

# Book Of Acts, Christ In Us

by Major Ian Thomas

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*This sermon emphasizes the unchanging nature of Jesus Christ, highlighting Major Ian Thomas' insights on the quality and consistency of Jesus throughout history. It delves into the early Christians' unwavering faith, their boldness in trouble, and the miraculous acts witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles. The message underscores the importance of being true members of Christ's body, sharing His life, and the need for genuine dedication and surrender to God's divine sovereignty.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 13:8, Acts 2:42, Acts 5:12, Acts 5:14, Acts 5:32, Acts 5:42, Acts 16:25, 1 Timothy 1:13

**Topics:** "Unchanging Nature of Christ", "Faith and Boldness in Adversity"

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## Description

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## Transcript

But there's one thing confident today. That Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Major Ian Thomas, this man as we heard this morning, reveals that quality of Jesus Christ.

I'd like to introduce to you at this time Major Ian Thomas. Pastor Stevens, President Leonard, faculty, graduating class, student body, distinguished guests, families and friends. I need hardly say that it's a particular joy and privilege for me to share this momentous day in the lives of those who will be leaving this place and embarking upon that ministry that God has entrusted to each one.

It's been said of the early Christians that they were incorrigibly happy, utterly unafraid, and nearly always in trouble. And that, as most of us recognize, is a pretty adequate description. They knew what they believed, they believed what they knew, they assumed that God meant what he said and acted on that assumption, let God prove it.

And God did. He always does, and he always will. That's why it's always refreshing to turn to the record that's given to us in the book, in the Bible, that's called the Acts of the Apostles.

All of us know that in a sense that's a misnomer. We don't claim that the titles themselves are divinely inspired. The author of the book makes it abundantly clear as to whose continued activity he was

describing.

In the first verse of the first chapter of the book of the Acts, the former treatise said Dr. Luke, who wrote this book as he did Luke's gospel, the former treatise have I made a theophilus of all that Jesus began to do, began to teach. In other words, I'm writing a second book now, and I'm going to tell you what the Lord Jesus continued to do, and continued to teach. The only difference in the activity that I'm describing in this book is the humanity with which the same Lord Jesus clothed his divine activity.

That which I have described in the Luke's gospel is that activity that the Lord Jesus clothed with the humanity the Father was pleased to provide for him, miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit in fashion of the borrowed womb of a virgin girl, and born at Bethlehem. But the activity that I'm going to describe in this book is that activity that the Lord Jesus clothed with the new, the second body, that the Father was pleased to present to him on the day of Pentecost, when the church was born, which is his body. And to which every redeemed sinner, claiming cleansing through his precious blood, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, through whom we may share the life of our risen Lord, taking residence within our humanity, that body, to which we're added as members in particular, and through which the Lord Jesus today continues to teach, continues to do the things that he began to teach, and began to do, members of his body.

And of course that is the privilege that God has given to every forgiven sinner, boy, girl, man, or woman. If you look in the fifth chapter, if you happen to have your Bibles with you, there in the fifth chapter of the book of the Acts, the twelfth verse, by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. By their hands.

For theirs were the hands with which he worked, theirs were the feet with which he walked, theirs were the lips through which he talked, theirs were his minds to think, with hearts to love, with ears to hear, with eyes to see with. This was what it meant to be a Christian, was then, is now, members of his body. But the one who motivated what they did with their hands, who went where he would with their feet, who said what he wanted to say through their lips, Christ.

Head of that body to which they had been added, whose life they shared, with a fantastic privilege of being that humanity on earth today in which God still can make himself articulate and visible. Members of his body. Of course, you're only a member of his body when you share his life.

Only a true Christian, part of the true church, if that miracle has taken place, spiritual resurrection, that the Bible calls new birth, regeneration, the renewing of God the Holy Spirit, whereby the Lord Jesus takes up residence within the humanity of a given sinner to clothe himself with their humanity. Members of his body. And I need heartily say that if some boy, some girl, man or woman here, in this graduating service has not as yet received him to entwine their humanity, you may be very respectable, I'm sure you are.

And you may be even deeply religious and not insincerely, but you're not yet a Christian. Because a Christian is a forgiven sinner. If you're not a sinner, of course, you'll never become a Christian.

Because the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost. And it's a marvelous thing to be lost. If only you'll recognize it, because, you see, if you're lost, you're wanted.

You don't look. 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 keeping bad company. He was always being blamed for keeping bad company. He came to seek and save that way.

Aren't you glad he keeps bad company? In all probability, he wouldn't be here if he did. But you've got to recognize that you're lost if you're ever to find the one who seeks. And then be found.

Marvelous. And the moment you're found and you embrace the Lord Jesus as your redeemer and he seals that redemptive transaction whereby you're reconciled to a holy God by the gift to you of his resurrection life, somebody living in somebody, because that's a Christian. A Christian is somebody that cannot happen apart from Jesus Christ.

As he for 33 years testified that he was a man on earth, God's son, who could never have happened apart from the Father. Without my Father, I can do nothing. The Father who dwells in me, he does the work.

Even the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself. They have their origin in my Father God in heaven to whom I gladly make available to my humanity as his son on earth, the word incarnate. So that's where the Christian life begins, to be born of his spirit and become the recipient of his resurrection life.

During the war, I lost half of England. It was a German, unfriendly German tank. I said, just a minute, but he didn't wait.

Some people can say one way, I can only say half way. It doesn't embarrass me unduly. Little kids love it, they want one like it.

It took place in Lake Trasimene in Italy. That's where my remains are buried. I've never been back to see my remains.

Now I imagine that if it did embarrass me, it doesn't. But if it did embarrass me, the fact that I've lost half a limb, I could get somebody somewhere to manufacture an artificial one and stick it on, make it twiddle like the other one. And nobody would know the difference.

Would it be a member of my body? Of course it wouldn't. It'd be just a rubber dummy. It may look exactly, impress everybody, deceive everybody, but it's just an artificial thing stuck on.

And that's what you and I would be were it not for the fact that the Lord Jesus has come to share his life with us in that moment of redemption when he comes by his Holy Spirit to take up residence within the human spirit and restore to man the life that was lost in Adam, that life for which man was made. You could tread on it all day, I wouldn't complain. But if you trod on my little finger, I'd say, pardon me, you're treading on me.

And you might say, oh no, I'm not only treading on your little finger, and I would say I couldn't care less whether you're treading on my little finger or my face. Get off. And if you didn't get off, I'd mobilize all the other members of my body and give you some encouragement.

Now that's what it means to be a Christian. Not a rubber dummy, not an imitation limb, not something stuck on and labeled, but a forgiven sinner who reconciled to God all undeservingly has become the recipient of the resurrection life of our now glorified Savior seated at the Father's right hand, the Lamb enthroned. And of course the early church knew this.

They made it unmistakably clear. That's why in the 14th verse, very beautifully put, it says the believers were the more added to the Lord. That's how they described somebody who genuinely received Christ as Savior, added to the Lord.

They got excited when a boy accepted Christ as his Savior. They said, the Lord Jesus got another pair of hands, two more feet to walk with, two more lips to speak with, eyes to see with, ears to hear with. He's got another mind, another heart to love with and beat in harmony with the pulse of God's heart in heaven.

They were excited, added to the Lord. That's what it meant to be a Christian, sold out for his divine indwelling so that he might accomplish through them his timeless ends. They didn't in those days say, if you're one of us, you're one of his.

They said, if you're genuinely one of his and share his life, you're one of us. Like the kid, you know, turned to his friend, he said, why doesn't your dad go to the church my dad goes to? His friend said, he belongs to a different abomination. Well, the abominations are going to be with us like the poor as the Lord Jesus said until he comes again and we've got to learn to live with them.

And I do, I move from one abomination to another every week of my life and have done so for over half a century. And I'm thankful in spite of all their imperfections for the abominations that give me an opportunity to share Christ with some very dear folks hungry for God. And within them all, those who are the true invisible members of that invisible church whose names are recorded in heaven in the Lamb's book of life.

But because you see, it was made abundantly clear what it meant to be a Christian that from that moment, the creator, redeemer would come and take up residence and claim the absolute right to exercise his divine sovereignty govern our behavior so that he could display his glory and accomplish his divine aims. It wasn't everybody who was prepared to become a Christian that didn't have the guts. In the 13th verse of that fifth chapter, the rest durst, no man joined himself to them.

They didn't dare. They didn't dare because they knew that they would be exposed at once for the phonies that they were. And yet in spite of that fact, though they themselves didn't have the courage to be identified with the Lord Jesus as members of his body, it says the people magnified the true Christians.

That means they honored them. They couldn't help but respect them for the transparent genuineness of the quality of their lives. That was in the early days.

But they weren't themselves members of his body and very few played church. One or two exceptions. A couple of exceptions are found there in the beginning of this chapter.

You will remember the story. A certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold the possession. They realized the value of part of their property, that which they carefully calculated would least inconvenience them and suffer them the minimum amount of loss.

And even having carefully selected that part of their possessions that they were to sell, they then, in verse 2 we're told, kept back part of the prize. And it says his wife was privy to it. In other words, she was in the conspiracy because they were going to make out.

They were the first to pioneer evangelistic show business. And make a hollow display in which there was no spiritual substance. You see, the idea was that he was to go in and make out as though this was total dedication, completely sold out.

But it was to be in two phases because she was to come in later. He was to take the first applause and she was to take the encore. It was very carefully designed.

Kept back part of the prize, his wife also being privy to it, brought a certain part, laid it at the apostles' feet. And Peter said, are you kidding? That isn't the way it's rendered in King James, but that's exactly what Peter meant. And then asked, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the prize of the land? Now, he made it abundantly clear that this was not a controversy between himself, Ananas, or his wife.

He says, whilst it remained, was it not thine own? Did I come knocking on the door and saying you've got to sell that piece of land and give it to the church? No, he said, that isn't within my jurisdiction. You're not a member of my body, you're a member of Christ's body. He exclusively is the head, who alone has the right to give those instructions the individual member of the body must obey.

Furthermore, said he, having sold it and got the money, was it not in thine own power? You could have reinvested it, you could have bought other property, nobody would have said a word. That isn't a complaint. Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? You're making out that you have given totally to God all that belongs to him and you have not lied to men, you've lied to God.

And Ananas dropped dead. It was quite exciting going to church in those days. Ananas, hearing these words, fell down, gave up the ghost, and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

If it weren't so tragic, so sad, it would almost be funny. Verse 6, the young man arose, wound him up, carried him out and buried him. It didn't take very long really.

And Peter said, let's sing hymn number 295. Then three hours later, the wife arrived, she didn't even know her husband was dead and buried. She came in for the encore, swept into the presence of the assembled company of believers with a sweet evangelical smile.

And Peter said, tell me whether you sold the land for so much. She said, yes, isn't it lovely to be dedicated, sold out to God so much. That's exactly what we got.

And Peter said, how is it that you have agreed together to tempt the spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and they'll carry you out. And she dropped dead. And it says, the young man came in, found her dead, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

You see, in those days at church, they didn't just have ashes to show you to your seat. Or stewards, you know, to take the offering. They always had a posse of young men to bury the dead.

A little wonder in verse 11, it says, great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things. I can't think of anything that would be more salutary for certainly the church in my country, England, although I'm a resident now of this country, and certainly for the United States, most of our so-called Western Christianized nations, if say, 15 minutes after the announcement of the first hymn in every service, all the phonies would have dropped dead. Wouldn't that be fantastic? I don't mean the godless.

I don't mean the folks coming off the street and those who are hungry and seeking for God. I mean those who are making out. You wouldn't have such large congregations.

It might even be if you knew next Sunday that was going to happen, you'd go fishing or visit your daughter-in-law. The high priest, we're told in the 17th verse of that chapter, the high priest rose up. All they that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees, that was the theological wing of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who didn't believe in the resurrection.

They were, you know, pragmatic individuals. They didn't believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Sadducees.

That's why there was Sadducee. And it says, they were filled with indignation, a word that means envy. You see, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, those who were the religious leaders of their day, the ones who engineered the death of our Lord Jesus upon the cross, they saw boys, girls, men and women entering into a living, life-transforming relationship to the Lord Jesus.

They couldn't deny that something was happening, but they weren't going through the normal channels and that was bad for business. And this had to be stamped out at all costs. So they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

That didn't faze them too much. They were accustomed to that kind of accommodation. Remember when Saul, as he then still was called, and one other of those who loved the Lord Jesus, Silas, they were in jail.

Not even just in jail, they were in the most unsavory part of it, in the inner power. And yet they sang so loud, they kept the other prisoners away. I imagine Silas may have turned to Saul and said, What do you think God has in mind? This place stinks.

And Paul said, Well, you're right. But he must have something, something very important because he's not that mean. Exciting, isn't it? Let's have another song.

So they had another song, woke the prisoners up again and then in the middle of all that, for good measure, God threw in an earthquake. Walls fell out, the roof fell in, and when finally, rubbing their eyes after the dust had settled and the noise was over, they saw a man in inquiry. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? That was New Testament evangelism, earthquake and all.

But during the night, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them forth. By divine intervention, God set them free. And the angel said, verse 20, Go, stand, speak.

In all the temple, to all the people, all the words of this life. Lovely description, wouldn't you say, of the gospel? Said the angel, Go to the temple, the place of public worship. You could hardly call it a hotbed of good, sound, Bible-believing, conservatively evangelical, Bible-built doctrine.

But God said, That's exactly where you've got to go, because there are hungry-hearted people. As we heard from Pastor Stevens, they want a drink. But the water was contaminated.

They'd never, never received the fresh springs from the heart of God's Son. So said the angel, Go to the temple, and there tell them all the words of this life. This life, not the life to come.

Not the then and there, but the here and now. Not pie in the sky when you die. Go tell them all the words of this life.

Go tell boys, girls, men and women, that if only they will confess themselves to be the guilty sinners that they are, they may come to God's dear Son, who shed His precious blood for their redemption, and receive from Him as their risen Lord the gift of life. He Himself will come to take up residence within their humanity and clothe His divine activity with their flesh and blood. Go tell them! They can come alive, be born again.

Life from above. Go, stand, speak. Said the angel, Go where you're sent, stay where you're put, and give what you've got.

That's it. And that's God's word to you men and women right now as you leave this place. Go where you're sent, stay where you're put, and give what you've got.

If you've got nothing to give, well, quit. We've got plenty of people cluttering up the ministry today. Don't join them.

But I know that you have somebody. You're not going to build an empire. You're not going to perpetuate a system.

You're going to share Christ. Go where you're sent, stay where you're put, and give what you've got. You see, if you're sent and went, you're put.

And if you know who sent you, you know who put you. And if it's God who sends you, it's God who puts you. And if it's God who puts you, nothing can frighten you.

That's why they were incorrigibly happy, utterly unafraid, nearly always in trouble. Because they were men who were sent, went, and put. You're put.

Are you put? That's what it means to be a Christian. If you're not put, you don't know what it means to be a Christian, even though you may have become one. I might say, do you excuse me, sir, why are you in that business? Well, of course, if you were a Christian, there's only one intelligent, logical response that you could give with sheer joy.

I say, why are you in that business? With a broad grin, you'd say, put. And I'd say, what do you mean, put? I was sent and went. I'm a Christian.

I'm a member of the body of the Lord Jesus. And you see, he is the head of that body, dwelling in my heart, king again in his kingdom, sent me and I went and put. I might ask some of you students, why are you in this school? If you can't say, put, then it's time you went somewhere else.

You've got to say, I'm in this school because I was sent and went. And I'm put. Excuse me, Paul, why are you in the ministry? What do you think Paul would say? Put.

He'd say, what do you mean, put? Well, he'd say, I was sent and went. Ever read that in the Bible? Maybe he didn't know it was there. Well, then start reading it.

Here's the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, 13th verse, the apostle here gives his testimony. He said, I was before a blasphemer, as indeed he was, together with his theological peers. He believed that Jesus Christ was the illegitimate child of a lying, faithless, ignorant, Galilean peasant girl.

He considered that this Jesus was a fanatical street preacher with no credentials, an incorrigible scrounger, lived on other people, didn't even have a coin to illustrate his illustration, who of himself testified, I have nowhere to lay my head. For he came into this world to be the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The cost of our peace with God laid on him.

But of course, to Saul then, blue-eyed boy of his theological class, well on the way, being promoted above many his equals of the Jews' religion, Jesus was a fanatical street preacher. He said, I was a blasphemer. I was a persecutor.

I wanted to hound Christians if needs be to their death, destroy this thing. I was injurious, he says. I was dangerous.

People got hurt when I was around. I stood by consenting to the death of Stephen. I saw his blood run in the gutter.

I heard his bones snap as they stoned him to death, and I loved every moment of it. A woman in the street, true believer, would race home. The moment she saw me, why does a sheathen hide her husband?

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