

# Complete Faith

by Major Ian Thomas

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*Major Ian Thomas's sermon 'Complete Faith' emphasizes the necessity of Christ's indwelling for true transformation and living out the Christian life.*

**Duration:** 38:40

**Topics:** "Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the law cannot make a person fit for heaven because it has been weakened through the flesh. The preacher explains that the life of Jesus Christ on earth fulfilled every demand of the law in righteousness, making him the end of the law for righteousness. The law exposes our sin and proves us guilty when we compare our achievements in the flesh to its demands. The preacher concludes by stating that Jesus came into the world not just as an example to copy, but to impart and reproduce his life in believers, qualifying them for the life he lived.

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## Transcript

I'm certainly deeply appreciative of the courteous and careful way in which you have followed, as we have explored together, into some of the basic principles of the Christian life. And I trust that this will prove to be profitable as we come increasingly to understand the implications of our faith, the true spiritual content of our faith. We have seen man as God intended him to be in his innocence.

We have seen man in his innocence as he was in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate. And yesterday we examined man as he is, as you and I are. Now, the question now to be resolved, how can man as he is become man as he was intended to be? And if man as he was in Christ, in perfection, is the one who was sent into this world to make it possible, what is it in the person of Jesus Christ, as perfect man as he was, that makes it possible for us to be now, in the present tense, what he was? What is it that Jesus Christ accomplished by coming into this world and living for 33 years in perfect manhood? In other words, man as he is, uninhabited by God, inhabited only by sin.

His human personality, dominated by a new principle of satanic origin called the flesh. This is the unregenerate natural man. It may interest you to know that in the French Bible, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, and the second chapter, and the 14th verse, which is rendered in our Bible, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

In the French Bible it says, l'homme animal, not the natural man, but the animal man. The animal man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And the animal man is spiritually dead, lifeless, because he's godless.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18, alienated, cut off, severed from the life of God, inhabited by the flesh, the sin principle of satanic origin that dominates his human personality and prostitutes his humanity to the devil's evil devices, but uninhabited by God. This is man as he is. The Lord Jesus, perfect man as he was, uninhabited by sin, only and wholly inhabited by God, so that he could say to his disciples in John 14, verse 30, the prince of this world is come, the devil, he hath nothing in me.

He has found no point of entry, no point at which he has invaded my soul, for I am that my father exclusively may do. He alone, my father, who indwells me by his spirit, is the one who exercises his prerogatives in me. This was man in his perfection as he was, as opposed to what you and I in our imperfection are.

How can we be what he was? Surely this is the supreme question, if you and I want to be Christians, which simply means men restored to their true humanity, to be because we love him, what God intended us to be. Well, there are some who tell us, of course, that the Lord Jesus simply came into this world to give us a beautiful demonstration of manhood, that we might thereafter emulate the example that he set, and that is the sum total of his purpose, that we gaze at him and do our best. No need for conversion, no need for redemption, no need for regeneration, no need for any of these things.

We simply emulate his example. We copy the pattern that he has set us. Well now, if we were to examine that, it would involve this fact, that being uninhabited by God, as the fallen seed of the fallen Adam, and having a personality dominated only by the flesh, there would be inherent in us, dominated by the flesh, the capacity to be like a man, infilled by the Spirit.

In other words, in the energy of my flesh, I can be what man was intended to be, apart from God. That in itself would be a perpetuation of the satanic lie first perpetrated in Adam. For Satan persuaded Adam to believe that he could lose God and lose nothing.

That he would still have, in the absence of God, all that it takes to be man. And if I believe that I, apart from regeneration, the restoration to me of the Holy Spirit, can emulate the example and life of Jesus Christ, I am subscribing to the creed, the Adamic creed, that I've lost God, but I've lost nothing. I have still in me, apart from what he is, all that it takes to live a successful human life.

When I wonder if that is true, I wonder if it is true that a human personality, totally empty of divine content, only dominated by the flesh, does such a man have what it takes to be man as God intended him to be. If he has, then we can dismiss the need for regeneration, we can dismiss the need for the cross, we can dismiss the need for conversion, and Jesus Christ, if he means anything at all to us, simply means no more than the example that he set. Well, let's examine this for a moment.

In Romans chapter 3. Romans and the third chapter. Could I have my point of reference? Thank you so much. Thank you.

I wish you'd give me one that went slower. In the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we know that what things whoever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, what has the law to say? Well, the law is an interpretation of the absolute standard that the very nature of God demands in righteousness.

That's the law.

The law is simply God's absolute standard of righteousness interpreted, in some measure at least, in a way that man can apprehend the nature of his righteousness. Written, we're told, with the finger of God upon the tables of stone that were placed into the hands of Moses in the mount. This is the law.

And we know that what things whoever the law says, this, the demand of God's righteousness, it said to them who choose to be under that law. For any man may opt to be judged by the demands of the law. He may exercise the option to be judged by virtue of his comparison to the demands that God's law makes in righteousness.

We know that what things whoever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

In other words, the moment that I compare my highest achievement in the energy of the flesh that dominates my human personality in the absence of God, the moment I compare what I am apart from what he is, with the demands that God's law makes upon me, the law instantly stops my mouth, proves me guilty, and exposes my sin. So we read in the eighth chapter of the same epistle and the third verse, what the law could not do. What couldn't the law do? In imposing a standard that represents God's righteousness upon me, it cannot qualify me for God's presence nor for God's approval.

Why not? In that it was weak through the flesh. That there is dominating my human personality this sin principle called the flesh, which you will see in the seventh verse, is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh, empty of God, dominated only by this sin principle, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The law is totally impotent to make us fit for heaven, because its demands can never and will never be met by the sin principle that governs the human personality in the absence of God himself. In other words, no matter which way you look at it, what you are in the flesh, apart from what God is in you through the Spirit, is totally unacceptable by God. He repudiates it through and through.

It is fit for nothing but judgment. For all that the flesh in you can accomplish, falls short of the minimum demands of God's righteousness. So the law cannot make you fit for heaven, because it has been weakened through the flesh.

So your personality, dominated by the flesh in the absence of the Holy Spirit, falls short of what God demands of you as man, as God intended man to be. Now turn over at the page to the tenth chapter. Verse four, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

Paraphrased, the life that the Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth as man, wholly inhabited by God and utterly uninhabited by sin, fulfilled to the uttermost degree every demand that the law could make upon man in righteousness. He was the end of the law for righteousness. He was the last word in righteousness.

There was never a single point at which the law could accuse him and find him guilty. In other words, the life of the Lord Jesus as he lived it in perfect manhood 1,900 years ago, was a complete exegesis of the demands of the law. The righteousness of his life equaled exactly the righteousness demanded by the law.

Now if the weakness of your flesh makes it impossible for you to accede to the demands of the law, the weakness of the same flesh will make it impossible for you to emulate the demands of his life. Compare what you are in the flesh with the demands of the law and you are proved guilty. Your mouth is stopped and your guilt and sin is exposed.

Compare what you are now to the life that he lived then and equally because his life equals the law, your mouth will be stopped, you will be proved guilty, and your sin will be exposed. Both the law and the life that fulfilled that law condemn you. So any attempt on your part to be man simply by an emulation of what Christ was then is as inevitably bound to fail as any attempt on your part to be man as God intended man to be by subscribing to the law in the energy of the flesh.

What you are apart from what God is in you falls short of the demands of the law and falls short of the demands of his life. So it is quite obvious that if the Lord Jesus had come only into the world 1900 years ago to live for 33 years in perfection and then go back to heaven, he would have been born to live in vain. His whole life on earth would have been to you and to me simply a message of frustration.

As frustrating to us as an example as the law in its demands. Because of the weakness of the flesh which is of satanic origin is hostile to God, is not subject to his laws, nor indeed can be. Why then did Jesus Christ come and live that kind of life? He lived that kind of life to qualify him for the kind of death he suffered.

That's why he says in John 12 verse 23, John 12 23, the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains, it abides. A perfect specimen, but it abides alone.

It may be copied, but every copy will be sterile. Only if it dies can the life that it possesses be reproduced. And when the Lord Jesus came into this world, it was not that you might have an example to copy, but that there might be in him a life to be reproduced in you and in me.

If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And in the new ear of corn, inherent in every individual grain within the ear, will be the original life of the original corn. Not copied, but imparted and reproduced.

That is the purpose to which he lived, for the life he lived qualified him for the death he died. That the death he died might qualify you and me for the life he lived. That's the gospel.

The idea that Jesus Christ simply shed his blood to get you out of hell, to keep you out of the scrapes that you've got yourself into because of sin, and one day get you to heaven, as the benevolent gesture of a benevolent Father in heaven, is completely inadequate. That is not the gospel. The life he lived in his sinlessness qualified him for the vicarious substitutionary death he died, that on the basis of his vicarious atoning sacrifice, as a reconciled sinner whose sins have been forgiven, you might be qualified for the life that he lived then, to be lived now by him in you.

Not copied, but reproduced. Not an imitation of the same life, but his life imparted. He had to be sinless that he might be made sin.

If he had not been sinless, he would not have needed to have been made sin. He could only have suffered the consequences of his own sin. So he had to be what he was in order to do what he did.

And in order to be what he was, he had to be born the way he was born. Because if Jesus Christ had been born the way you and I were born, he too by nature would have been a sinner. He would have been born uninhabited by God, and inhabited only by sin.

You and I are not sinners because we commit sins, we commit sins because we are born sinners. Because when we are born, we are born uninhabited by God, but already inhabited by the sin principle of satanic origin that invaded man's soul in the first fallen Adam. And you commit sins because you are a sinner.

As an apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree. And if Jesus Christ had been born as you and I were born, he too would have committed sins by nature, because by nature he would have been a sinner. That is why he had to be miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit and be born of God.

And the virgin miraculous birth of Jesus Christ is an absolute imperative for man's redemption, and for his spiritual regeneration. A man may not necessarily believe it nor understand it, but it makes it nonetheless imperative. If he doesn't believe it nor understand it, that simply explains and declares it ignorance.

It's nonetheless imperatively necessary. But because he was born miraculously of the Holy Spirit, he could say the Prince of this world has come, he hath nothing in me. For I am not inhabited by that which inhabited the fallen Adam, I am inhabited only and exclusively by my Father who dwelling in me does the work.

And for 33 years on earth he lived in complete manhood, utterly sinless, that there might be added at Calvary to his sinlessness all your sinfulness. To all that he was by virtue of the Father in him might be added all that you are without the Son in you. All your depravity, all your natural inherent wickedness and bankruptcy, all that you are apart from what God is in you was added to Christ, and sentenced with him, and executed in him, and buried with him.

So that when you give yourself to Jesus Christ, you don't come to God as though you are looking for a job, or in a condescending way, telling God how fortunate he should consider himself that he's got a person like you at his disposal. Never before have you had such a lovely voice to sing for you. Never before have you had such a scintillating personality calculated to capture the imagination of the crowd.

Never before have you had such an intellect at your disposal, how lucky God you ought to be to think that I've decided to be on your side. Oh no. When you give yourself to Jesus Christ, it is simply that God might add you to him in your wickedness, to his sinlessness, sentence you, execute you, and bury you, because that's all you're fit for.

All that you are apart from what Jesus Christ is in you is fit for nothing but death and the dung heap. And that's where God put you in his eternal economy 1,900 years ago, and so far as God is concerned, that's where you still are, because that's the only place you're fit for. So don't delude yourself, and don't deceive yourself, and don't fatter yourself.

And of the two of you who went into the grave, God only gave one of you the right to rise again, and it wasn't you. It was Jesus Christ, that in the power of his Holy Spirit, he might reproduce in you now, clothing this his life with your redeemed humanity, the life that he lived 1,900 years ago. So he had to be what he was, sinless, perfect, to do what he did, redeem.

But he had to do what he did, redeem, that you might have what he is, life. That took place at Pentecost, when the Lord Jesus told this first ear of corn, so soon to ripen, to tarry in Jerusalem, until they receive power from on high. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

But on the day of Pentecost, 120 new grains of wheat received the same life that were in the original grain. They were added to the Lord, and the life of Jesus Christ was clothed with the humanity of 120 men and women, redeemed by what he did. Now the recipients of what he is.

So that Jesus Christ lived again on earth, this time not in his own sinless humanity, but in their redeemed humanity, as those who had been added to his body corpus, the church. So he had to be what he was, perfect, in order to do what he did, redeem. But he had to do what he did, redeem, that you might have what he is, life.

And you must have what he is, life, in order to be what he was, perfect. That's the circle. Did you get it? It's not intended to be a tongue twister, nor indeed just simply to be clever.

This is absolutely basic. If you are ever to have an intelligent understanding of your professed conversion, he had to be what he was, perfect, to do what he did, redeem. He had to do what he did, redeem, that you might have what he is, life, by the gift you of the Holy Spirit.

You must have what he is, life, in order to be what he was, perfect, because he is what he was, perfect. That's why the Lord Jesus says, be ye perfect, present tense, even as I am perfect, present tense. So where is your perfection? Only in Jesus Christ.

And you will be what he was, in the measure in which you allow him to be what he is. That is sanctification. For of God is he Christ.

Made unto us, sanctification. Made unto us, righteousness. Made unto us, wisdom.

Made unto us, redemption. Where then is to be found your redemption, your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, all and only and exclusively in the person of Jesus Christ, of whose life you have now become the participant by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, who credits you with what he is, that you might enjoy what he is. So what do we discover? That the life he lived on earth, 1,900 years ago, condemns you, even as the law condemns you.

It is the life that he lives now, in you, by his Spirit, that saves you. But the life that he lives now in you, that saves you, can only do so by the death he died, to redeem you. That enables the Holy God to restore to you that which sin forfeited.

For when sin came in, life went out. When through his atoning death, sin goes out, life comes in. So you see, by his death, he kills death, dead.

Because life destroys death. And when the Lord Jesus returns to dwell within you, the presence of life destroys the state of death, so that he brought life and immortality to life. We understand, therefore, that the Christian life is the life that he lived then, lived now, by him, in you.

Reconciled to God by his death, Romans 5.10, how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. So I understand now what it means when the Bible says, to me to live, to enjoy life at all, to be alive, for me to be alive is Christ. I am crucified with Christ, the self that sin makes of me, the self that I

have a right only to despise.

I am crucified, sentenced, executed, and buried with him. I am crucified with Christ, never given the right to rise again. Nevertheless, I live.

The self that I have a right to respect, the self that Jesus Christ makes of me when he takes over control of my human personality from the flesh. Nevertheless, I live, the new I, yet not I, for it is Christ that lives in me. And the life that I now live in this my body, wholly presented to him as he once presented his body to the Father, I live in the same attitude of dependence upon him in which he lived in his attitude of dependence upon the Father, faith.

So that every step I take I say, Lord Jesus, thank you for what you are in me for this situation, thank you. That's the Christian life. So you walk by faith.

This is walking in the Spirit. Now there are two ways in which you, of course, as a Christian, can walk. You can walk in the flesh, like a foolish Galatian, or you can walk in the Spirit.

What is the condition of a Christian who walks in the flesh? The flesh in you before you were redeemed and before you were regenerate could never satisfy the Lord. The flesh in you before you were redeemed and before you were regenerate could never copy the life of Christ. And there is nothing about redemption and there is nothing about new birth that adds any new quality or capacity or ability to the flesh to do either of those things after you're redeemed or after you're regenerate.

The flesh is as inherently bad after as before. It is as bankrupt and rotten through and through after your regeneration as before your regeneration. And your flesh after being converted will no more be able to satisfy the demands of the Lord, nor want to, than it will be able to satisfy the demands of his life.

If therefore, like a foolish Galatian, you receive the Holy Spirit who imparts to you now the life that he lived then, you still try to be made perfect in the flesh, what are you saying? Well you're saying I had the flesh before I had Christ. But now I have Christ I realize that having him I have no more than I had before I hadn't him. I can be made perfect in the flesh now having received him in the same way that I thought I could be made perfect in the flesh before I received him.

In other words I've received Christ, I've received God, but I've received nothing. Now that is the mental attitude of the carnal Christian. In other words the carnal Christian says I'm pretty impressed by what I am in spite of the fact that I'm converted, I'm still pretty well impressed by what I am apart from what Christ has added to me.

In point of fact I'm so impressed with what I am apart from what he is that I consider that having received him I've received as good as nothing. Now that's the devil's masterpiece. He persuaded Adam in the first place to believe that he could lose God and lose nothing.

The carnal Christian he persuades to believe that he gains God and gains nothing. And that is why some of you as Christians are so hopelessly futile in the quality of the Christian life that you profess to be living. That's why you're so barren.

That's why you're so sterile. It's as though I were to see a man pushing his car and he looks very tired and very exhausted and somewhat discouraged. And I ask him what's wrong and he says well I can't understand why this thing doesn't go as fast as the other ones that I see down the road.

I just can't make it go. I'm disappointed at what I can get out of it no matter how hard I push. Well I'd look no doubt at such a man with deep sympathy and I'd say did nobody ever talk to you about gas? No he said what's gas? Well I said it's the stuff you stick in the back.

That's what makes it go. Oh. I say you wait here a moment and I go to a garage.

You always have to think twice before I say that word. It's a garage in English. But I go to a gas station.

That's right. I go to a gas station. I bring back ten gallons of gas.

And I pour them in the back and I say now you have all that it takes to make this thing go just as fast as you'd like it to go. And he says thank you very much and as I say goodbye and wave him looking through the rear window I discover that he's started pushing all over again. I've given him now all that it takes but he's so impressed still in spite of his exhaustion so impressed at the speed that he can make it go.

That he'd rather go on pushing than enjoy what it takes to make the car function as it was created to function. Do you know what Paul says? I like the amplified New Testament in the third chapter of the Galatians. Galatians chapter 3 verse 1. Oh you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians.

That is the amplified New Testament. Let me ask you this one question verse 2. Did you receive the Holy Spirit as a result of obeying the law and doing its works? Was it the flesh that earned you the presence of God's light? This is a rhetorical question. He knows perfectly well they know the answer to this.

Was it by hearing the message of the gospel and believing it? Was it from observing a law of rituals or from a message of faith? He knows they know the answer to this question. That if the Holy Spirit has taken up residence within their redeemed humanity it is only because they have yielded the response of obedient faith to the message preached. That Christ died to cleanse them from their sins.

That by virtue of his death for which his life qualified him they might be qualified to receive his life. They know it and the Holy Spirit has come to take up residence in them. Are you so foolish? Verse 3. So senseless.

So silly. Having begun your new life spiritually with the Holy Spirit are you now ignoring his presence and reaching perfection by dependence on what you had before you had him? The flesh. What are you redeemed for? What's the meaning of your new birth? What's the whole point of your conversion? What intelligent objective had you in yielding the obedience of faith to the redeemer? The redeemer Christ that you might have his resurrection life if now having received his life by the Spirit you intend completely to ignore his presence.

Now that's exactly what some of you are doing. Some of you in ignorance and some in defiance of the truth. When you redeemed, when you claim cleansing through the blood of Christ, no other than Christ himself in the person of the Holy Ghost came to take up residence within your redeemed humanity.

To credit you with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. To make your body wholly filled and flooded with God himself. To lift you out from among the dead even while still in the body on earth that you might be the recipient of no less than his resurrection life.

And yet the amazing thing is this. Some of you in spite of that fact are still trying to be made perfect in the flesh. You still believe that you can be as impressive by virtue of what you are apart from what he is.

As you were before you received him. Of course there will be some of you who will never get over it. There are some of you who will never be anything but impressed by what you are apart from what he is and you'll be carnal Christians for the rest of your day.

It may well be that because your chin sticks out three inches more than anybody else's you'll blast your way in terms of personality to the top of some profession. God help you. It may well be that you'll go into the preaching ministry and by the same means you'll blast your way to the top of some denomination.

God help you. And God help those to whom you minister. There are some of you who will never be anything but impressed by what you are apart from what Christ is.

And you'll live carnal Christian lives until you stand ashamed in the presence of the one whom you robbed all your lifetime on earth of his inheritance in you. The right to be himself in you. In place of what you are of which you were so proud and of which God is so ashamed.

And that's the issue that some of you have got to decide. He had to be what he was to do what he did. That you might have what he is and be what he was because he is what he was.

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your body a living sacrifice wholly unacceptable unto God. It's your reasonable service as he once presented his own. That your future might become the hilarious adventure of proving daily what is that good and perfect will of God.

This is the Christian man. Christ in you. The only expectation of glory.

And the only one whom God credits with the right to live in you. Choose the kind of Christian you want to be. Now we bow our heads in prayer.

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