

Christ Made Perfect

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being saved by the life of Christ, not just being reconciled to God by His death.

Duration: 46:29

Scripture: Exodus 15:22-26, Psalm 34:8, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:45, John 20:9

Topics: "Life Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of being reconciled to God at a young age. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross and how it relates to salvation. The speaker challenges the notion of standing in the world and witnessing to Christ, stating that it is more effective to stand in Christ and let the world see what Christ can do through us. He also highlights the significance of the Old Testament in revealing God's redemptive acts and the importance of understanding the historical records of God's dealings with Israel.

Transcript

Turn with me tonight to the epistles of the Romans, chapter 5 and verse 10. I suppose if I were to have asked you a few moments ago, what it is that the Lord Jesus Christ has done to save you, almost instinctively, you would say, well, he died to save me. That would be the natural answer to give.

But I want you to notice very carefully what this verse says as we read together. I'll read the 10th verse of the 5th chapter of this epistle to the Romans. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

So what is it that saves you? His death or his life? Reconciled to God by his death, much more saved by his life. And we make, perhaps, the rather surprising discovery that it isn't the death of Jesus Christ that saves us, but his life that saves us. Of course, it is true that in a limited sense, his death saves us.

In the least important sense, his death saves us from the punitive consequence of sin. Restores us to a relationship to God that enables us to be thereafter saved by his life. And this, you will notice, is the much more of our salvation.

If, when we were enemies, a condition that now has been relegated to the past tense, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, an accomplished fact, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by

his life. Have you been reconciled to God by his death? Well, I imagine that without exception, you can all say, yes, indeed. I can think back to the day when, convicted by the Holy Spirit of the fact that I was a guilty sinner, convinced of the adequacy of his atoning death, of his vicarious sacrifice upon the cross, becoming convinced that the precious blood that he shed cleanses from all sin, I can remember the day when I received him deliberately as my personal redeemer, put my trust in him, and since then I have thanked God that I am reconciled.

I don't deserve to be reconciled, but I thank him now that I am reconciled to God through his death. A perfectly legitimate question would be, of course, thereafter, to say, are you being saved by his life? Having been reconciled to God by his death, are you being saved by his life? Have you ever thought about it? Because this is the much more of your salvation. In other words, if your Christian experience is limited to being reconciled to God by his death, a historical fact 1,900 years ago, and you are not being saved by his life, then you are missing, quite obviously, the much more of your salvation.

In point of fact, you're missing the whole purpose for which he died. Cheating him of that for which his blood was shed. Reconciled to God by his death, saved by his life.

The one is the crisis of a moment. The other is the process of a lifetime, and on into eternity. I was reconciled to God when I was a boy of twelve.

Quarter to nine on a Saturday night in a boy's camp. Almost the first time that I had ever had clearly explained to me the purpose for which the Lord Jesus, as God incarnate, had died upon the cross, the good shepherd who lay down his life for the sheep. And I can remember the evening when the story of the good shepherd from John 10 was explained by a very dear man of God who has now gone to be with Christ.

We used to call him Bubbly Head. His name was Mr. Lawrence Head, and he used to froth at the mouth when he spoke, so we called him Bubbly. But he was wonderfully used of God in bringing boys to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

And without anybody knowing that night of what had happened in my heart, I found Christ. Nobody knew for three days. But I've never had cause to ask again that Christ should redeem me.

From that moment I can honestly say, until this moment, I've had complete and supreme confidence that through his death I was reconciled to God. But that is not my salvation. That was the beginning of my salvation.

That was the threshold of my salvation. That night I found the Lord Jesus Christ in the way in which he described himself, as the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, the door. And the door is that through which you enter.

The Lord Jesus as the door is not our salvation. The Lord Jesus as the door is the means whereby we enter into our salvation. The Lord Jesus says, I am the way.

But the way is not your destination. The way is the way to the destination. And by virtue of his reconciling death, he is the door and the way into life.

The process whereby we enjoy what he is in us, by virtue of what he has done for us. Reconciled to God by his death, that we might thereafter be saved by his life. The one a crisis, the other a process.

The first an initial, an initial act of faith that accepts him for what he did, and thereafter an attitude of faith that enjoys what he is. For he not only died for what you have done, he rose again from the dead by his indwelling Holy Spirit to take the place of what you are. Now this is the gospel.

Anything less than this falls short of the gospel, as it is given to us in the word of God. Reconciled to God by his death. Now that is called justification.

God looks upon me as one who has been clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. By virtue of the fact that there has been imputed to him in his sinlessness all my sinfulness. And there is now imputed to me all his sinlessness in spite of my sinfulness.

That's justification. We simply change places. There being imputed to him my guilt, and there being imputed to me his righteousness.

Now we call that justification. Justification by faith. I'm sure you've heard on many occasions.

Justified. Just as if I'd never sinned. That's what it means to be justified.

Just as if I'd never sinned. God looks at me just as if I'd never sinned. Because all my sins have been laid on him.

Imputed. Credited. The word impute means to credit.

If I were to impute your bank account with a thousand dollars, then you would be one thousand dollars richer. There's very little danger of that taking place. But that is what would happen should it do so.

And there was credited to the Lord Jesus all our guilt and sin. That there might be credited to us all his spotless righteousness. For God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin.

Imputed guilt. That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Imputed righteousness.

Now how soon does that take place? How long does it take to take place? It takes place instantly in the very moment of time that you and I convicted of the Holy Spirit repent toward God and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As our redeemer who through his death reconciles us to God. And we are thereby according to Ephesians chapter 1, 6 and 7 accepted in the beloved.

Having redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. But that doesn't constitute our salvation. This qualifies us for salvation.

This makes us the recipients of that which now is to constitute our salvation. Not this time imputed righteousness, but this time imparted righteousness. For the moment there is imputed to me the righteousness of the Lord Jesus whereby I am clothed with his righteousness.

There is imparted to me the righteousness of the Lord Jesus whereby his righteousness is now clothed with me. Do you see the two sides? Justification, I am clothed with his righteousness so that when God looks upon me he sees him. Sanctification, his righteousness now clothed with me so that he by his indwelling Holy Spirit through whom his righteousness is imparted to me lives, walks and has his being on earth in this my body which has thereby through redemption become the temple of the living God.

Justification, imputed righteousness. Sanctification, imparted righteousness. I am in Christ, justification.

Christ is in me, sanctification. I step into Christ by the act of faith. Christ lives in me by my attitude of faith.

So the one is a crisis that precipitates the process. One is the act of faith and the other is thereafter the attitude of faith. Having received what he is by the act, I enjoy what he is by the attitude.

As I thereafter take each step in an attitude of total dependence upon the one who living in me credits me with all he is. That's what Paul means when he says if when we were enemies, guilty, condemned, alienated from the life of God, uninhabited by God if when we were enemies, dead in trespasses and sins we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, crisis much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life, his indwelling presence, process. The crisis, if it is valid, is always followed by the process.

That's why in the eighth chapter of the same epistle Paul says there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus clothed with his righteousness. Justified. But then the verse goes on to say this who walk, that's the process who walk not after the flesh but who walk now after the indwelling spirit who imparts the righteousness of Christ that has already been imputed so that I step into Christ redeemed that I may now walk in the spirit.

The one a crisis, the other a process. And all and only that which validates my claim to be in Christ is that manifestly by every step I take Christ is in me. Putting it another way when you are in Christ justified that makes you fit for heaven.

When Christ is in you sanctified that makes you fit for earth. And the tragedy you see is this that there are lots of Christians who have been made fit for heaven in Christ but have never yet become fit for earth because they have never recognized nor submitted themselves to the glorious fact that Christ is in them. When you're in Christ justified that changes your destination heaven instead of hell.

It's when Christ is in you and you yield to that fact that this changes not just your destination but your destiny. You can have your destination changed heaven instead of hell without your destiny being changed on earth, on the way to heaven if you do not recognize nor yield to the totalitarian lordship of Christ which is his legitimate right in the redeemed humanity of a forgiven sinner cleansed through his blood and now indwelt by his spirit. If you step into Christ by the act of faith you claim your inheritance in him heaven one day.

But remember the moment you step into Christ by faith he by his holy spirit steps into you that he may have his inheritance on earth, right now your humanity on the way to heaven. To claim your inheritance in him without yielding his inheritance in you is to cheat the lord Jesus Christ of all that for which he went to the cross. Now this of course is the basic message that runs from Genesis to the Revelation.

This is the gospel the only gospel that was proclaimed in the early church. This is why the early church was so virile as compared to our present day church because they recognized that the motivation of the redeemed fellowship of forgiven sinners was not their enthusiasm for Christ not their ability yielded to Christ but Christ himself in and through them. The possibilities of the early church as they recognized them were limited not by what they could do on Christ's behalf only by what Christ could do through them on his own behalf.

So the world in that generation saw what Christ could do through the church. Today we are trying to show the world what the church can do for Christ and that's the difference. We sometimes say we have to stand in the world and witness to Christ.

Is that right? No. That's quite wrong. When you stand in the world and witness to Christ all the world sees is your best for Christ.

God calls us to stand in Christ and witness to the world. That's quite a different thing. When you stand in Christ and witness to the world the world then sees what Christ is and can do through you.

The difference, of course, is you being your size for God or God being his size through you. Which is it in your life till now? You being your size for God or God being his size through you? Do you think there would be any difference in the consequences? The difference in the consequences would be the difference between your size and God's size. Maybe that explains why so little has ever been accomplished by your life as a Christian.

You've been too busy being your size for God. You're reconciled to God by his death. Are you being saved by his life? Having accepted by faith what he did Are you enjoying moment by moment what he is? I'm going to ask you to look with me tonight for a few moments to two very lovely Old Testament illustrations.

Because you'll discover that the Old Testament will come to life in a wonderfully new way to your heart if once you recognize what it is the Holy Spirit is seeking to declare. The Holy Spirit is the one who takes the things of the Christ and reveals them unto us. And remember, the only Bible that the early church had was the Old Testament.

The only Bible from which Paul preached, or Peter, or John the only Bible from which the Lord Jesus preached was the Old Testament. And Paul rightly, in writing to Timothy, says from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures the Old Testament, that are able to make you wise unto salvation in all its fullness through faith which is in Christ Jesus. In other words, all you need to be wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus is contained in the Old Testament.

Supposing you didn't have a New Testament. Some of you Christian folk here today. Supposing you just didn't have a New Testament.

Supposing you were one of the early Christians in the Ephesian church, or the Corinthian church and you didn't have a New Testament. How would you get on? How much do you, as a Christian, right now enjoy the Old Testament? How far does it speak to you of the Lord Jesus in such a way that you would be completely wise unto salvation through faith in Him? Would you be at a loss without your New Testament? If you would be at a loss without your New Testament then there must be something wrong with your appreciation and appropriation of the message of the Old Testament. What is it that brings the Old Testament to life? The Lord Jesus Himself.

It was when He was risen from the dead that He turned to His disciples and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, Old Testament the things that concern Himself. And we're told in the 24th of Luke He opened their eyes that they might understand the Scriptures. That it behoved Christ to suffer these things, to be crucified and to be raised from the dead.

Patently obvious from the Old Testament. So when we turn to the Old Testament we're turning to the revelation that God has given to us intended to make us wise. Wise unto salvation.

In the 15th chapter of the book of Exodus only just a brief glance at this short passage it is coincident with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. One of the most vivid pictures given to us in the Bible of redemption. One of the most important historical records in the Bible is that which deals with God's earthly people.

God's dealings with the earthly people, Israel. That is one of the most important and imperative historical records in the whole Bible. For it is more cited in the Old Testament and the New than any other single record given to us.

And I personally can never understand how a Christian could ever grow spiritually or understand spiritual truth or spiritual principle without coming to grips with the spiritual content of the record given to us by divine inspiration of God's dealings with His earthly people, Israel. There'll be a great big gap in my Bible. And there'll be a great big gap in my experience of Christ if I hadn't come to understand at least in some measure the significance of this record.

Now this is contemporary with God's redemptive act in bringing His earthly people, Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea. And He underlines again the principle of redemption in these few verses. Verse 22 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.

End of verse 26 For I am the Lord that healeth thee. Very beautiful picture. Here were the waters bitter that could only spell death.

And when they cried to God God showed them a tree which when they had cast into the bitter water the waters were made sweet for I am the Lord that healeth thee. In the day that Adam fell into sin and we shall be exploring more fully later the significance of what happened at the fall of man how dark and deep and bitter did the waters become within the soul of man. Waters that could only spell death.

And then God graciously moved upon the face of those waters and showed a tree where he bore our sins in his own body on the tree which when cast by faith into the bitter waters the waters are made sweet for I am the Lord that healeth thee. A beautiful picture in cameo of the redemptive work of Christ whereby through his death he reconciles to God the guilty sinner who humbly repents and by faith appropriates the adequacy of his shed blood the cross for reconciliation. In other words it is the tree for bitterness the precious shed blood of the cross for cleansing reconciliation the threshold of our faith.

Now that's the first picture reconciled to God by his death the tree in the bitter waters. Now turn to the second book of Kings and the second chapter 2 Kings chapter 2 just four verses in another cameo picture 2 Kings 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 naught and the ground is barren.

The situation of this city upon their good fortune in living in such a charming situation and although the inhabitants might courteously smile and reply with appropriate words there was a deep sorrow in their hearts for there was something beneath the surface in that charming situation which was not immediately obvious to the casual passer-by the water was naught and the ground was barren when it says the water was naught it doesn't mean to say that there was no water as we could discover from the context but it was good for nothing it was stale there was a quality about that water that made it useless for the purpose which it should exist and in a consequence the ground was barren and again when the word there is used barren it doesn't quite convey the true sense if you happen to have a

marginal translation you'll see that the word means causing to miscarry in other words not that nothing grew but that nothing came to maturity nothing ever ripened nothing ever became fit to eat so that the casual passer-by coming in the early spring would see all the evidences of life and all the early promise of bumper harvest there would be foliage they'd see the bud shooting and the blossom finally falling to the ground and the fruit beginning to form and they would sincerely congratulate the inhabitants upon the obvious harvest that inevitably must be reaped and yet deep down in our hearts the inhabitants knew that it would happen again as it had already always happened year after year they knew perfectly well that the fruit would never ripen it would fall to the ground, it would

rot, immature and premature and never reproduce what's this a picture of? maybe it's a picture of your life as a Christian all the outward appearances of spiritual prosperity all the outward evidences that would offer healthy promise of coming harvest and yet deep down in your heart a bitter sorrow for although you can engage in conversation with fellow believers and they can go away from your presence charmed and enchanted to say to their friends quite sincerely what a lovely fellow that is what a fine Christian girl you know deep down in your heart that your life is barren that in spite of all the outward evidences that promise harvest you know it'll happen again this year as it has happened every year the fruit will fall to the ground immature and premature to rot and never to

reproduce charming but useless and the burden became intolerable until at last they came to the prophet and they unburdened their souls and they said we're tired of living this kind of life we're tired of giving all the outward evidences of prosperity and harvest and knowing that deep down within there's nothing but death and the prophet said bring me a new crew and put salt therein and they brought it to him and he went forth unto the spring of the waters and he cast the salt in there and he 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 Elijah which is based the tree for bitterness and the salt for barrenness now we know what the tree speaks of it speaks

of the atoning death of Jesus Christ the death by which we are reconciled what does the salt speak of placed at the source of the waters reconciled by his death crisis that we might be saved by his life process the salt speaks of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ salt speaks of the indwelling Holy Spirit placed at the source of the waters for the Lord Jesus said John 7 38 and 39 he that believeth on me out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water this spake he of the Holy Spirit whom they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified risen from the dead and ascended to the Father that he might give himself to the redeemed sinner as a redeemed man as the Father had already given himself to the Son as perfect

man salt speaks of the imparted righteousness of the risen Lord who comes in the person of his Divine Spirit to re-inhabit your redeemed humanity and live on earth again himself in you but if you are not enjoying what he is in spite of the fact that you have been redeemed by what he did then you may have all the language and all the outward charms all the outward evidences of spiritual prosperity but nothing within but barren Leviticus second chapter Leviticus chapter 2 verse 13 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 God spoke to Moses and he said no matter how much it may cost you no matter how much sincerity it may

involve no matter how much sacrifice it may demand I want to tell you this that no sacrifice no offering that you ever bring to God will be acceptable unless it is seasoned with salt no matter what you bring I will not,

I cannot accept it unless it is seasoned with salt what does this mean? it means that the only activity in you that will be acceptable to the father is the activity of his son Jesus Christ that as the Lord Jesus lived as perfect man on earth in an attitude of total dependence upon the father who indwelt him through the eternal spirit so you and I are to live in an attitude of total dependence upon the son who indwelt us through the eternal spirit and as our nation of royal priests according to Peter in his epistles we are to bring to God sacrifices acceptable to God's

heart through Jesus Christ the only person whom God recognizes to be alive in you as a redeemed sinner is Jesus Christ only what he is and only what he does in you and through you can ever under any circumstances be acceptable to the father and without fault no matter how sincere you may be no matter how earnest no matter how enthusiastic no matter how scholarly no matter how gifted no matter how much you may sacrifice it will be refused and it will fill you with a sense of despair and confusion and a sense of futility and frustration our time is gone but turn with me to Luke's gospel chapter 14 so likewise verse 33 whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath he cannot be my disciple until you have forsaken all that you have until you have nothing left bankrupt until you

have come into the place where you recognize that you have nothing of yourself apart from what he is you cannot be my disciple verse 34 salt is good but if the salt have lost his savor if it's imitation salt in other words wherewith shall it be seasoned it is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunhill men cast it out he that hath ears to hear let him hear I was in the Middle East during the war and I discovered that in the Middle East in the Mediterranean area salt was at a premium very difficult to get salt the Arabs would buy salt for a dozen eggs just a pinch of salt you could get a dozen eggs just a pinch of salt you could get a chicken you could buy an Arab shirt for a pinch of salt if it was worth buying you wouldn't know which hole to put your arms through so we usually

bought the chicken but because salt was difficult to obtain there was every kind of imitation salt on the market and if you wanted it for immediate consumption it was all right to the taste and you would not have known the difference but the moment the Arabs used it for the purpose which salt is mainly used to preserve fish and meat from corruption in a matter of hours at most a day in the hot sultry climate it would begin to stink and go rotten and putrid it wouldn't even be fit for the dunhill and the tragedy you see today in the Church of Jesus Christ that there is so much imitation salt catches the attention of the crowd passes muster when it is only for immediate consumption but it has no preservative quality and it isn't long before it begins to stink and that which has been treated

by it goes putrid, rotten and bad it isn't even fit for the dunhill salt that has lost its savor an imitation of the real thing man's perspiration instead of divine unction the energy of the flesh instead of the power of the spirit my last reference for you tonight then we finish is to be found in the book of Ezra back from Job Nehemiah and Esther Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra and in the seventh chapter and this is rather fascinating God's hour had struck after the Babylonian captivity for the restoration of his people in Palestine the rebuilding of the temple its cleansing and the reestablishment of true spiritual worship and it says verse 6 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

requests according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him not because he was clever or slick not because he had a persuasive way not because he had strength to pull or influence no no we're told that the king granted him all his requests according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him why was God's good hand upon Ezra for verse 10 Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord he'd begun to

read the books of Moses and to discover God's mind as to how God does God's work God's way he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and secondly having discovered God's way of doing God's work to do it God's way and not only having discovered God's mind with a willing heart to obey his purpose was also to teach in Israel's statutes and judgments Ezra was a man who had

determined to find out God's mind to obey God's mind and to teach God's mind God's way that's why God's hand was upon him verse 21 and the king wrote a letter I even I Artaxerxes the king do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river that whatsoever Ezra the priest the scribe of the Lord the God of heaven to require of you it be done speedily for he wishes to reestablish true spiritual worship in the temple of God rebuilt and cleansed verse 22 unto 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 all these things and salt how much unlimited quantities of salt salt without prescribing how much for Ezra had said to the king I think a hundred of this will do and I think a hundred of that and I

think a hundred of the other but he said to the king I must have absolutely unprescribed quantities of salt because God my my God has made it plain to me through his law that no matter how much it may cost no matter how grave the sacrifice no matter how sincere the one who offers it no offering that is ever brought will ever be acceptable unless it is seasoned with salt so I don't mind whatever else I may run out on I must never run out of salt unlimited quantities of salt for in him whose resurrection life is imparted by the indwelling Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus himself in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily unlimited quantities for we have a God who makes all grace to abound toward us that we always having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work

unlimited quantities of salt only to be found in Christ who by his Spirit comes at the source of the water that out of your innermost being might flow rivers of living water reconciled to God through his death the tree forbidden and much more saved by his life the salt for barrenness are you being saved by his life let us pray

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