

Audio ■ The Emptiness of Contemporary Christianity

by Major Ian Thomas

This sermon delves into the nature of humanity and the relationship between God and man, emphasizing the importance of being submissive to God's authority. It highlights the sinlessness of Jesus as not merely avoiding certain actions but operating in complete obedience to the Father, allowing God to work through him. The speaker challenges listeners to adopt a posture of humility and submission, recognizing their need for God's presence and guidance in every aspect of life.

Scripture: John 14:10, Romans 14:23, Luke 4:1, Luke 18:18, Genesis 1:27

Topics: "Humility", "Obedience to God"

Description

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Transcript

Second epistle, Paul to Timothy and the third chapter. Understand this, that in the last days there will set in perilous times of great stress and trouble, hard to deal with, hard to bear. For people would be lovers of self, utterly self-centered, lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate greedy desire for wealth.

Proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive, blasphemous, scoffers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane. In other words, totally materialistic.

They will be without natural human affection, callous and inhuman, relentless, admitting of no truce or appeasement. They will be slanderers, false accusers, troublemakers, intemperate and loose in morals and conduct, uncontrolled and fierce, haters of good. They will be treacherous and betrayers, rash and inflated with self-conceit.

They will be lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God. For although they hold a form of piety, they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it. Well, that was the newspaper that God wrote by the hand of his servant Paul 2,000 years ago, and it's pretty

descriptive.

So I thought I'd like to quote from a newspaper that was written just two years ago, which relates some of the statistics that are common today to the United States. Only 57 percent of all households contain a unmarried couple. Nine percent of the whole population, men, women and children, that's the total population, nine percent is a divorced person.

And that means that over 23 million men and women have embarked upon a marriage with solemn vows and failed. Twenty percent of all children were born to unmarried mothers. There are nine million single parent homes and millions of children have no normal family life at all.

Only four fathers in a hundred in this country return home to a non-working wife and two happy children. Just four in a hundred. From the age of five years and upwards, three out of five children have experimented with drugs.

1,600,000 mothers every year have their children killed before they're born. Every year. It's a way of life, murdering babies.

Now, this is reputed to be a Christian country. It may interest you to know that in Russia, every woman, on average, has 11 abortions. That's a communist country, a materialist, godless country.

And of course, the United States is falling hard on their heels. Every woman in Russia has, on average, 11 abortions. In other words, human life is absolutely of no value whatever.

And of course, that is now true in the United States. In ten years, the women of this country murdered twice as many babies before they were born as Adolf Hitler put men, women, and children into gas chambers. One adult in every 58 in this country, one adult in every 58 is in prison.

Did you know that? There are 140, 50 million people in this country and one in 58 is in jail. Every single 24 hours in this country, 28 Americans are shot dead by one of their fellow Americans. On average, in the European countries, given one way or the other, just three or four, there are 100 people murdered in any European country.

In this country, 10 million every year. Interesting. But it shouldn't shock us, it should grieve us, but never shock us.

Because you see, the newspaper was written 2,000 years ago. This is simply an addendum, just bringing the picture up to date, 1989. Relentless, admitting of no truce or appeasement, callous and inhuman.

Just the other side of the world, they've just murdered six priests. They didn't just shoot them, they cracked their skulls and put their brains out. Anything gone wrong with the human race? Down on the Mexican border, they've just been digging up the remains of people offered by Satanists, devil worshippers, people sacrificed to satisfy their own debauched appetites.

Now, where's the key to all of this? Well, it's in one of those verses there in the third chapter, the second epistle to Timothy, for though they hold a form of piety, calling it true religion. And remember, in this country in particular, but this in a sense is no worse than every other country, it's no worse than ours, except maybe in the extent to which it's gone. But most people in this country pride themselves on belonging to a Christian country.

Well, what's wrong? And in sense of church-going, I suppose it would be true. It varies between 40 and 60 percent who attend a place of worship, as opposed to a minimal number in most European countries. On a pole, it doesn't mean anything, because folks don't understand the terminology.

Sixty percent in this country say they've been born again, because the term has totally lost its meaning. It's a Christianized nation that often in their conversation with me, you know, deplores the condition in England, in Denmark, in Sweden, other European countries. Canada has just been declared by the United Nations to be a pagan nation, as was Australia 18 months ago.

Just a pagan country. And they've got massive churches. I suppose still almost everybody has been christened or confirmed or baptized.

Almost every jailbird, everybody on death row in this country has been baptized, one way or another. Well, what's wrong with the religion that is being practiced? You can switch on a radio or television and almost 24 hours a day purport to hear the gospel. Well, they hold a form of piety that they deny and reject, and are strangers to the power of it.

Well, that's what we were hearing about from Charles in the first session this morning. It's the Rolls-Royce without an engine. Looks pretty.

But you see, everything that glitters is not gold. And that certainly is true of our contemporary Christianity. Glitters.

Man, if ever Christianity glittered, it is today. Evangelism, that commands the attention of hundreds of millions, tens of millions of people. Glitters.

Man, did it ever glitter? But it's nothing more than multi-billion-dollar show business, where the gospel isn't designed to address the human disaster, the human remedy for that disaster, the human dilemma or God's remedial measures. It's designed only to satisfy the carnal appetites of people who want to dance to the gospel, who want to visualize, dream it out, name it and claim it. Positive thinking.

If you want a million dollars, all you've got to do is visualize. It'll be yours the week after next. We've got a form of religion.

It's called Christianity. Soul music, Christian rock, of course, no such thing anymore as Christian drugs or Christian promiscuous sex. Unless you simply want to gather folks under your roof and put a new label on them, that's all.

Give them the same stuff they can get down the road. They get it cheaper in church. That's all.

It has nothing to do with Christianity, because of that trust you've already gathered and never, ever before, and some of you, of course, have. Christianity is Christ in you, in the person of his Holy Spirit. But you see, we've turned the evangel into jukebox religion, where you play to the gallery.

The only important thing that matters is how many people you get to listen to you and how much they're going to put in the offering. That's all that matters. It's of very little importance as to the ultimate eternal destiny of those who deny the power they are.

That's the problem. You know, Doug and I were in, incidentally, if you haven't met Doug, Doug Lanier, he's an old inmate of this place. He was in Bible school about three years ago, and for the last three years he's

been on counseling staff, and he tried to get a job, and as he couldn't find one, I took him on.

And he's been traveling with me since August, and will be until the end of May, and he'll be delighted to meet those he hasn't met. But he and I were in Wilma, Minnesota, not too long ago, just about three weeks ago in point of fact, and they invited me to speak to the chapel hour of the Christian school alongside. We were at the Evangelical Free Church, and the principal and many of the staff were members of that church.

I was unable to go because I had another engagement, so they invited the local Baptist pastor, either the pastor himself or his associate, I'm not quite sure which, but on the staff. Doug went the next day. I was almost sorry for him, because you see, in that chapel hour, which I had to decline, the pastor from next door told them really what the Christian life was all about.

He said, it's flexing your muscles, it's sticking your chin out, throwing your chest out to its full expansion, it's gritting your teeth, it's clenching your fist, it's advertising yourself, you've got to sell yourself, you've got to sell yourself as Christian. This was his stuff. Where'd he get it from? Well, the average evangelical seminary today.

Then do you know what he did? He told the kids to stand up, and he said, now you've stood up, just face each other, and I want you to talk to each other, and this is what you've got to say. I'm somebody. I'm taught.

I'm it, and you ought to respect me. You ought to recognize the inherent goodness that exists in me, the illimitable potential in my personality. He said, that's Christianity.

Sound like Christianity to you? Well, it's a form of religion, like humanism, but this is supposed to be Christian religion. But it certainly hasn't got an engine, but it glitters in the eyes of a world where we live in a success-oriented society, where it's statistics rather than substance, turnover rather than the quality of the end product. Everything's expendable, including Christianity.

Once you've tried this kind of Christianity, and it's lost its savor, you know, got old hat, well, throw it out of the window and get another kind, a little more excitement to it. That's why we have Bible schools, and rather unique in their character, because they happen to be a Bible schools where we teach Bible, which is very unusual. But we don't really just want to teach Bible, because as the Lord Jesus said, turn into the theologians of his day, you search the scriptures, and indeed they did.

The only Bible, of course, they had, the only Bible that Jesus had, Old Testament. Allow anybody to undermine your confidence in the Old Testament, you've robbed the Lord Jesus and the early church of the only Bible they had. That Bible that is able to make you wise under salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus, Old Testament.

Whenever Paul or Peter talked about scripture, whenever the Lord Jesus talked about scripture, he was talking about the Old Testament. We have the New Testament, a bonus, simply tells us that Jesus did what the Old Testament said he would, that's all. But he said, you search the scriptures, it's your stock in trade, it's your textbook, you're all seminarians.

And of course, Paul, as we have been reminded, bright-eyed, blue-eyed boy of his theological class, promoted above many his equals in the Jews' religion. All he learned at seminary was to persecute the church and be numbered amongst those who engineered the death of God, see a son upon the cross.

That's what he learned at seminary.

Because they presumed then, as they still do today, to reinterpret the Bible, to make it say what they think it ought to have said, or that which is compatible with their own preconceived humanistic, philosophical, and theological propositions. Said the Lord Jesus, had you believed Moses, in whom you trust, you say you trust, you'd have believed me, he wrote of me. But you've reinterpreted Moses.

As by and large, from every pulpit throughout the land, with a few bright exceptions, the word is reinterpreted to suit the appetites of carnal human beings. While I hope we're not in that business, and I hope we never will be, you search the scriptures, said Jesus, they are they which testify of me, and you will not come to me that you might have life. So you've got your Rolls-Royce that hasn't got an engine.

It glitters as gold, but all that glitters is not gold. There's no substance to it. You see, the problem is that folks haven't been to the Mount, to the Assembly of Man.

They haven't listened to what you were hearing earlier on. This description of the United States today, with all its religion, would it indicate that folks have recognized the poverty of their own spirits, when kids are told out by a Baptist pastor to look at each other and say, I'm tops. It sounds as though he went to a theological seminary, you know, run by Muhammad Ali.

That's where he got his philosophy. But on the electronic church, on television, some of the most nauseating individuals you can look at, you ought to get a cable television and go down the list. Man, they're hideous, but all in the name of Jesus.

They certainly never recognized their poverty of spirit, nor ever did they once begin to mourn their condition in true repentance. Never, never learned to walk humbly and submissive to the only one who has the right to be God as creator within the life of the creature. Well, into this mess, which is going to get worse and worse, that's the good news.

And it is good news, because the word of God tells us plainly, as did the Lord Jesus, that the situation is going to get worse and worse and worse. But the worse it gets, the sooner he comes. And that's good news.

And it's good sometimes to be reminded. There shall be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity and scenes, waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear. Looking after those things which are coming on the earth for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

So don't be shocked, said the Lord Jesus. Anticipate that there'll be wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, plagues. There'll be disease and disasters of a natural order beyond anything that man has known before.

And by the way, he said, just about that time, Satan himself was an angel of light with signs and wonders, deceiving, even if it were possible, the elect themselves in a pseudo revival. False fire that has no substance to it, but is one of the devil's substitutes for the truth. And the overwhelming invasion of every area of life, religious, political, and commercial of a new age that will seek to deify man and make him God.

But he said, don't panic. Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your heads.

Your redemption draweth nigh. Behold the fig tree and all the trees. When they now shoot forth, you see and know your own settles that summer is now night.

The day is about to dawn, the day of the Lord. So likewise, when you see these things come to pass, know ye the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. And verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Well, we don't know whether or not we're in that last generation, but it would be very likely. Even at my age, I rather anticipate not going to heaven by underground, I'm going by air. When the Lord Jesus comes.

That's why I'm so glad, you know, to experience the rich ministry that Charles Price has, because when the Lord comes, he's going to take over the ministry that I've had all this time on earth. As I ascend, I'll wave to him and say, bye. And Doug's going to be his assistant.

But I hope there'll be nobody left in this Bible school. Well, these are exciting days. I don't think I'd like to trade with anybody.

Excitingly dangerous days to live in. But remember the role for which we have been redeemed. As we discussed last evening, not to get out of hell and into heaven as cheaply as possible.

Only to stand in the heap of ashes, all that's left of the wood, the hay and the stubble of a wasted life. On the one foundation that God has laid, Jesus himself. But careless of the building that we built thereon.

Nothing left but ashes. Instead of the wood, instead of the gold, the silver and the precious stones. Of that which only the Lord Jesus himself can accomplish.

And without whom, by his own testimony, we can do no more than he as man on earth could do without his Father. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

That's why in coming into this world, born at Bethlehem, he had to empty himself, humble himself, make himself of no reputation. Just imagine all the ingenuity, the money, the effort, energy, lobbying, that people indulge in to gain a reputation. If every man had the right to claim a reputation, it was Jesus.

He just happened to be God. He created the universe, he put him into space. But he made himself of no reputation.

In the New English Bible, it says he made himself nothing. All that he knew was the God who created us man to be, apart from the God who created him. Nothing.

That's why Paul, in the sixth chapter of his epistle to Galatians, verse three says, or it might be verse five, if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing. He deceives himself. He deceives himself.

He's kidding himself. That's why the Lord Jesus said, who's Paul? Who's Apollos? Who's Cephas? One plants, another one waters. But neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth anything.

And if a man isn't anything, how much is he? Well, nothing. It's God who gives the increase. He's the only one who can accomplish anything that is of any timeless worth.

We can be busy. We can do lots of things, smile, earn the approbation and the congratulations of our peers. But it doesn't amount to anything in the timeless purpose of God, because when we go, we leave it

all behind, no matter how much you've accumulated.

See, when the Lord Jesus shed his precious blood, that we might be reconciled to a holy God, so that he, risen from the dead, might invade our humanity, clothe himself with us, so we become his hands, feet, and lips, and eyes, and ears, and minds, and hearts. It was that being added to his body, corporate, of which he alone exclusively is the head, in and through us, he might continue to do and teach the things he began to do, and began to teach nearly 2,000 years ago, in the body the Father was pleased to prepare for him. That the Father now has replaced in giving him the corporate body, which is, as we have discussed, the Church.

Not a building, not a theological entity, organizational being, just a fellowship of forgiven sinners. There'll be no Baptists, no Methodists, no Lutherans, no Presbyterians, no Plymouth Barones in heaven. Aren't you glad? Only forgiven sinners.

Only those who've opted on God's terms to be restored to their true humanity, to become man again on God's terms, to be truly evangelized, until finally the Lord Jesus can look at us and see what God saw when he first looked at Adam, before he fell himself, perfectly reflected. While in the midst of all the chaos wrought by man's stupidity, perpetuating the satanic fraud that was introduced when Satan persuaded man that he could be a man without God, that little baby was born and walked this earth. And he was an astonishing preacher, because whenever he preached, people were astonished.

And that should make him an astonishing preacher. Look at Matthew in chapter 7. Seventh chapter, Matthew's gospel, the last two verses, it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. It wasn't that he had a different source, he had the same Bible that they had, and that's from what he spoke.

But they were astonished at his doctrines, the astonishing doctrines of the Lord Jesus. Something was strangely different about what he had to say, so much so that they were astonished, shocked, and very often resentful. He didn't toe the party line.

What was so astonishing about his doctrine? Well, first and foremost, he spoke as though he said what he meant, meant what he said, and actually had the right to say it. For he taught them, verse 29, as one having authority. They weren't used to that.

They weren't used to somebody standing up and saying, thus saith the Lord. They anticipated that somebody would give them a pretty little homily, and throw out a few suggestions, take it or leave it. After all, your opinion is as good as mine.

Situational ethics. Existentialism. There's nothing absolute.

It's up for grabs. You know, even then they got accustomed to that. That's why when he came unto his own, his own received him not.

When the truth walks by, and the truth is incompatible to the church men have established, you see, what they do now is what they did then. They perpetuate the church and crucify the truth. But he spoke with authority, not as the scribes.

He goes on to say, he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In the German Bible, it calls them *trift geleata*, learned in the scriptures. You know, those who could boast of their academic

excellence, their biblical scholarship, who were several notches above the average.

These were the scribes. But he didn't preach the way they brought. If there is such a word, if there isn't, there ought to be.

He spoke with authority. When their contemporary preachers got up, they nestled in the corner of the pew, hoped they'd have a nice little dose, and that they would wake up before the benediction, and preferably after the offering. And that was going to church.

And that to them, of course, was conforming to the requirements made by contemporary religion that would get them to heaven without any other implications than they conformed to pattern, squeezed by the Pharisees into their own mold and made as moldy as they were. That, to them, was true religion. But it denied the power thereof.

That's why, as we've been reminded, said the Lord Jesus, except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. He spoke with authority. You see, the Lord Jesus, incredibly enough, though the Creator, playing the role of creature, though the God who made man on earth to be the kind of man that he has God had made, recognized his own poverty of spirit, that having made himself nothing, emptied himself of no reputation, he maintained that disposition towards his Father that admitted his poverty of spirit.

He said, without my Father, I can do nothing. And if without my Father, I can do nothing, without my Father, I am nothing, because what I do is the result of what I am. We've heard that this morning too.

Incredible. And he mourned his condition, not in the sense that he wept over it, but true repentance. True repentance.

That's hilarious. True repentance, of course, is the most positive, adventuresome thing that you can indulge in. Baby repentance says, I've done something wrong, and I'm sorry.

Well, you should be sorry if you've done something wrong, but that isn't true repentance. Most people can be sorry for what they've done, especially if they've been found out. But then they're normally not sorry for what they've done, they're sorry for the consequences that they have inflicted upon themselves.

Judas Iscariot was sorry. It was with remorse he went and hung himself. For that kind of baby repentance, normally there's not much hope.

But for true repentance, that simply recognizes that apart from who God is, living where he was intended to be, within the human spirit of a man made to be inhabited by his maker, so that from within the human spirit, the inner man, he can gain access to the human soul, the heart, and operate within the workshop, teach the mind, control the emotions, direct the will, and govern behavior, and reveal the glory. The Lord Jesus recognized that the whole time. He lived in a state of repentance.

He never had to repent of his sins, ever, but he lived in that state of repentance that he reintroduced on the basis of a redemptive act and a regenerative purpose that would put God back into the man, so that a person having been reconciled to God by faith might then walk by faith. As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in him. We receive him on the basis of the fact that we need a redeemer.

And by that act of faith, we're reconciled to God, accepted in the beloved. Our names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. That transaction is sealed by the gift from God to us of somebody to live in somebody, the Holy Spirit, that now we might embark upon the incredible adventure of sharing the very life of God on earth, on the way to heaven, but only in the measure in which every step we take is taken in a state of repentance that says, God, I can't.

You never said I could, but you can, always said you would. Thanks, you're in business. And that's the adventure of sharing the life of Christ, called reigning in life by one Christ.

You'd be more than conqueror through him that loved us. It's the fight of faith, not fighting to do something, but the fight of adopting that disposition that lets God do it. That's the hardest thing in all the world for fallen men to learn, to let God do it.

That's faith. And these dispositions, the Lord Jesus constantly exhibited, he walked at all times in humility and submissiveness. And that's why, of course, he exercised authority, because he exercised that authority that derives exclusively from a man's submission to God's authority.

And that was the authority that the Lord Jesus exercised. We'll only glance at it for a moment, because we've other and more elaborate things to talk about in the short session that we've got, but look in John 10, and verse 37, said the Lord Jesus, if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. That's pretty frightening.

In other words, if I'm not at all times, 24 hours a day, being told by my Father what to do, and am not doing what I'm told, he says, you don't have the right to believe what I'm telling you, even though what I tell you is true. That's frightening. It isn't just standing up, having mastered a few doctrines, having memorized a few Bible verses, having learned a little testimony to give utterance.

Uh-uh, that won't give you authority. You can master all the doctrines in the Bible and go back and behave like a bear when you arrive home. That doesn't give you authority.

That's why a lot of kids have to leave their homes to learn from somebody else what their parents told them, but parents who never had the right to say it, because they weren't submissive to the authority of Jesus Christ and the family knowing. That's why so many people have to shop around for another church, or leave this one, go to that one, or travel thousands of miles in the armed forces to hear maybe from somebody in Japan or Africa what they heard from the pastor, but he never had the right to say it because he never exercised that authority that derives from his submission to Christ's authority. He thought that office, his ordination, his theological degrees, his personality, his gift of the gab, he thought that was what gave him authority.

There's only one thing that gives man authority, and that is his submission to God's authority, because we were made that way. So, if I do not the works of the Father, said the Lord Jesus, don't believe me. If I do, though, you believe not me.

And he understood their problem. They'd known him as a little baby, helplessly nursed in his mother's arms. He was the little kid that romped in the street.

He was the kid that learned his trade and apprentice bench. He was the man that came into the house, remember? He said, I realize your problem, to recognize who I am, but though you believe not me, believe the works. Recognize in my humanity a quality of life that defies any possible explanation but a

relationship between man and God and God and man.

That relationship for which man was created when God first made Adam, who in the man as the creator within the creature was to be the origin of his own image, remember? Source of his own activity, dynamic of his own demands, and cause of his own effect. So that if anybody was to be congratulated, it would be God himself as the author of all that man does, says, or is. Says the Lord Jesus, though you find it hard to credit who I am, recognize a quality of life that allows no possible explanation but a relationship that I enjoy.

What is it? End of that verse, that the Father is in me and I'm in him. That's the relationship. It's a relationship that is demonstrated by the quality of life that you see demonstrated by all that I do, all that I say, and all that I am.

And of course, as again and again you may discover in God's Word, note it every time you come across it, it was to restore man to this relationship to God, the Lord Jesus, bled and died. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. Anybody who doesn't, there is no life in him.

In other words, whatever religion he may profess, it denies the power thereof. It won't work. It's a dead loss.

Just glance very quickly at Luke 7. Luke and chapter 7. When the Lord Jesus had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum, and a certain centurion servant, who was dear unto that centurion, was sick. He was ready to die. He was dying.

But when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him. Somebody told him about Jesus. He sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

This could well have been Cornelius. When they came to Jesus, they besought him in instantly saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this. They said to the Lord, if ever a man deserved your divine intervention, that's the man.

A conquered country. And yet the Jews, whose country the Romans had conquered, loved him. His reputation spread far and wide.

And said they, if ever a man deserved your intervention, this man deserves it. They were quite wrong, of course. None of us deserve anything, ever.

We can't give God anything, only allow him to reclaim what is already his and for years has been stolen. You can't be congratulated on that. For some strange reason we say, if I don't lie, I'm good.

What makes you good about not lying? Did God create man to be alive? You say, I'm good, I don't steal. Oh, big deal. What's good about not stealing? God creates you to be a thief.

Oh, we say, I'm good, I don't indulge in promiscuous sex. What's good about that? Does God indulge in promiscuous sex in whose image he made you? Whose likeness and glory you were to reflect? What's good about that? That's normality. That's normality.

That's only allowing God to have that for which he created you. The right and a physical, visible, and audible body to give a physical, visible, and audible expression of your own invisible self, but utterly inhabited and dominated, monopolized by an invisible God. That's all.

Then you're normal. And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him and saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself.

Somebody's just come and told me that they fetched you and you're on your way and that they have told you that I'm worthy for your intervention. Well, forget it. Trouble not thyself, I am not worthy, that thou shouldest enter under my roof.

He wasn't prepared to bargain with God on some commercial basis. As though he deserved. As though God owed it to him.

God owes us nothing. I am not worthy. God can do something with a man like that.

That's why he could do something with Jacob, the sneak, the cheat, the swindler. Couldn't do anything with Esau. Couldn't do anything with Cain.

Jacob have I loved. I can do something with him because he loathes himself. He knows he's not worthy.

Esau's a braggart. He's an extrovert to the nth degree. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say no word and my servant shall be healed.

All you've got to do is say the word. Isn't that marvelous? That was his confidence in the Lord Jesus. What was the basis of his confidence? Oh, he was God.

No, no. He didn't know he was God. Say no word and thy servant shall be healed.

He was the basis of his confidence. For said he, verse eight, I also am a man set under authority. I also.

What does he mean by I also? What does that presuppose? He says, I also am a man under authority. In other words, I'm a Roman officer. I'm the ultimate authority, the emperor.

I also. That presupposes that he considered the Lord Jesus too to be under authority. You're under authority.

I also am a man under authority. Well, whose authority did he recognize that Jesus operated? God's. He knew nothing about the triune Godhead, the Trinity.

He didn't know anything about the incarnation. He didn't know of God's divine intervention, whereby a little baby boy would be fashioned in the borrowed womb of a virgin girl, conceived to the Holy Ghost. Didn't know anything about that, but he recognized a quality of life.

That a relationship existed between this man called Jesus and God in heaven. And he recognized that everything the Lord Jesus did, said, and was, was that of a man under authority. I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers.

I say to one, go, and he goeth. And I say to another, come, and he cometh. And to my servant, do this, and he does it.

But I can only exercise that authority because I'm under authority. That's why I recognize you to be a kind of man who is under God's authority, willingly, gladly, and obediently, and therefore you can exercise that authority that derives from your submission to God's authority. Say the word.

Isn't that terrific? When Jesus heard these things, verse 9, he marveled at him. He turned him about and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith. No, not in Israel.

Recognized this to be faith. A man who recognizes in the person of the Lord Jesus somebody who has the right to exercise authority. And they that were sent returning to the house, surprise, surprise, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Well, little, little wonder that when Jesus stood up and preached, folks were astonished. Even the whole bunch of them, especially the religious leaders of his day, didn't like it all that much. Look at chapter 13 of Matthew's gospel.

Matthew in chapter 13. Came to pass, verse 53, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence, and when he was come into his own country, where he was to be reared, Nazareth, not Bethlehem, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished. And they said, whence hath this man, this wisdom, whence hath this man these mighty works? In other words, all they recognized the Lord Jesus to be then was a man.

And they were quite right, he was a man. Except, of course, they didn't know the kind of man he was. This man.

They didn't deny the wisdom of what he had to say. They didn't even deny the quality of the mighty works in which he was engaged. They couldn't deny it because it was true.

But they didn't like it. He got underneath their skin. They were astonished and offended.

Said they misguidedly, is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and this his brethren, James, Joseph, and Simon, and Judas, and his sisters? Are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? I mean, if he could have rationalized and said, well, his mom and dad got all the money in the world. He's been sent to every university under the sun. And in any case, both his mom and dad were a genius in their own right.

They've always been unique, outstanding. Little wonder they had a child like that. A genius in his own right, of course.

But you see, they had known him as a little baby nursed in his mother's arms. Of whom may it well be they'd heard from the religious leaders of their day, who would warn them of his influence upon their lives, that he was the illegitimate child of a lying, godless, faithless, ignorant Galilean peasant girl. This man, with that kind of a background, this man.

And verse 57, they were offended in him. Offended. Offended at the quality of his life.

Of which he could say, the father has seen me. And when you look at me, you see the father. Of whom the father himself could say, this is my beloved son, in whom I'm pleased.

They were offended. Now, why were they offended? You might say because they did not know that he was God. But that wouldn't be true.

Though God he was, is and always will be. They were offended because they did not know that he was man. Not man as they were, not man as you and I are, but man as he is God created man to be.

He was real man. And that's what offended them. Because he didn't operate, you see, on the same basis that they were trying to operate.

They were all still trying to create a reputation for themselves. And he was somebody who had absolutely no premise, whatever, to achieve a reputation for himself. And yet he was outstanding.

In other words, quite frankly, he showed them up for what they were. The pygmies that they were. And nobody likes to be shown up to be the pygmy that we are.

Jesus did. Because he was man. When he came into this world, he didn't come to behave as God.

Though God he was, is and always will be. Into eternity, in co-equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost and the triune Godhead. But he didn't come to behave as God.

He was born a human being. If he'd wanted to come and behave as God, he could have appeared in any kind of form and behaved as God. But he didn't.

He was born a human being, for which purpose he had to empty himself, humble himself, make himself nothing and no reputation. When he came into this world, out of eternity and a time, it wasn't to behave as God, but to behave as man. But man is God, created man to be.

So when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, he could say, he that has seen me has seen my Father. In other words, he was the truth about God. If you and I want to know anything about God, look at Jesus.

For the God whose image he bore, the visible representation of the invisible, Colossians in chapter 1, verse 15, he was the visible expression of an invisible God. He's described here in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, beautifully rendered in the Amplified New Testament, he's the sole expression of the glory of God. He's the light being.

He's the outpouring of the divine. He's the perfect imprint, the very image of God's nature. That's Jesus.

He was the truth about God. But remember, he was also not only the truth about God, he was the truth about man. Anything you and I need to know about man, we look at Jesus and see him, beautifully portrayed.

Don't go to a psychologist. I mean, the Lord Jesus, our creator God, is the one who knows all about the human soul, his body, and his spirit. He happened just to be the creator who made man.

What he doesn't know about man, and the things that can go wrong with him, and the remedial measures that he needs to put things right, that's Jesus. He was the truth about man, in terms of his relationship to God, and the Father's relationship to him. He's the truth about man.

He exhibited precisely that relationship. I am in my Father, my Father is in me. And of course, when you've been restored to that relationship, to me who is the vine, if you abide in me, as I abide in my Father, as man on earth, and I abide in you, as I will live within you, once you've been redeemed, born again, regenerate, to whom has been restored my life, by the Holy Spirit, if you will abide in me, as I abide in my Father, and I abide in you, as my Father abides in me, I tell you what will happen.

You'll bear much fruit. And the kind of fruit that you will bear will remain. It'll be timeless, eternal, because it'll be the spontaneous expression of the life of God, translated into action, by his spirit from within your

spirit, gaining access to the human soul, so that I can reign in your heart, govern your mind, emotion, and will, and color your behavior with the glory.

You can be radiant and shine. He was man, as he is God intended man to be. The truth about God, and the truth about man, and of course the glimpse of the obvious that we've discussed many, many times in days gone by, he was the truth about God because he was the truth about man, because the truth about man is that God created man to be the truth about God.

That's the divine logic. He was the truth about God because he was the truth about man, because the truth about man is that man was created to be the truth about God. Galatians, Genesis chapter 1. God said let's make man in our image, in our likeness.

Now if a man is true to his true humanity, then he cannot but be the truth about God, because he was created in God's image, to reflect his glory. And of course to restore man to that relationship that allows God to advertise himself in terms of a man's humanity, for that purpose Jesus came, to restore many sons to glory, not change their destination, change their behavior. So that Jesus was the truth about God, and the truth about man, the truth about God because he was the truth about man, and that's why he was astonishing.

That's how I didn't like him. I mean he had no degrees, he had no background, didn't even go to high school, didn't have wealthy parents. Astonishing.

You see the perfection, the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus that evidenced and demonstrated for 33 years the innocence of a pre-fallen Adam, had the same origin in him as that glory that was exhibited before he fell in Adam. The life of God. The life of God.

For incredibly enough the Lord Jesus, though God, so humbled himself that the presence of his Father as God was indispensable to his humanity. Without my Father I can do nothing. The Father who lives in me, he does the work.

That's why that verse that Charles cited this morning is so important, although because he was illustrating something else he didn't dwell upon it. But in passing he mentioned that it's one of the most important verses in the Bible. Just to glance at it again, would you? Luke 18 and verse 18.

Charles reminded the young man who came and said, good master what shall I do to inherit eternal life? The Lord Jesus didn't waste his time telling him because he knew that this man hadn't a clue what eternal life was. He didn't know that eternal life is a person, not a place you're going to. Most Christians don't even know that.

But it's spelled out loud and clear in the fifth chapter of the first epistle of John. This is the record God has given to his eternal life. This life is in his Son.

Only those who've got the Son have that quality of life which alone is eternal. Those who don't have the Son, somebody living in somebody, don't have that quality of life which is eternal. They're spiritually dead.

They have no life in them, as Jesus put it in John chapter 6. This is the record God has given to his eternal life, has already. He's addressing himself to Christians who've enjoyed a spiritual new birth, have been raised from the dead. He that has the Son has life.

Well, the Lord Jesus knew perfectly well this man hadn't a clue anything about that. So he didn't waste his time on that occasion to explain to him more fully what eternal life was. Instead, he asked him a question which was designed to help him understand the nature of eternal life, the presence of God, his life, in a man, the creator within the creature.

So he didn't answer his question. He posed a question. He said, why do you call me good? There's only one who's good, and that's God.

All I'm doing is placing my humanity as available to my Father as God, as I intended as God, when as the creator I created you as men, intending that you would place your humanity at my disposal. That's all. And because I'm placing my humanity at my Father's disposal, allowing him to be God in the man, what I do, my Father does.

What I say, he says. What I am, he is. I'm the human vehicular, physical, visible, audible body, giving a physical, visible, audible expression of my own invisible self, but inhabited totally and utterly submissive and in complete obedience to an invisible God.

So everything you see me do, my Father does. Everything you hear me say, my Father says. All that I am, he is.

Look at me and see God. Why do you congratulate me? On what in me you can see of him. You don't congratulate a light bulb because of the light that you're receiving from it.

You don't even look at it with wonder, love and praise. I don't suppose one of you have gazed at any of these lamps since you've been sitting here. You're just enjoying the light because you know perfectly well the lamp isn't to be congratulated.

It's simply receiving in meekness and true repentance what it knows it needs in order to function for the purpose for which it was made. That's all. You see, all these lamps have listened to the sermon on the mountain.

They recognize their poverty. I can't produce light. Nobody ever said I could.

When I came out of the factory, I wasn't ablaze with light. I didn't attract everybody's attention. I was just a lamp.

Remember what it said about God's lamp in Proverbs 20, 27, the lamp of the Lord? The human spirit is God's lamp. What does it need to shine? What does human personality need in order to evidence the character of God? Well, the oil. These lamps know that.

They're poor in spirit. They know they can't function apart from what they were created to receive. And in a spirit of true repentance, they mourn their emptiness and so are willing in meekness, humility, to receive what they know is imperative to their function.

Well, the Lord Jesus was saying the same. He says, I'm playing the role, though the creator of the creature that is created, I create it. And I realize that I can only do that by emptying myself, foregoing the attributes of deity and submitting myself to the limitations of this, my humanity, which the Father prepared for me so that I could accomplish in it what I never could do as God.

Because, you see, God can't die. He alone hath immortality. But Jesus died.

He had to become as man, you see, like you and me. He had to become man in order to do what as God he never could have done. God obeys nobody.

The Lord Jesus, the Son, learned obedience by the things which he suffered. As man, setting aside the attributes of deity, limiting himself to man's humanity, he had to learn obedience by the things which he suffered. So he didn't go into any great detail.

He said, all the goodness that you see in me is God, whom I allow to be who he is, evidencing himself by what I do, say, and because I know how I made man, and I'm fulfilling that function. My Father, by the Holy Spirit, lives within my human spirit so that he can have total access to my soul. It's my Father who, through the Spirit, teaches my mind.

My Father, through the Spirit, who controls my emotions. It's my Father who, through the Spirit, directs my will. He's the one who governs my behavior.

Everything I do, say, and am, has its authorship in him. Don't congratulate me now, therefore, in what? In me, you see, of him. There's only one person to be congratulated.

My Father. Simple, isn't it? Oh, by the way, he said, as my Father sent me, I send you. It's called being filled with the Holy Spirit, which simply means normality.

Luke 4, 1, Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, was led by the Spirit. In other words, told what to do, he did as he was told. And if a man is being told at all times by God what to do, and is always at all times doing what he's told, who's behaving? Well, God is.

And others in him see the glory. It's also simple. And it was to restore this relationship that is the origin of man's true function, that Jesus came.

So, the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus was not that he didn't lie, steal, or get drunk, or take drugs, or commit adultery. He didn't do any of those things. And that wasn't his sinlessness.

You see, the Bible says, Romans 14, 23, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And faith is that disposition that lets God do it. And he was without sin.

In other words, there was never a word he spoke, there was never a step he took, and no decision that he made, nothing that he was that did not derive from a disposition on his part that drew exclusively upon the resources that were his by virtue of the presence of the Father in the Son. As the living Father has sent me, and I live through the Father. So, he that eats me enters into this faith relationship that allows me now as God to be to him as man, what now my Father as God is to me as man.

He will live through me. Now you know what the Christian life is all about. Not flexing your muscles, gritting your teeth, and doing something to God, jumping on the bandwagon, drawing attention to yourself, and advertising your own skills and abilities.

Abraham tried that, and all he produced was Ishmael. The church is lousy with Ishmael. God wants you and he wants me to enjoy his Isaac, for whom there's no possible explanation but God in action, behaving.

Truth about God, truth about man, Jesus. As my Father sent me, so send I you. So, tomorrow morning we'll pick up the threads from there, and understand, I trust more fully, the inevitable consequence of his being submissive to that purpose which the Father sent him.

And then we will discover in that way what he now expects of us, which the Father expected of him. Simple, isn't it? Now let's pray. Thank you Lord Jesus, eternal God, utter man.

Thank you didn't come into this world just to give us an example, to show off. That would have been a message of despair. Thank you that there is nothing that you ever did on earth that you didn't do as man, and for which you claimed absolutely no responsibility, advertising only the fact that you were prepared to live in that relationship as man to the Father as God that you intended we should adopt as men in our relationship to you as God.

Thank you. Thank you that there was any one possible explanation for your life, the Father and the Son. Because we realize that there's nothing less going for us now with you as God in us than there was going for you then with the Father as God in you.

That if only we as men will be to you as God what you as men were prepared then to be to the Father as God, you now as God will be to us what the Father then as God was to you. Help us to settle for it, instead of strutting around still perpetuating the satanic fraud as though we could actually do something on your behalf, no matter how well-meaning, no matter how enthusiastic or skillful, when again and again and again you made it so plain to us that we could do absolutely and can do or ever will be able to do any more than you ever as man could do without your Father. Nothing.

Cure us of this incurable deceit and conceit. And we know that you're the only one who can cure the incurable. Because with God nothing is impossible.

Thank you that on the cross you took that old damning nature that clenches its fist in the face of God into the place of death and that risen yourself from the dead to inhabit our humanity, oh the only one who can keep that principle where you put it on the cross. So that we may bask in the plenitude of God's provision as those who have the power become partakers of the divine nature, in the measure only in which we will, one step at a time, in every new situation that arises, let you be God in us, as once you then allowed the Father to be God in you. Then we'll be able to say I'm a Christian, not a super Christian, just a Christian.

Not the ultimate end product, not having arrived, not having fully appropriated that for which we had been appropriated at least with your servant of all we can say, forgetting the things which are behind, reaching forth unto the things which are before, we're pressing on toward the mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus when we'll be restored to image, man again. Because God intended man to be, and then forever. Thanks, dear Lord, in your own purest and precious name.

Amen.

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