

Discerning Spiritual Things

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual regeneration, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the significance of Christ's life in demonstrating the normality of the Holy Spirit and the gospel message.

Duration: 1:03:17

Scripture: Acts 9:1, 2 Corinthians 4:6

Topics: "Spirituality"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the purpose of human creation and the image of God in man. He emphasizes that God created man so that all of creation could look at him and know what God is like. The speaker also highlights that the evaluation of a person by God is based on their reflection of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He uses examples of a lamp needing oil and a car needing gas to illustrate the necessity of God's life and power in man. The sermon concludes with a reference to the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus about the need for spiritual regeneration to enter the kingdom of God.

Transcript

He had a body, and within that body he had a soul, just like yours and just like mine. And within that soul, a human spirit. The tripod nature of the man whom God created, spirit and conjunction, soul and conjunction, spirit.

All indispensable, of course, to his function as man. None of us have too much difficulty in determining which is the body. We feed it, decorate it, educate it, in physical skills.

That's the body. Sometimes we have a considerable amount of difficulty in determining between the soul and the spirit. The natural man is aware of his body, very aware of his body.

It's the most important part of thinking. It's the part that he wants to preserve. He only vaguely is aware of the fact that he's got a soul.

He simply knows that unless he keeps body and soul together, and that's why he goes to work, somebody's going to bury the body, so he goes to work. But if you asked him to define his soul, he wouldn't have a clue. But the soul is not to be confused with the human spirit, and the word of God has clearly determined that.

Hebrews and chapter 4 and verse 12, the word of God, the sword of the spirit, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It is this that discerns between soul and spirit. In other words, exposes soulish religion and soulish music and soulish ceremonial and sacrament, discerns between the soulish and the spirit.

The one is still dead and the other is already, once indwelt by the Holy Spirit of the living God, alive again. But soulish religion, of course, never raised anybody from the dead. The soul must be awakened that we might turn to Jesus and claim in him that life that only he can restore, because he gave himself for us in order, risen from the dead, to give himself to us.

That's why Ephesians in chapter 5 verse 14 says, Awake thou that sleepest, that's the soul, totally unaware of its lost condition, awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light, he'll switch you on, he'll give you what it takes to shine. Because in the beginning was the word, the word was with God, was God, by him all things were made, without him was not anything made that was made, he is the creative deity, but in him was life. And it's that life that is in him that gives to man the moral competence to discharge the office which he was made, reveal the glory of God.

It's the life of Christ as the creator within man, the creature, that switches him on by virtue of his presence within the human spirit, gaining access to the human soul so that he can teach the mind, control the emotions, direct the will, and so govern behavior that others in him see Christ behaving. Now we've covered that territory as to fresher memories, and the incredible thing is that the Lord Jesus, when he was born at Bethlehem, assumed our humanity. He wasn't Superman, any more than, and least of all, Superstar.

He was just man, in normality. And he's described as such in the first verse of the fourth chapter, the Gospel of Luke, Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost. That simply means Jesus being man.

To be filled with the Holy Ghost is not some unique experience that we have. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is normality. It was for that purpose you and I were created, and when Adam was made in God's image, he never would have reflected God's glory, had he not been full of the Holy Ghost, through whom the Holy Spirit, God in the triune deity, inhabits a man's humanity, the one through whom Christ made himself available to the Father.

Hebrews 14, 9. Christ, who offered himself, body, soul, spirit, and the totality of being, body, soul, spirit, offered himself to God without spot. How? Through the eternal spirit. Through the eternal spirit.

Every air of his being, his mind, emotion, and will, governed by the Father, through the spirit, motivating his body, so that everything he did, said, and was, declared deity. He has revealed him. And we saw that yesterday in the first chapter there of the epistle to the Hebrews, very beautifully rendered, the express image of God's person, the outshining of the divine.

That was the Lord Jesus, very beautifully expressed also in John's Gospel, in the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse. No man has ever seen God, as God, at any time. The only unique Son, the only begotten God, who was incarnate, cloaked with the humanity that he created, the Word made flesh, the only begotten God, who is in the bosom, in the intimate presence of the Father, he has declared him.

And I like the way this is put. He has revealed him. He has brought him out where he, God, can be seen.

He has interpreted him and made him known. Now, in fulfilling that office, the Lord Jesus was being no more nor less than man, full of the Holy Ghost, totally monopolized in every area of his being, by the Father, who through him could reveal righteousness, the Father behaving. Don't call me good.

The words even that I speak unto you, though through my lips they're given utterance and become articulate, do not derive from me. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself. John 14 and verse 10.

The Father who lives in me, no matter what I do, no matter what I say, no matter what I am, he does the work. He's at work in me, and it's my privilege as man, by mutual agreement between all three of us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to place my humanity so at my Father's disposal that when you look at me you see his goodness. The only person who's to be congratulated, and the only possible explanation of the life I live.

My Father living in me. Somebody living in somebody. This, of course, is underlined for us in the Colossian Epistle in the 15th verse of the first chapter, Colossians 1 and verse 15.

He is the one through whose precious shed blood the Apostle here affirms we have forgiveness of our sins. That demanded the redemptive act, but in order that he might accomplish the redemptive act he had to be born as he was, coming as he did, conceived of the Holy Ghost so that he could be the man that he was. And only because of the man that he was, in all his sinlessness, could he accomplish the redemptive act.

He had to come as he came, conceived of the Holy Ghost, to be what he was in his utter sinlessness, declaring the perfection of deity in order to do what he did. But as we have already heard explained again and again, and must constantly and proclaim if we are to preach the Gospel, he had to come as he came to do what he did because of the man that he was so that we can have the life that he lived. Because the life the Lord Jesus lived then in his own body is the Christian life that he lives now in your body and mine in the measure in which we make our humanity is available now to him as God as he then as man made his humanity available to the Father as God.

Isn't it simple? So gloriously simple. It's the divine logic. In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, verse 15, that is of the first chapter, the epistle of the Colossians, he is the exact likeness of the unseen God.

He's the visible representation of the invisible. There inherently, of course, is presupposed the humanity of Jesus Christ because he is co-equal in deity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And yet, we are told, 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 16, that no man has seen God at any time nor can see God.

It's beyond his capacity. And yet here we have Jesus, whom we know to be God, the creator, the one by whom all things were made, in whom was that life which alone gives to man the moral competence to discharge his office in revealing glory, walking this earth in the flesh and blood of our humanity, man, the man Christ Jesus, God. And yet in him, a God who cannot be seen, we are to see a God who cannot be seen.

How can you see in a God who cannot be seen a God who cannot be seen? Only because he emptied himself, humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, made himself nothing, and was born a human being. So that in that physical, visible, and audible body the Father was prepared to prepare for him, he

could give a physical, visible, and audible expression of an invisible self, totally monopolized by the invisible God. Now, let's grasp that because this is the heart of the gospel.

This is new birth. This is spiritual regeneration. This is the fullness of the Holy Ghost.

Normality. Normality. Truth about God.

Truth about man. And as we saw yesterday, the truth about God, because he was the truth about man, because he was the God who created man to be the truth about God. Let's make man as our image.

And the Lord Jesus magnificently demonstrated what is no longer a mystery, it's an open secret. The mystery of God-likeness. The Father in the Son.

Look at me, see him. The mystery of God-likeness. The Son now in you.

When we have been restored to normality, we can turn to all creation and say, look at me and see what Jesus is like. And that, as we reminded ourselves a couple of nights ago, is to be evangelized. In the day when seeing him as he is, we will be like him.

He'll look at us and see precisely what God saw when he looked at Adam, when first he made himself. Then we've been evangelized. And that exclusively, of course, is the measure in which we've been evangelized.

And how many Bible verses you've memorized, not how many doctrines that you've mastered, not how many souls you may have precipitated to some decision for Jesus. That doesn't determine your spirituality. There's only one thing that determines your spirituality.

How much looking at you do others see of God? Paul came to that determination, as you may remember, on the road to Damascus. He records it in the fourth chapter of his second epistle. I beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I was the arch-persecutor. I was the enemy of the cross. I sought to destroy anybody who dared to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

And then suddenly, blinded, I was flung sightless to the earth by a light bright in the sun at new day. But in that brightness, I looked into the face of Jesus Christ and saw in a man all that can be seen of God. And I realized what man is all about and why he was made.

Because the mystery became an open secret for me in that moment. And from that time on, the only thing that mattered to me was that Jesus Christ be given in my humanity, not, alas, as he would admit, to perfection here on earth, but pressing toward that mark, the prize of the glory of Christ Jesus. He said, my supreme preoccupation is that others in me now see as much of God as others in Christ saw the Father.

Paul's discovered why he was created. That's why it didn't matter too much to him all the things that he suffered as the evidence of his apostleship, as Charles indicated in the earlier session. Because he knew, he knew perfectly well the only thing that would survive would be that which alone he could take with him, the gold, the silver, and the precious stones.

Wasn't his business on earth simply to earn his income, secure his old age, make sure he'd got a pension, impress the peers, hit the headlines? He said, that's trash to me. Long since I've recognized what it is,

trash. All I need to be is one who is illuminated by the life of Jesus Christ, because I'm receiving that for which I was created, his life, so that that life can be translated through me into tangible behavior.

See, as we indicated yesterday, these lamps are functional only because they're receiving that for which they were created. But they're not doing that to draw attention to themselves. Only so that you and I can enjoy the light.

That's all. And when you and I receive Christ as our Redeemer, it isn't so that we can draw attention to ourselves. It's so that others in our presence will be conscious of the light.

And God is light. That's all. And Jesus, being the truth about man, could not help but be the truth about God, because the truth about man is that he produced man to be the truth about God.

In the middle of the night, there was a knock on the door, and maybe Nicodemus was surprised to find Jesus still awake. Still up and about? Oh yes, Sir Jesus, waiting for you. What do you mean, waiting for me? You're a stranger to me.

And I imagine the Lord Jesus might well have said to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John's Gospel, you're right, I'm a stranger to you, but you're no stranger to me. Come here, sit down. Nobody's a stranger to Jesus Christ.

The woman by the well of Mary, of whom we've heard from Charles, she was no stranger to Jesus Christ. Said he to her, go and fetch your husband. Don't have a husband, right? Said the Lord Jesus.

You've lived with five men, you've got another man now, and he's not your husband. Bit of a shock, wouldn't you say? She said, I perceive you're a prophet. And what was her story when she went back to the city? Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

He knew the worst about me, and loved me just the same. There's only one who loves like that, and Jesus is his name. If you met somebody who knew every last thing about you, would you invite your friends to go and talk with him? Would you? No, he might spill the beans.

But you see, her compelling message was such that she recognized in the Lord Jesus, not somebody who exposed her sin just to hurt her, but to heal her. And she knew that the needs of others were just as great as her own. She was just the plaything of wicked men.

So I imagine that Nicodemus was as surprised as was that woman, and indeed as was Zacchaeus up the tree pretending that he was a sycamore bud. Do you remember? Hiding himself behind the leaves. He wasn't the first man to try that on.

But God can see through the leaves. So don't kid yourself if you're running away from God. He'll find you.

But he'll find you because he loves you. He came to seek and save that which is lost. The most wonderful thing in the world is to know that you're lost.

As we have remarked already, you don't throw lost things in a trash can, you look in a trash can for lost things. That's why Jesus was always being blamed for keeping bad company. Aren't you glad he keeps bad company? You probably wouldn't be here in Bible school if you didn't.

To seek and save that which is lost. Come in, sit down. And Nicodemus, I imagine, said in so many words, Master, you're extraordinary.

You're really quite exceptional. I've come to the conclusion there's no possible explanation for your life but God. I mean, the things you say and the things you do, no explanation but God, said he.

Master, we know that a teacher comes from God, not just from the local seminary or Bible school, from God. That's what folks recognized about John the Baptist. He was a man sent from God.

If there's one thing you should covet more than another is that others should recognize in you, not that you are an alumnus of this, that, or the other, but that you're a man, a woman who's been sent from God. And that quality of life, of course, is miraculous, because there's only one person who can engineer it, and he only will and does in the measure in which you let him. Nobody could do the miracles that thou doest except God be with him.

Well, Lord Jesus said, you're absolutely right, Nicodemus. As a matter of fact, I am exceptional. As a matter of fact, I am the exception.

I mean, I can't tell you that I have a brilliant educational background. I never went to college. I can't tell you that my mother was unusually wealthy, or the man people call my father, because they weren't, just tradesmen.

In point of fact, Nicodemus, I'm very, very ordinary, very ordinary. When I was born, there wasn't even room in the inn where my mother hoped to spend the night. Very ordinary.

I was born in a manger. But you're absolutely right, Nicodemus. There is only one possible explanation for the things I say, and the life I live, and the things I do.

God. God in the ordinary, the very ordinary. Because, you see, Nicodemus, when God is in the ordinary, he puts the extra into the ordinary, and the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

That's why there's hope for you and for me. God hasn't chosen the mighty and the noble, the wealthy and the popular. Those are the things that people strive after, not least of all within Christian ministry.

That's what I want. I want to get to the top. I want people to gaze at the lamp, not just enjoy the light, as purely incidental, but gaze at the lamp.

That's why John and Peter, remember, laughed at those when they had healed the man who was lame from his mother's womb. They looked at them with wonder, love, and praise. Peter said, Don't be so stupid.

Don't imagine it's my hold in this, or his. Or our power. Utter nonsense.

We're simply making ourselves available now to the Lord Jesus as God in us, as he once, for thirty-three years, made himself available as man to the Father as God in him. That's all. And any old dream I will do that's open both ends and nothing in the middle.

The water will flow. You're right, Nicodemus. There isn't any one possible explanation for anything I've ever said or am likely to say and will say or do.

God. God in the man. You see, I'm exceptional because, Nicodemus, for the very first time in all human history since Adam fell, my Father on earth has a man.

A real man. Not a man like you, Nicodemus. Not a man like your peers.

But a man as I, my Father, and the Holy Spirit created man to be Adam as he was in his innocence, because I've come to demonstrate the innocence of a pre-fallen Adam. There's nothing more going for me at this moment than was going for him then, because he was created in innocence. And I was born in innocence.

The only man ever born who was real man. Because the only other real man was Adam and Eve, whose names, plural, God called Adam. And they weren't born.

They were created. And ever since Adam was created, no other real man has ever been born. Except myself, because I'm the exception.

Every other man born since Adam fell was born dead, alienated from the life of God, empty of that divine contents that makes man functional, enables him to tick. I didn't graduate into the sinlessness of my humanity, whereby you can, looking at me, see my Father. I was born this way.

Man was born uninhabited by God, inhabited by sin ever since Adam fell. I was born uninhabited by sin, inhabited by God from the moment of conception. I am exceptional.

But of course my Father, I, and the Holy Spirit agreed upon this, as between all three of us, that I would come into this world first to demonstrate what we had in mind when first we made man, so that in the sinlessness and innocence of my humanity, I can accomplish a plan that was agreed as between myself, the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the eternal ages of the past. I am the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world. But for that reason, you see, Nicodemus, I had to come as I came, to be what I am, so that I can do what I will, so that you can have, one day, my life.

And that'll make you tick. Marvelous. As a matter of fact, you see, Nicodemus, I came to demonstrate a very simple proposition.

Now this is a proposition that I've spelled out countless times, and I find it extremely helpful, as I will illustrate in a moment by a very simple sketch that some of you will recognize, which I have used for nearly half a century. Whether I'm talking to a little kid of seven, eight, or nine, or whether a gray-bearded professor who are far more difficult to talk to, because they aren't as smart as a kid of seven, eight, or nine, except a man become like a little child, be converted, he won't enter the kingdom. Until spiritual regeneration is, has taken place, as Jesus here said to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John, you can't see the kingdom of God.

It doesn't mean that you won't arrive and be able to look around. He wasn't talking about that. He said you won't be able to see the kingdom of God any more than, as Charles has explained to us, without that meekness of heart that recognizes your need, you'll see God.

You'll see all kinds of things happening, but you won't see God in those things that are happening. You'll be blind. And if you want to know who's going to blind you, I'll give you one guess, but you needn't even guess.

It's the God of this world. He has blinded the minds of them which believe not. Lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Here's the proposition. It's not very complicated. You might think it is, but it isn't.

But I'll illustrate it in a very simple way, so that you don't miss the point. Here it is. By virtue of the way God made man, remember this, by virtue of the way God made man, with a body, with a soul, with a human spirit.

A human spirit to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who will be given by our moral choice access to the human soul, so that he can operate within the workshop, govern our behavior, and reveal God's character. Now, by virtue of the way God made us, here's the proposition. Everything that God demands of a man is, from God's point of view, completely logical.

According to the divine logic, not human logic, God's logic, every demand that God makes upon a man is, from God's point of view, completely logical. Pause for a moment to discover what it is that God demands of a man, and has every right to demand of a man, in that he made in this way. Old Testament, be holy.

Be holy. That means whole, be functional. It isn't putting on a pious stance.

It isn't sort of behaving religiously. Holy, whole, functional. It isn't singing choruses, or going to meetings.

Holy. And getting a little hot around the neck, you say, how holy? And God says, well, even as I'm holy. In other words, when you are as whole, wholesome, total, as I am, you're okay.

That's one demand that God makes upon us, that we are to be as holy as the God who made us in his perfect, unblemished image. Then the Lord Jesus sort of picks up the story, last verse, fifth chapter of Matthew, and said, he be perfect. And that's a bit too tough, and getting hot around the neck, you say, how perfect? And God, the Lord Jesus says, even as your Father in heaven is perfect, when there's no difference between you and the Father God in heaven, when others looking at you see him, you're okay.

Any complaints? All that God demands of you is that you be as holy as the God who created you in your own likeness, and all the Lord Jesus demands of you is that others looking at you will see exactly what others saw when they looked at him, the Father. Any complaints? If there are some complaints, what are the grounds of your complaint? In whose image did God make you? For what purpose were you created? So that all creation, looking at man, would know what God was like. That's why in the person of our Lord Jesus, who was the truth about man, all creation could look at him and know what the Father was like.

Not because he was extraordinary, other than the fact that God, by his presence, puts the extra into the ordinary, that's all, makes man functional. Well, that's the first part of the proposition. And remember this, that is the sole norm, the sole standard by which God will evaluate you.

There is no other. That was the folly of those who described, in the tenth chapter, the epistle to the Romans, for whom Paul had much concern, because he had been one of them, his kith and kin. He said, my concern for Israel is that they might be saved, presupposing, of course, they weren't saved, as indeed they were not.

They had religion up to the neck, but they weren't saved. And he goes on to say they have a zeal of God. Indeed they did.

They had much more zeal than most professing evangelicals. They only go to church on Sunday and watch television Sunday evening. Jews didn't.

They conformed to the party line. They have a zeal of God, he said. First two of Romans in chapter 10, but not according to knowledge.

Not according to knowledge. They had a form of religion, but denied the power thereof. You'd be surprised how many professing Christians, evangelical, born-again people, students in Bible school, don't want to know enough that's going to change their lives.

Did you know that? They're scared stiff of discovering what it really means to be a Christian. You'd have to throw away your transistor. You wouldn't be seen walking around, hooked on that as much as others are hooked on gambling, or drugs, or alcohol.

We don't want to hear that. We don't want to hear that. So, bear in mind, there is only one standard.

Paul went on to say of those there in Romans 10, they have a zeal of God, but not in according to knowledge. What was the nature of their ignorance? He said, being ignorant of God's righteousness. Being ignorant of God's righteousness.

And being ignorant of God's righteousness, they went about to the establish their own righteousness. But of course, they shopped around to find the kind of standard that would be compatible with their way of life. Don't be fanatical.

I mean, having been created in God's image, don't be that fanatical that you want to discharge the office and be functional, so that other people looking at you will know what God is like. I mean, that's taking things too far, isn't it, really? When you buy your new Cadillac, don't expect it to go at 60 miles an hour. I mean, settle for 15, or 20, or 35.

That's okay. Didn't pay all that much for it. Only 25, 30, 35, 40,000.

Or get a Rolls Royce. Make sure there's an engine in it. But don't expect it to go.

Now, that's what the average Christian says about his Christian life. I sing and wave my arms about for Jesus, but please, please don't expect me to conform to the minimal demands that he makes of anybody who dares to say that God, my creator, has re-inhabited my humanity, so that he can be God in the man. Forget it.

Just give me a nice little chorus to sing. And pass the plate around, as long as you don't want much more than a dollar, but tax deducted. This is the Christianity that's being sold today.

It's nauseating. Every demand that God makes upon a man is, from God's point of view, completely logical. As holy as the God who made you, and as perfect as the Father God in heaven.

And here's the next part of the proposition. From man's point of view, man in his fallen condition, that includes the regenerate, who've opted for a carnal Christianity that doesn't distinguish them from the folks next door. Remember that.

From man's point of view, in his fallen condition, utterly unreasonable. That's why you get hot around the neck when somebody tells you the quality of life, that God in heaven has the absolute right to expect and

demand of you the moment you dare to say, I'm a Christian. I'm a Christian.

Every demand that God makes upon you is, from God's point of view, completely logical. Only from man's point of view, in his fallen condition, is it utterly unreasonable, because in the divine logic that makes divinely possible what otherwise cannot be humanly unreasonable. There's a hidden factor that's absent in human reason, and that hidden factor is God himself.

God himself, who so engineered man that the presence of the creator within the creature is indispensable to his function, his humanity. So that man in normality is to be distinguished from the animal kingdom by a quality of life and the behavior that has absolutely no possible explanation but God himself in the man. The hidden factor.

That factor for which man was made. That's why the Lord Jesus, assuming our humanities, without that factor, I am nothing, have nothing, can do nothing. Without my father, the hidden factor in me, I can do nothing.

And that's why without me, the hidden factor, restored to clothe myself with your humanity, without me, you can do nothing. You just happen to be made that way. Every demand that God makes upon a man, from God's point of view, completely logical, from man's point of view, in his fallen condition, utterly unreasonable, because within the divine logic that represents the marginal difference between what God is and you and I now are, a hidden factor.

God himself. God himself. That's why the moment you detach your Christianity from Christ, all you've got is a dead religion, just as useless, impotent, and powerless as any other pagan religion.

It may satisfy your soulish appetite to play church, but it won't raise you from the dead. That's why if you detach your religion from God, all you've got is a legalistic straitjacket, because your religion detached from God will impose certain behavior patterns upon you that you will be totally incapable of yourself, even at that minimal level of satisfying. Of course, detach the person of the Holy Spirit from your activity, and all you've got is programs, entertainment, ostentatious shows of human ability.

It has nothing to do with God. You see, religion without God is a legalistic straitjacket. Christianity without Christ, a dead religion, and activity, religious activity, apart from the Holy Spirit, a nauseating fraud.

So, what do you think that Jesus came to do? If the hidden factor is that which alone makes divinely possible what otherwise cannot but be humanly unreasonable, he came to restore the hidden factor to fallen men, give you back what it takes to be. And, of course, that's the important thing about the gospel, isn't it? Becoming. The emphasis today is become a Christian.

God isn't all that interested in you becoming what you're not intending to be. How many of those who become Christians raise their hand, walk the front, shake the preacher? How many intend to be what they've become? Very few. Very few.

That's why in any given week of meetings where it is honestly declared we're going to talk about the reality of the Christian life, what it means to be what you've become. Do you know how many will attend from that showcase window on Sunday? Never more than 10 percent. Because the church has long since settled for people who want to become, but have absolutely no intention of being what they say they've become.

So, if you're that stupid to tell them that you're going to tell them what it means to be what having become they're not intending to be, then they stay home. And I'm not kidding. I've been moving from one church congregation of all denominational ilks for the last 56 years, over half a century, and so I'm not a novice.

And, of course, my heart doesn't break when I find that out of the 5,000 or 10,000 or 2,000 or 500 on the Sunday, you've only got that minimal few huddled together in an empty auditorium. Because we've settled for that, not in the East, not in Communist Korea, not in East Germany, not in those countries like Russia, not in Communist China. Because when you become a Christian there, you can only become a Christian if you already settled for the consequences of being what you have become.

We don't know that kind of Christianity in the United States. It's playboy stuff. Multi-million dollar show business.

But Jesus came to be what at Bethlehem he was born to become. Man. Just man.

Just man. Well, here's the very simple illustration. Why does an oil need... Why does a lamp, rather, need oil in order to shine? And the answer is very simple.

Don't make it complicated. Don't turn it into some theological or philosophical proposition. Just face the facts of life.

Why does an oil lamp need oil in order to shine? The answer is, very simply, it's made that way. That's all. It's just made that way.

Somebody discovered that in oil there was the potential to produce light. All it needed was means whereby that potential could be released. So he scratched his head for a little while, came up with an oil lamp.

Not because an oil lamp can produce light, it cannot, but simply because it was designed to be the means whereby the potential in oil could be released. Period. So when you get any light from an oil lamp, you don't congratulate the oil lamp, you congratulate the oil, without which it is nothing, has nothing, can do nothing.

You could hang it from the ceiling, but it would be useless there, just like a potato. If you've got an oil lamp, of course, on the table without oil, well, you might just as well have a cabbage for all the light you'll get. So what's the important thing about an oil lamp? Oil.

It's made that way. Some of you drove here. Why does your car need gas? Don't make it complicated.

It's made that way. It can release energy, and that energy can be turned into motion. All it needed was the means whereby that potential in gas, releasing energy, can be turned into motion.

So he scratched his head a little longer than the man who made the oil lamp, and came up with the internal combustion engine. Not because an internal combustion engine can reduce motion, it cannot. Only because it was designed specifically to be the means whereby the potential in gas could be released into reduced motion.

That's why a car needs gas in order to go. That doesn't look complicated. Why does your pen need ink? Well, it's made that way.

Ever tried to write with a pen that doesn't have ink in it? I have. Do you know what I do with it? If I can't refill it, throw it in the trash can. Or pick my teeth.

It's about the only useful thing you can use it for. Tell me this, why do you think a man needs God? It has nothing to do with being pious, nothing to do with being religious. Why does a man need God? He was made that way, that's all.

Nothing more complicated than that. Long time ago, God decided that he would create a planet, put it in space, and on that little planet in space, he'd create a creature called man, with a physical, visible, and audible body, so that inhabited by his maker, he could give a physical, visible, and audible expression of his own invisible self, but totally monopolized by an invisible God. That's all.

So that all creation, looking at man, would know what God was like. He would reflect the glory. Not because the man he made with a body, a soul, and a human spirit, a mind, emotion, and will, not because that man, for what he was when God made him, could produce glory, produce righteousness, produce holiness, he can't.

He was simply the means whereby that divine potential, the life of God, could be released and produce righteousness. Supposing you were to tell a lamp to produce light without oil. Utterly unreasonable.

Wasn't made that way. Other people would laugh at you, think you were stupid, around the bend. Put oil in it.

And what would otherwise be unreasonable, completely logical. It was made that way. Tell a car to go without gas, and most of you have tried it, but you find that it's utterly unreasonable.

If you want it to go, you push it. It'll only go as far and as fast as you push it. You wish you bought a little one, you know, the kind that you can put on instead of having to get in.

Fill the tank, then tell the car to go. Completely, completely logical. Why? Because the car's become that much smarter? Well, no.

It's got what it takes. That's all. Have you educated it to operate without gas? Well, no.

If somebody found you trying to educate the car to go without gas, they'd laugh at you too. Tell a pen to ink without, tell a pen to write without ink, utterly unreasonable. Sing to it, see what happens.

Nothing. Tell a man to be good without God, utterly unreasonable. Put God in the man, completely logical.

And that man who's smart enough to understand what God is saying will recognize that it is God who works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. But he's imperative to the operation. He'll be smart enough to discover that the Apostle Paul was right when he said in the fifth chapter of his first epistle to the Thessalonians, Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.

The only one who can. So what would be illogical about anything that God wills for your life, if God who wills it will work in you and do it? What would be illogical? Nothing. What would be illogical about anything to which God has called you, if being the God who called you to it, he himself within you is prepared to do it? What would be illogical? Nothing.

Absolutely nothing. To be a Christian, in other words, to be restored to your true humanity and be functional, would be the most natural thing in the world. That's why to be filled with the Holy Spirit has little to do with excitement, ecstatic behavior.

It's normality. It's the most natural life in the world. And you see it best exhibited in those who seldom attract any attention to themselves, whatever, because they're shining lights.

And nobody gazes at a shining light. They enjoy the light the lamp produces, that's all. You can normally tell a person who's being filled with the Holy Spirit, be being is the command, be being filled with the Holy Spirit.

You nearly always determine because they don't attract attention themselves. They don't stick out like a sore thumb, make everybody, you know, aware of the fact that I am here. But whenever you are in their presence, you enjoy the light.

You're conscious of Jesus, God is light. In him there's no darkness at all. When they come into your presence, they banish the darkness.

There's a story told, you know, of a cabin that was in pitch darkness, and it called out to the sun, come in here and have a look at the darkness. And so the sun came down and went into the cabin to look at the darkness. But there was no darkness.

Because you see, just as light abolishes darkness, so life abolishes death. That's why Jesus was manifested, to abolish death and bring life and immortality to light. So that others, by the way you behave, what you do, say and are, will be compellingly aware of the fact that somebody who is imperative to your humanity has been received by you and upon whom you are now depending.

Walking by faith, walking in the Spirit, full of the Holy Ghost. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to do the washing up at home. As a kid in the family, to mow the yard, that's what you need to be filled with the Holy Ghost by.

You can normally tell a person who is being filled with the Holy Spirit by the way they drive. Because few Christians commit more sins than behind the steering wheel. You can always tell a person being filled with the Holy Spirit because you'll recognize who's behind the steering wheel.

It has nothing to do with some ecstatic experience. It only has to do with allowing Jesus Christ as God to behave in you today as he allowed once the Father as God to behave in him. Period.

Don't kid yourself. You can always put on a front. You can always put on an act.

You can always do the spectacular. You can do your thing. You can be an artiste.

It doesn't tell anybody about your being filled with the Holy Ghost. It's only about what you're doing, saying, and being when nobody's looking. Allowing Jesus to behave.

Well, tell a lamp to shine without oil? Utterly unreasonable. Tell a car to go without gas? Utterly unreasonable. Tell a painter to write without ink? Utterly unreasonable.

Tell a man to be godlike without God? Utterly unreasonable. And God never made any unreasonable demands upon us because you see every demand that God makes upon a man is from God's point of

view completely illogical. Even though from man's point of view in his fallen condition it's utterly unreasonable because within the divine logic you see there's a hidden factor that's absent in human reason.

God himself, who's always big enough for the job. Now, we've got to quit, but just to satisfy your curiosity, let me give a very brief explanation of what you see here, and if you want to have it, no need to copy it because you'll find it illustrating the principles that are enunciated in a book called *The Mystery of Godness*, written by a very fine author. But in this way I can just summarize.

Here's the world on which we live. Let me hold this thing. That's the best thing.

That's right. But what's a preacher without a pulpit? Can't even stand. Here's the world, XX, in which we live, this physical planet stuck into space, and only God keeps it there.

Here's the vegetable kingdom. It's got a body. It's physically alive.

It's capable of growth and reproduction. And the most important thing to a vegetable is body. What's the most important thing to you? Your body? Well, then you're no more than a vegetable, because the most important thing to a vegetable is a body.

That's all it's got. Now, here is the animal. It's got a body and a soul, a soul which is a behavior mechanism, a mind to think with, emotion to react with, a will to decide.

We talked about that on Monday night. So, the animal has a body in common with the vegetable. Now, to the vegetable, the body is the all-important thing.

It's all it's got. What about the animal? Supposing the animal had a body but no soul, could it behave? Would it know where to get its food? Would the bird proceed on its migratory path? Well, no. It's just got a body.

If that were the most important thing to it, wouldn't worry about its mind, its motions, its will, mating season, building skills. No. The most important thing about an animal is its soul.

Now, of course, if the most important thing about you is your soul, you know your mind, how it's educated, your emotions, who's going to stir it? That's why you turn on the television or go to the theater, or engage in all kinds of social activities to titivate your emotions. That's why you go to a rock concert. The most important thing to you and the soul, and your will, you know, I've got what it takes.

Stick out your chest, flex your muscles, grit your teeth, clench your fist. Well, then you're no more than an animal. The animal to which the body is the most important is no more than a vegetable.

The man whose most important part is the soul is no more than an animal. It's behaving that way. And so much of religion is tuned to the soul.

That's why the word of God, quick, powerful, sharper than any two-digit or discerns between soul and spirit. That's why when somebody speaks in the power of God, the Holy Ghost, it hurts. Those who've become accustomed to soul-ish religion, who only go to have their minds titivated, or their emotions stirred, or their will challenged.

Somebody talks about being godlike, advertising deity, fulfilling the function for which man was made. Forget it. Then you're behaving just like an animal.

Because, you see, man was made with a body, a soul, and a human spirit. And the human spirit, that unique capacity to be inhabited by God, so that as the animal kingdom is governed by instinct, with a rigid interlock between the instinctive thrust and the animal soul, so that its behavior patterns, as I have reminded you, are repetitive and predictable. A law of compulsion does what it does because it must.

When the animal behaves, it's not saying anything to its creator. It's just functional. It's not exercising any moral choice at all.

It's operating under the law of compulsion. A built-in computerized program, a transistor, that tells it day and night what to do and how to do it. And God didn't make man that way because he didn't want man to be governed by a transistor.

He wanted a creature on this earth who could love God back. But you can't compel love. You can't demand a person's friendship.

You can't go up with your fist clenched and say, you are going to be my friend, you understand? And you're going to love me. Whether you like it or not, you're going to love me. You ever make friends that way? If you've got a wife, as I have and Charles has, did you get your wife that way? I didn't.

I keep her that way, but I didn't get her that way. Once she made the fatal choice, but it had to be hers in the first instance. So God gave to man a human, a holy, a human spirit to be inhabited by God himself.

So that not instinct governing the animal soul, but God himself governing the human soul, playing that role in man's soul, teaching the mind, controlling emotions, directing the will, therefore governing behavior, expressed to the outside world by the body, he behaves in such a way that others by his behavior know who it is that is operating within his soul. That's called the fullness of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit from within the human spirit gains access to the human soul and is allowed to teach the mind, control the emotions, direct the will, govern behavior.

So if anything happens of any ultimate worth, only God can be congratulated. Now that's how you and I were made. Here is the hidden factor that is absent in human reason, within a fallen humanity.

For the day came when the devil said, you can be a man without God. Humanism that has invaded your high schools, your junior schools, your theological colleges, your youth pastors, your government. It's the spirit of the age, humanism.

There's nothing new about it. It's simply a perpetuation of the satanic lie. When the devil persuaded man to believe that he'd be a man without God.

If I can persuade an animal that he could be an animal without instinct, and we'll discuss that tomorrow, results will be disastrous. And if a man can be persuaded that he can be a man without God, results cannot but be disastrous. Cosmos, a divine order, will immediately deteriorate, degenerate into chaos.

That's the world you and I live in. That's why we're rushing at a headlong pace, ever accelerating to our own self-destruct. Because we still perpetuate the devil's lie.

But of course, God gave to man the moral choice to say yes or no. The only capacity that he had to love God back, and so God bowed to his choice. He said, in the day that you eat the rod by that act of disobedience, evidencing a new attitude of independence, you'll die.

And God withdrew the Holy Spirit from the human spirit. And all that was left on the day that man fell was a body that was still functional, a soul that was still functional, the animal part of man. He still had a human spirit, but it was empty of the Holy Spirit.

He was dead. So he can only function, you see, in the area of his body and his soul. That's called the natural or animal man.

1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14, the natural man received, if not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them. They're spiritually discerned and he's spiritually dead.

In the French Bible, I think I mentioned this the other day, l'homme animal, the animal man, homicide, the murder of a man. L'homme, capital L apostrophe, H-O-M-M-E, the French for man, animal, animal man. This is animal man, the natural man.

He doesn't receive the things of the Spirit of God. He's incapable. He's intellectually disarmed.

He doesn't have the capacity, any more than if you try to teach a dog calculus. He doesn't have that capacity, you see, and man has no capacity to be man apart from the one who makes man, man, who was as imperative to the Lord Jesus, the Father in the Son, as he, the Lord Jesus, now is imperative to you and to me, the Son in us, somebody living in somebody. He can be religious, fanatically religious, as Saul of Tarsus was, fanatically religious, as the conservative Muslims, fanatically.

And with their own set of rules, they'll cut your finger off and your hand off or your foot off if it misbehaves, fanatically religious. Something, a quality of religion that only serves as the mind, the emotion, the soulish. You can be evangelically religious and remain spiritually dead, soulishly awakened, and a deep conviction, but no spiritual regeneration.

So you'll troop out to the penitent bench at the altar call, week after week, and have a few tears, and you're doing no more in an evangelical church than the Catholic is going when he goes to confession. Gives him a psychological lift at all, playing church. Here's the natural man.

Tell him to be good without God, utterly unreasonable. There's only one final solution to the human dilemma, and that's to get God back into the man. We call it new birth, regeneration, the renewing of God the Holy Ghost, Titus 3, 5, and 6. So that if any boy, girl, man, or woman has never received the Holy Spirit, he's in this condition, the animal condition of the natural man.

He is dead. If you want to give him religion, and he may be religiously inclined, you've either got to titivate his mind with theological and philosophical propositions, or you've got to stir his emotions, give him a sing-up, dancing up and down the aisle, jump up and down. He'll go for that.

After all, the Beatles gave him that. If you can give them in the church, you can get your church full. Of course you can.

Or you can challenge the will. If you want to give religion to somebody who's unregenerate, you can only aim at the soul. But if you want a man to be man, you've got to get God back into the man, because that's

what it takes to be a man, God.

That's why it takes Christ, not Christianity, Christ, somebody, to be a Christian, because Christ in the Christian puts God back into the man. But if anything really happens after that, there's only one person to be congratulated. Christ.

If the lamp shines, congratulate the oil. If the car goes, congratulate the gas. If the pen writes, congratulate the ink.

If a Christian behaves, congratulate Christ. That's all. Complicated, isn't it? So just pause long enough to discover who you've been kidding, or trying to kid.

Trying to live a Christianity that other than has its utter, absolute, unquestioning authorship and source in Christ himself. Anything else is phony. And most who perpetrate that kind of Christianity know it, and not the least the professionals.

That's why after the show is over, they're deeply depressed, and that's why in the largest Protestant denomination in this country, six pastors quit. Burned out. Every day.

Every day. Two thousand a year. Because all they've known, by and large, is soulish religion.

A form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. And we're in the last section of God's newspaper. Dear Lord, we thank you that you've given us this book.

Tells us what it's all about, like it is. Even though there's only a small gathering here in its so-called Bible school, there are men and women, there are young fellows and girls, who don't know anything about the real Christian life. Some of them will be through Bible school, they'll behave themselves, they'll take a lot of notes, they'll learn a lot of facts.

But when they leave, there won't be any difference when they came. And dear Lord, if we give them no more than Christianity, which is less than Christ, if we give them religion which isn't God, if we tell them how to implement programs that isn't a spontaneous expression of God the Holy Spirit, we have to plead failure. And we're guilty.

We've sold you down the river. And we've cheated you of that for which your precious blood was shed. For you came and shed that blood, only that we might have life.

And if we offer to anybody anything other or less than life, your life, then we're frauds. And we want you to deliver us from that. Keep us on track.

Keep us at home base. Help us to recognize and proclaim relentlessly, again and again and again and again, the utter absolute centrality of Christ in the Christian, God himself in the man. That we might stand one day before you with clean hands and unashamed.

And we ask it, dear Lord, in your own dear and precious name. Amen.

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