

# A New Principle

by Major Ian Thomas

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*The sermon emphasizes the revolutionary principle of the exchanged life, where true faith in Christ produces genuine spiritual fruit and good works through the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 22:44

**Scripture:** Exodus 15:22

**Topics:** "New Covenant"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker talks about the burden and weariness that many people feel in their hearts, despite their efforts and devotion. He shares a story from the Bible where the men of a city approached a man of God with their troubles. The man of God instructed them to bring a new cruise with salt and he cast the salt into the spring of waters, declaring that the Lord had healed the waters. The speaker then reflects on the tragedy of hope and disappointment, as the people's crops would always fail to ripen and reproduce. He relates this to the consequences of Adam's sin and emphasizes the redemptive principle, highlighting the need for the soul to cry out to God for forgiveness and salvation.

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## Transcript

Chapter 2 A New Principle We have begun to see that victorious Christian living is not a method or technique. It is an entirely different revolutionary principle of life. It is the principle of an exchanged life.

Not I, but Christ liveth in me. This is all part of our gospel. It is not the gospel plus.

We must not get our terminology wrong. To divorce the behavior of the Christian from the gospel is entirely false and is not true to the word of God. Yet all too often such is the characteristic of gospel preaching.

I would like to explore with you what is the true spiritual content of our gospel. Not just heaven one day, but Christ right now. Christ in you, on the grounds of redemption.

This is the gospel. To preach anything less than this must inevitably produce evangelicals, folk with no spiritual vertebrae, whose faith does not behave. Do you remember what James says in his epistle? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

The spirit there means breath. And a body without breath is dead. Stop breathing and folk will bury you.

In other words, a living body breathes. And a living faith breathes. And a living faith breathes with divine action.

A living faith breathes with the activity of Jesus Christ. That is why the Lord Jesus in John 6 verse 29 said, This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he has sent. This is the work of God.

It is your living faith in the adequacy of the one who is in you, which releases his divine action through you. It is the kind of activity that the Bible calls good works, as opposed to dead works. Good works are those works that have their origin in Jesus Christ, whose activity is released through your body, presented to him as a living sacrifice by a faith that expresses total dependence, as opposed to the Adamic independence.

There are two very simple illustrations given to us in the Old Testament of these two facets of the truth, you in Christ and Christ in you. We will glance at them briefly, because there is no better Bible commentary in all the world than the Bible itself. If you want to know what the Bible means, then turn to the Bible and it will tell you.

And you are not likely to be confused. Reading from Exodus chapter 15 verses 22 to 26, So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.

Therefore the name of it was called Marah, a word that means bitterness. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee.

The incident concerns God's divine intervention in bringing his people out of Egypt. We will not pause to consider that now, as we shall be doing so later. Suffice it to recognize that this particular incident is just an underlining, an emphasis of the redemptive principle.

This is the first picture, bitter waters in which there was only death, and they cried to God, and God showed them a tree. The meaning, of course, is obvious, for there had come a day when Adam fell into sin, and how dark and how deep and how bitter had the waters become within the soul of man. All the tears and all the anguish and all the sorrow and all the death and all the crying and all the dying, this has been the consequence of that first Adamic repudiation of man's true relationship to God, of which you and I today are still the heirs in this poor, sin-sick world.

The waters indeed are dark and deep and bitter within the soul of man, but the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters and they are stirred, and the soul is awakened, and at last the soul, convicted of its sin, cries out to God, and he says, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. He showed them a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

This was the second tree, the place of second choice, for as Adam had repudiated his relationship to God at that first tree and said no to God and stepped out of life into death, out of dependence into

independence, so may you and I at that second tree, the place of second choice, say our yes where he said no, step back out of death into life, be raised from the dead, out of our self-will and independence into a childlike dependence, the obedience of faith. I am the Lord that healeth thee. This is the beginning of our salvation.

This is to be reconciled to God by the death of his son. It is the tree for bitterness, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus that cleanses us from all sin. And though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. This is the beginning of our faith and this is where we must begin. For if we have not begun here, we have not begun at all.

But it would be a very sad thing to stop there. That is why we have this other very valuable picture. It is found this time in 2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 19.

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant as my Lord seeth, but the water is nought, and the ground barren. This is a different picture. Here is a beautiful city, enchantingly situated.

And the casual passer-by, the stranger, the traveller, the merchant, they would be glad to sudge in a while, to spend the night or if possible the weekend. They would like to come back for their vacation with the family. They would congratulate the inhabitants on the good fortune that was theirs to live in such attractive surroundings.

And yet, beneath all this charming exterior, there was heartbreak, a sickening load within the breasts of those who lived there. They showed a brave face when folk congratulated them. And when folk admired their beautiful city, they displayed a sweet smile.

They tried not to give their inner sorrow away. Yet every time somebody admired and flattered the place where they lived, it hurt them. They knew the inner secret.

The water was nought, and the ground was barren. When it says the water was nought, it does not mean that there was no water, as we shall discover, but it was stale and stagnant, producing sterility. When it says the ground was barren, it does not mean to say that nothing grew, otherwise the place would not have looked so charming.

The word barren means causing to miscarry. Had you been there in the early spring, you would have seen all the early evidences of coming harvest. You would have seen the tiny tender shoots bursting through the soil.

You would have seen the leaves beginning to pop out of the buds on the trees and bushes. And a week or two later, you would have seen the blossom fashion, fade and fall, to leave the promise of a bumper crop. You might well have congratulated the people on all that they had, seemingly to look forward to.

That was the tragedy of it. Maybe there still lurked in the hearts of the inhabitants, the feeble hope that this year things would be different. That maybe they had turned the corner and everything was now to be all right.

Yet, something heavy as lead, deep down in their hearts, kept saying, No. It will always be just the same. You know exactly what is going to happen.

And it did. It always happened. The fruit, just about to ripen, ready to be plucked, fell suddenly to the ground, premature and immature, to rot and never to reproduce.

This was the heartbreak of that beautiful city, so deceptive, so impressive to everybody except to those who lived there. Of what is this, a picture? It may, of course, be a picture of you. Do not be shocked when I say it.

It is the picture of a carnal Christian. You say, I thought a carnal Christian was a backslider. Somebody, for instance, who used to go to church but has run off with somebody else's wife.

Oh, no. That is only one kind of carnal Christian. And I would not suggest that you were that kind of carnal Christian.

No, no. I am talking about Sunday school teachers. I am talking about some Sunday school superintendents.

I am talking about some pastor in his pulpit. I am talking about some missionary on the field. I am talking about many ordinary, average, earnest Christians.

They are wonderful people. You would love to meet them. They talk all the language of salvation and they mean every word they say.

They are not hypocrites. They are tired, many of them. Desperately tired.

God knows how tired they are. But they are not hypocrites. They are overwhelmed inwardly with a sense of defeat and frustration and futility and barrenness.

But when you meet them, they will smile sweetly and they will mean the smile they give you. They will grip you by the hand and they will say, God bless you for passing my way. They will thank you for all the encouragement that you have given them.

Yet, as you thank them for the message you have just heard from their lips, your very words of thanks will hurt them because they know what you do not know, that for years they have labored in vain. The fruit that has appeared to others has fallen. Oh, so often.

So cruelly often to the ground. Premature. Immature.

Only to rot and never to reproduce. Story after story could be told of men and women who bravely, doggedly, out of a sense of duty, love and devotion go on and on and on. Yet, deep down in their hearts they are tired, almost beyond endurance.

Again and again they have got down by their bedside and they have cried out to God with tears in their eyes. God, you know how barren I am. You know how empty I am.

You know how stale I am. You know it. And yet they do not know the answer.

I wonder, are you like that? At last the burden became intolerable and the men of the city came to the man of God and they poured out the whole story. He said, bring me a new cruise and put salt therein. And they

brought it to him.

And he went forth unto the spring of the waters and cast the salt in there and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters. There shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

He went to the spring of the waters, for there were waters, and he placed salt at the source. What does salt represent? Salt speaks of the risen life of the glorified Saviour imparted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the redeemed sinner. It is the tree for bitterness.

It is the salt for barrenness. As you have been reconciled to God by His death, so you are constantly to be saved by His life. It is only the life of the Lord Jesus, His activity, clothed with you and displayed through you that ultimately will find the approval of God.

As a forgiven sinner, you are a member of an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It is the Lord Jesus Christ alone who makes your sacrifices acceptable to God. Only what He does in you and through you merits His approval.

And God can and will accept nothing less. And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt. Neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering.

With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. Under no circumstances, God said in His law given to Moses, were any offerings to be brought to Him or sacrifices made that were not seasoned with salt. Without the salt, they would not be acceptable.

No matter how sincerely brought, no matter at how great a cost, no matter how lofty the motive, no matter how noble the ideal, without salt, they would not be acceptable. This was the practice as in Ezekiel 43 verse 24. Thou shalt offer these offerings before the Lord and the priests shall cast salt upon them and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the Lord.

It was salt that made the offering acceptable. Now the Lord Jesus, in Luke 14.33, tells us the minimum demands that He makes for true discipleship. He says, Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, literally all that he hath, himself and all that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple.

He has got to recognize his bankruptcy so that his sole wealth is vested in the one whom God has credited to him in the person and by the presence of His Divine Spirit. This is the condition for discipleship. Salt, He goes on to say in verse 34, is good, but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. There is a substitute salt that has lost its savor. In the Middle East, salt is at a premium.

I served there in the army during the war and we did good business. For some reason salt is scarce and the Arabs would give anything for a pinch of salt. You could get a dozen eggs.

You could buy a chicken. You could have bought their shirt for a pinch of salt. I do not think you would have wanted the shirt as you would not have known which hole to put your arms through.

But salt was everything to them because with salt they preserved their meat and their fish. Because salt was scarce, however, there were substitutes on the market, good to the taste, all right for immediate

consumption. But the moment they tried to preserve their food with these substitutes to keep it pure and healthy and edible, within a matter of hours or at most a matter of days in that hot, sultry climate, it went putrid and bad and stank.

It was not even fit for the dunghill. As in the case of substitute salt, there is a form of activity that is all right for immediate consumption. It impresses everybody and your stock goes high.

But it will always leave a stink behind it if it stems from the flesh. If it is self-activity, it will always produce the kind of fruit that drops, both premature and immature, to rot and never to reproduce. This is the work of God that you believe and maintain unrelentingly total dependence upon the one whom God has sent to fill you with himself.

He is the true salt through whom you are made the salt of the earth. Here is another fascinating reference to salt. It is described in Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13 as the salt of the covenant, the token of God's unflinching pledge and purpose in the lives of redeemed sinners, accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

That is the tree for bitterness, in whom ye also trusted, in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest or guarantee of our inheritance. That is the salt of the covenant, the salt for barrenness, the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus imparted to the true believer by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, he that believeth on me as the scripture hath said out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living, not stagnant, living water.

But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified. That is to say, salt at the source, salt at the spring of the waters.

Ezra chapter 7 verse 6 says this, This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given. And the king granted him all his request according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. It is a wonderful thing to be in such a relationship to God that everything you need for any circumstances always yields by the good hand of your God upon you.

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. He had said in his heart, I am going to seek the mind of God in the word of God, to do the will of God, and teach the ways of God. And for this reason, he was among those whom God raised up to rebuild, cleanse, and fill the temple with the worship of God.

The king gave him a letter. He said, I, even I, utter exceeds the king, to make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily. What had Ezra asked for? That pure worship might be reestablished in the cleansed house of God.

And to a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt, without prescribing how much. He said in so many words, King Artaxerxes, I want a hundred of this, I want a hundred of that, and I want a hundred of the other, but I must have unlimited quantities of salt. I must never run out of salt.

Because no matter how costly, no matter how sacrificial, no matter how sincere, God will accept nothing that is not seasoned with salt. I must have unlimited quantities of salt. Now is that not a wonderful picture?

And God has given you unlimited quantities of salt.

For God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. Is it this salt that you need? Then prepare your heart with Ezra of old, to seek the law of the Lord and to do it. And know that Jesus Christ himself is all you need, in death and resurrection, to cleanse and fill you.

And hear him say, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters, there shall not be from thence any more death, or barren land.

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