they learned that Jesus God's dear son died in their place Were raised from the dead and Peter was still preaching Hadn't got to his third point Not even the little poem at the end There wasn't even an invitation.

I mean it was hardly respectable and Yet they were all saved So how difficult was it for the Philip to lead the unit to Christ couldn't help it How difficult was it for Ananias to be a blessing to Saul of Tarsus who had encountered Christ on the road to Damascus? Well couldn't help it. All he had to do is fling his arms around his neck. How difficult was for Peter to lead? Cornelius the dirty Gentile dog and his friends to Christ He didn't even know they were saved though.

He was still preaching God had done the job I Say what did it take for Philip in the desert to be the right man in the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person Well, he had to die to his reputation as a citywide evangelist be told what to do and do as he told So what did it take for Ananias to be the right man the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person Very simply had to die to his own physical well-being He was sticking his neck on the block Knocking on the door of the

arch enemy of the early church, but he died to all that So what did it take for Peter to be the right man the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person Well he just had to die to his racial and religious prejudices his denominational prejudices Be told what to do and do as he was told isn't that simple that was the church in action Say who was running the church Well the Lord Jesus The head of the body Operating through his Holy Spirit. Who's the nervous system of that body? So that just as the father could communicate to the son through the indwelling Holy Spirit Through whom he shared as man on earth the life of his father God in heaven so now the Lord Jesus By the same Holy Spirit communicates to you and to me Who on earth has redeemed sinners cleansed in his blood share his resurrection life? What a fantastic privilege that God has given to us And you see nothing's changed It's as true today as it was then because the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever the only essential difference between what he began to do and began to teach remember on earth in that body the father gave him at Bethlehem and what he Continued to do and continue to teach as recorded for us in the book of the Acts Was that it was in the new body the father gave him on the day of Pentecost when he risen from the dead came to invade the humanity of a hundred and twenty Forgiven sinners to whom were added that evening three thousand others and then daily all down the centuries till 1986 Added to the Lord members of his body makes life incredibly exciting You know I Had to fly once from Billings, Montana to Seattle it was a plane that was stopping at Spokane in Washington It was a full plane just a few seats vacant one was next to me And then a mum and dad came with a whole bunch of kids They had to scatter to occupy the remaining seats and one of the children a boy of about 12 came and sat alongside And After a bit we got in a conversation. He was a nice kid And I talked to him about the Lord Jesus I was interested to know that he was 12 because I was converted when I was 12 So I shared with him how in a boy's camp.

I received the Lord Jesus. We had heaps of fun. I Because if God gives you a lovely opportunity like that keep in touch he became part of my parish So I wrote him didn't get a letter written in reply don't expect a letter all that soon not from a kid at 12 Because they hate writing letters worse than I do But finally I did get a letter It's always a source of joy to me Is what he read He said dear mr. Thomas when I was about 10 years old Well, he was 12 not 10.

I told him that afterwards because I had it in my address book. He didn't even know how old he was When I was about 10 years old I sat next to you on an airplane from Billings, Montana to Spokane, Washington And I don't like this bit He said I remember you as a happy old man Do you know when he wrote this 1966 20 years ago And he thought I was a happy old man Happy old man my foot Anyway, he said I remember you as a happy old man full of life and I remember that you asked me all kinds of questions about Jesus and you shared with me some things about him But now I can't remember what? That's encouraging too, isn't it for preaching? But the things I do remember most was that you though a perfect stranger talked to me It made me laugh told me for the first time about one called Jesus and when we changed planes in Spokane I felt you were my friend And you even wrote me one letter that I now have before me that was in November 1966 Today he said I'm 19 years old He said I'm now about to graduate from a Lutheran Bible school here in Seattle Most of all I wanted to share with you the joy that the Lord has given to me in his son Jesus in The fellowship of the Saints in the deepness of the word I praise him for leading me making himself real to me loving me dying for me Changing me from my old nature to the new glorified nature in him. I want to live for him I want to live to his praise.

I want to live to his glory He quotes Ephesians 1:12 that I may be to the praise of his glory Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ never the letter I live yet not I please don't get me wrong Christ lives in me this He said is my single heart's desire. I want you to know this because you were the first one I remember talking

to me about Jesus in a real way You shared through your witness and your prayers in my salvation and in my fulfillment in Christ I just wanted you to know that and to know that I'm eternally thankful that you love Jesus enough to share him with me Thank you said he in Christ. I'll see you in heaven Be looking for me Well, I wasn't prepared to wait till I got to him.

I Mean he didn't think it would be all that long before I got there, so He Signed himself a fellow child of the King Brad Agen brought next time I flew into Seattle I Contacted him we had a marvelous time of fellowship in the airport And then just a very short time ago because he teaches now in Oregon He came to the coast where I was having a conference drove two hours just to have 20 minutes To remember what a joy it is you see to be available to the Lord Jesus just a kid In a plane Well I Didn't have to get on a donkey. I just had to get on a plane that's all But get excited about being a Christian It isn't it isn't just sort of you know getting involved in Christian work. No no no just be a Christian Just be a Christian just be a healthy living Hilariously happy member of the body of the Lord Jesus in joyful anticipation that under the prompting of his Holy Spirit He's going to cause your path to cross with some of our boy go home and a woman Who's desperately in need of the one whom you already know and he knows where they are Exactly where they are You don't even have to know What he's doing when he does it One of the greatest joys of my life now Almost every week my life almost every day of every week is to meet those who are surfacing and Who come to me again as many have done here in these few days and said it was 20 years ago 30 years ago 15 Years ago, and I just want to thank you now.

I don't know these dear folks don't remember their faces Don't remember the circumstance, but something happened that has its lasting consequence to the inestimable Enrichment of their lives simply because you're available and you see there's not one boy Not one girl man or woman sitting here in this congregation this evening who cannot be that available to the Lord Jesus that whether you know It or whether you don't which is totally irrelevant His life released through you like a flowing river will make its impact and change the course of some boy's life girl man a woman to the uttermost ends of the earth Just five years ago. I had the great privilege of speaking at commencement Columbia Bible College South Carolina I Was speaking at meetings in Germany at the time so I had to fly back for those two days and then fly back to Germany on the Sunday To be back in time for the meetings on Monday But there was a student there who was taking a graduate course so instead of leaving after graduation He remained passed a message. He said I'd like to talk to you So on the Sunday morning he came He was a little diffident introduced himself Jack Cooper he said I Don't know quite how to talk to you because I don't know whether you'll fully understand But he said you're the only real father that I've ever had Now I've never seen him before He said I'm an Apache Indian, and I was brought up in an Apache Indian village in New Mexico He said my grandfather and my great-grandfather were two of the most famous Apache Indian chiefs.

They were fine noblemen Involved of course at that time in the Indian Wars But he said my mother and my father have been debauched degenerate drunkards I've never known real parents My father's a brutal man From my earliest days as a little child he thrashed me mercilessly The age of eight he beat me So brutally that I lay on the ground in despair and in agony and I cried from my heart God, where are you? He said I didn't know God I didn't even know there was a God But I felt somehow there must be some body somewhere who cared That was the beginning of the awakening of his soul He said by the 18 I was as drunken as my dad I Was not only a drug addict I was a drug pusher and I was a gunrunner He said there was seldom a day That I slept before I bought two or three thousand dollars in my pocket in the pursuit of my dirty trades But by the age of 23 My whole life seemed to have disintegrated And in sheer despair I

dropped on my knees again And I said God Whoever you are save me So I didn't know what it meant to be saved I've never heard the language But within a day or two in the first First time ever in our Apache Indian village a lady missionary came through And she led me to Christ But she only stayed a day or two but before she went she left me your tapes and your books and For several years you were the only church I ever went to The only voice I ever heard The only counselor to whom I could go The only real father I ever had I didn't know that he said I wanted you to know that It was at your recommendation to that lady that she recommended me to come here to Columbia Bible College I've graduated I'm taking a postgraduate course so that I can go back to that Indian village in that neighborhood and Start a Bible school said he so that no little boy of eight years of age in agony would ever have to cry out to God And have to wait so long Before he discovered Who he is Do you know ladies and gentlemen?

You're surrounded by boys and girls and men and women whose heart Cry out for God, and they don't even know what they need But you do Because he lives within your heart And all he's waiting for you Is to be in that sensitivity as healthy members of his body so that he who knows The crying need of a lost world who satisfies the hungry soul with goodness Can send you where he wants you to clothe his divine activity? So that that little boy girl man a woman May not go on seeking in vain Why not get excited?

Get up tomorrow morning and say Lord Jesus Thank you for the incredible privilege that you've given to me as my Redeemer having Reconciled me to God and cleansed me from my sins that you should come and live within me that I might be available to you To reach out to the uttermost ends of the earth that some boy girl man a woman May be raised from the dead and with me added to the Lord To share your life on earth until at last we see you face to face and then forever then you can say I'm a Christian Not a super Christian Just a Christian That's all now, let's pray.

I don't know your hearts Maybe some boy girl man a woman And there's been a deep cry in your own heart For longer maybe than you would care to tell To know God for yourself Maybe some boy some girl who's come in with that group here just for tonight and be on campus tomorrow. I Don't know you're a stranger to me But I'll tell you something You're not a stranger to him who came to seek and save that which is lost And what a wonderful thing it is to be lost You see if you're lost It means you're wanted You don't throw lost things in the trash can You look in the trash can for lost things That's why the Lord Jesus was always getting into trouble for keeping bad company He could meet the woman in Samaria He could stop beneath the tree where Zacchaeus was hiding He knows your heart And if you're lost You're wanted And he who wants you is here wanted you so much that he died upon the cross That in the shedding of his own precious blood you could be reconciled to a holy God and stop existing And come alive To be inhabited by your maker So that on earth you added to his new body could be the means whereby He might meet the desperate need of One of your own fellow human beings and hear the needy cry of some soul in despair What a marvelous thing For those of us who know him our Lord Jesus to be our Redeemer To tell him tonight Lord Jesus.

I don't know where to go. I don't know where to look But you do I Just want to become that sensitive To you that when you say go I'll yield obedience to your command And find myself Miraculously the right man in the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person So I dare to thank you already in advance for the blessing you're going to be through me Somebody's waiting for me Almost round every corner loving Savior. There's somebody that you want to reach and I'm available To the outermost ends of the earth Thank you for the privilege of being expendable That as the father once Sent you So you now may Send me Thanks dear Lord in your own precious name Amen You've been listening to a sermon by Major Ian Thomas if you've been blessed by this sermon you can find more sermons by him and

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