

Elijah

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects the truth of Jesus Christ and trusting in God's promise to supply all our needs.

Duration: 1:04:22

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:1, Matthew 7:25, Matthew 26:31, Matthew 26:38, Luke 2:7, Philippians 2:5-11

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects the presence of God within us. He encourages Christians to be a living testimony of Christ, not just through words, but through their actions and behavior. The speaker highlights that the message we communicate to the world is not just through sermons or speeches, but through the person we are and the quality of our lives. He reminds listeners that God can work through them to bring about miraculous and impactful moments when they align themselves with His will. The speaker also acknowledges that living out this calling may come with risks and misunderstandings, but it is a privilege and vocation for every believer.

Transcript

Right. It isn't sermons that count. It's the message.

That is to say, the truth. Lord Jesus said, if you'll abide in my word, you'll know the truth. It isn't the word that will do anything for you.

It's the truth that you discover in the word. The truth will set you free. And he leaves us in no doubt as to who the truth is, whom you discover in the word, Jesus.

For he goes on then to say, if the Son shall make you free, then you will be free indeed. A message. The lovely thing is this, that it never changes.

It's the same yesterday, today and forever, because the truth is a person. The Lord Jesus himself has said, I am the truth. That's why theology, if it's true to God's word, never changes.

Never. The truth never changes, because truth is a person. He is the sum total of all truth.

The final exegesis of all truth. And to know him is to know all there is to know. I've quoted sometimes, I think in the past, a certain German theologian who lived long enough ago, 400 years to talk sense.

Dr. Bugenhagen. I don't suppose you've ever heard of Dr. Bugenhagen. But you might imagine that he might be German by the name.

Sounds more like a disease than a name. But Dr. Bugenhagen. And he said, if you really know the Lord Jesus personally for yourself, anything else that you don't know doesn't really matter.

And then he went on to say, but if you do know the Lord Jesus personally for yourself, everything else, if you don't know the Lord Jesus personally for yourself, anything else you may know isn't worth anything. That's pretty good. But then he really knew God for himself.

The truth. Timeless, eternal. That's why any boy, girl, man or woman can qualify to be, as a member of the body of the Lord Jesus, a means of communication to the world, whereby they can come to understand the liberating, emancipating truth of the gospel.

And the beautiful thing is this, that you don't have to know what's happening. Just plant, plant, plant, plant, truth, truth, truth, truth. Preach Christ.

I mentioned to the folks over the weekend in our annual general meeting in Fallbrook that Francis of Assisi said, preach Christ. Always. When necessary, use words.

You see, the Christian life is Christ. All he wants to do is manifest himself through you and through me so that our humanity advertises deity. So in the measure in which we're restored to normality, that allows him now as God to be to us, what he in his normality, 2000 years ago, allowed the Father as God to be to him, he constantly advertised deity.

He brought Christ, he brought the Father out into the open, where he might be seen. I love that. Just in parenthesis there, do you remember how in John's gospel he said, 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, in him is life, that life was the light of men, and that Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

And we beheld his glory. And of course the Lord Jesus was quick constantly to affirm that the glory that they saw was that which the Father had given to him, that which derived from the presence of the Father in the Son. That's beautiful.

Because John then goes on to say, in the same chapter, the first chapter, where he affirms that Jesus is the Word, who was in the beginning with God, was God, by whom all things were made, without whom was not anything made that was made, and that Word, the Logos, was made flesh, he then goes on to say, only four verses later, no man has ever seen God at any time. Isn't that strange? He just tells us that the Word in whom they saw the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, the creative deity, but he says no man has seen God at any time. How do you reconcile those two statements? Only in the measure that you understand that the Lord Jesus of his own free volition assumed our humanity and was born a human being, and was willing, though never repudiating any of the attributes of deity that make God God, he was willing for 33 years to forego the exercise of those attributes of deity that would have been incompatible to his humanity.

And so he stepped out of eternity into time to fulfill the function which we mentioned last evening, that God had in mind in creating you and me, to make God known, with a physical, visible, and audible body that would give a physical, visible, and audible expression of an invisible God. So in the 18th verse he says

this, no man has ever seen God at any time. The only unique Son, the only begotten God, who is in the bosom, in the intimate presence of the Father, who lived constantly as man on earth in the presence of his Father, who was in heaven.

But not only in heaven, in him, for the Father who lives in me, said he does the work. Just as that song told us, we live in the presence now of an indwelling Jesus. He lived in the presence of an indwelling Father, incredible.

But he said, as my Father sent me, I'm going to send you, nothing surprising about it. He is in the bosom, in the intimate presence of the Father. He has declared him, he has revealed him, he has brought him out where he, my Father, can be seen, God.

He's interpreted him, he's made him known. Now that's your vocation and mine. The Lord Jesus came into this world to accomplish the reconciling act upon the cross, cleansing us from sin, so that we now, in a spiritual new birth, may be re-inhabited by the Lord Jesus, our Creator, Redeemer, so that he, through us, may be advertised to the world in which we live, so we preach Christ.

For everything you do, say an R, the look on your face, the tone of your voice, you preach Christ. When necessary, use words. But the vocation of a Christian is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to be a healthy member of that corporate body on earth which he is the head.

And that's why you don't have to know what's happening. Because it isn't the sermon that you preach, it's the person that you are. Because of who he is, living where he does.

That's the message. And that's your privilege and mine. We're very clumsy, and we fall tragically short of that which is our assignment.

But what is so exciting is that you don't have to know what's happening, while he, Christ, is being communicated through you, one way or the other. Just after breakfast and before the morning session, Charlie handed me a letter that arrived, addressed here to his hill. And I didn't open it until after the morning session.

But I found it quite fascinating because I get these kind of letters every week, almost every day. And if not in written form, at least by the handshake and what somebody has to say. Dear Major Thomas, after hearing you speak at East Dallas Christian Church many years ago, I bought you three books.

They've been a great source of inspiration to me as I sought to be and do what God wants me to be and do. Several copies of *The Saving Life of Christ* have been used until they fell apart and had to be replaced. I must have given at least 200 copies as gifts.

The Holy Spirit speaks loud and clear through every page. But this is the important part. When I first heard the statement you made about God waiting seven years to live through you, the life you had been trying to live for him, it was a mystery.

As it is to the vast majority of those who not insincerely claim to be Christians and have the right so to do because they have been redeemed. But they've never grasped the mystery of godliness, godlikeness. It's no mystery because the mystery is an open secret now in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Who refused to claim any responsibility for the quality of life that he lived, save to be available to his Father who through him could communicate in the Son the character of God. It's a mystery. But it's an open secret.

Because when you and I are prepared to allow the Lord Jesus as God to be to us what he as man allowed the Father as God to be to him, we will preach Christ 24 hours a day as he preached the Father 24 hours a day. He that has seen me has seen my Father. And I don't have to make an appointment.

I don't have to be in position. Just look at me 24 hours a day, day or night, from the right, the left, above, beneath, the front or the back and you'll see my Father behaving. Not because I'm God but because I'm man.

Man as I as God created man to be. The kind of man who'll let God be God in the man. Origin of his own image, source of his own activity, dynamic of his own demands, cause of his own effect.

This is truth, timeless, eternal, unchanging. He went on to say, having admitted then, it was a she not a he, that it was then a mystery. The veil of church organizationalism.

That was the veil. Church organizationalism was so firmly over my face that only the dryness of knowing the Bible in my head so well caused me to search this statement. I put it on the refrigerator door and meditated on it until at last I understood.

Not me living for Christ, Christ living in and through me. The only Christian life there is. Anything we do for him, no matter how nobly motivated, only produces a shabby exhibition of the real thing.

Christ. A friend recently gave me this address for you. I'm writing in hopes that he have some sort of organized Bible study or lesson plan I could use for ministry in the Dallas County Jail.

At present I'm writing my own materials and feel the need of a little more depth at the elementary level, which is the skill level of most inmates. Well, great. See, I've never met that lady and I don't know who she is, except I've got her address.

But all I know is that she rediscovered Jesus. And that's the desperate, crying need of the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world, because the Church has long since taken the place of Christ. And it's high time, worldwide, that men and women who call themselves Christians gave the Church back to the one who is the head of that Church.

Jesus. Because we are his body, the Church. And he's the head of that body.

See, most exhibit infinitely more loyalty to their denominational entity to which they belong than they do to Jesus. If their, quote, Church says it, that's infinitely more important than what Jesus said. You've got to be denominationally loyal to it.

And so it has become the object of their idolatry in taking the place of him. So preach Christ. Whoever it does please, whoever it doesn't.

If necessary, use words. You see, if 24 hours a day you preach Christ, somebody's going to come knocking on your door and say, Excuse me, what is it that makes you tick? Then you use words. Having evangelized with the quality of life that you live, now with lips you explain the evangel.

And you'll have to do it the way the Lord Jesus did it. When a young man came and said, good master, he said, why do you call me good? There's only one who's good and that's God. All you're seeing in my humanity is a valid expression of who he is, living now where he does.

By my free consent, Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost. And so when somebody comes and knocks on your door and says, what is it that makes you tick? You'll say, it isn't an it, it's somebody living in somebody. And he's knocking at the door of your life too.

And if you'll open it and let him in, he'll be to you what he is to me. And what he is to me is what his father was to him. Isn't it simple? It's evangelism.

Bunch of birds, dried up brook, and a bankrupt widow. God's logistics. That's how he takes care of his friends.

But it's exciting. Because, you see, if you're one of God's friends, because you're told what to do and do as you're told, even the birds will feed you. In other words, you'll embark upon the adventure of living a miraculous life.

And God always intended, you see, that the Christian life should be a miracle. Because, said the Lord, without me you can do nothing. And that which can't happen apart from God, we normally call a miracle.

And the Christian life is a miracle. A quality of life that has no possible explanation but Christ, in the Christian, putting God back into the man. This, of course, is his promise.

Let's just check on that. In the epistle to the Philippians, we're coming back, of course, in a moment, to 1 Kings 17. So if you've opened the place, keep your finger there.

But Philippians in chapter 4, rejoice in the Lord. And says the apostle, just in case you're hard of hearing, again I say, rejoice. He was accustomed, as we have become accustomed today, to mingle with all kinds of people who call themselves the servants and followers of the Lord Jesus, but look as though they're doing anything but rejoice.

So he said, rejoice, I say, and again I say, just in case you didn't hear me, rejoice. Because you've got good grounds to rejoice. Be careful for nothing.

That doesn't mean be careless, sloppy, irresponsible. That means don't have a care about anything because you know there's somebody who's equal to any need that could ever occur under any circumstance at any time in your life. So long as once you're prepared as man to let him be to you as God what the Lord Jesus man was prepared to let his father be to him as God.

For we're told in John 13, 3 that the father gave all things into his hands, all things. In other words, he was magnificently furnished by the presence of the father for every good work. For all that he was assigned to accomplish by his birth, life, death, and resurrection.

And as the father sent him, so magnificently furnished, so said the Lord Jesus, I'm going to send you. Because I'm going to be to you now what my father was to me then, if you'll let me. If you'll let me.

So be careful for nothing. Just in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. With prayer and supplication, in other words, lay the table with all your need, all the problems and opportunities and responsibilities, just lay the table.

Knowing that he who dwells within you as God could never be less than adequate. And demonstrate your confidence, unshatterable confidence, by stepping away from the table, leaving what you've put there where you put it. And say, thank you.

Thank you. In everything give thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Don't quench the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit lives in you if you're regenerate, to credit you with the life of Jesus as the Holy Spirit lived in him, to credit him with the life of the father. What a magnificent relationship that the Lord Jesus enjoyed with the father.

I'm in my father, my father is in me. But he said, this is the relationship I came into this world to reestablish between you and me, you in me and I in you. Terrific.

Now I'll tell you what will happen, says Paul. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. You rest in him.

For my God, verse 19 of that chapter, shall supply all your need. All your need. According to not your riches or anybody else's riches.

So don't go deputizing, trying to get somebody else to take the place of God. Because if you're told what to do and do as you're told, even the birds will feed you. My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

In other words, all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is already in the Lord Jesus and you're complete in him. Because God in heaven is going to provide all your need according to his riches through Christ Jesus. Wonderful.

The Lord Jesus himself of course laid the foundations for that confidence that you may and I may have in Matthew chapter 7. Just glance at that. Matthew in the 7th chapter. These verses are very familiar to you.

Matthew said, the Lord Jesus, I say to you, verse 25, take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. And initially of course, apart from a dynamic relationship between the creature and the creator, that sounds totally irresponsible. But the Lord Jesus himself didn't take too much thought for his life, what he would eat and what he would drink.

Foxes said he have holes, birds of the air have nests. The son of man had not where to lay his head. He was a street preacher.

And those of course who wanted to malign his ministry mocked him when he had to borrow even a coin for one of his, as they would consider, outlandish illustrations. He was an incorrigible scrounger. He always lived in somebody else's home.

Sat at somebody else's table. But after all, why shouldn't he? The world didn't provide him with a room in the Holiday Inn, he was born in a stable. There was no room in the inn.

Behold the fowls of the air, said he, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not much better than they? Do you mean to say that God in heaven, having created uniquely to advertise deity to be the human vehicle of his divine activity, the temple of believing God on earth, do you think he doesn't care? Or isn't competent? We need to rediscover the Lord Jesus, but we need to rediscover that quality of trust that believes that who he is and

where he lives is true. You see, I find that the vast majority of Christians are prepared to live on somebody else's faith.

You miss all the excitement of seeing God make provision for you. I can see the light of excitement in the face of somebody who has a deep, very deep and threatening need and suddenly God comes through, simply because they had a simple state of heart. God knows my need.

If he knows the needs of the fowls of the air, who sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, surely God knows my need. He said so. He said he'll provide all my need.

But I find people constantly grumbling and criticizing because somebody else isn't exercising enough faith to provide their need. Isn't that crazy? They're living a second-hand Christianity, second-hand life. Somebody else's faith has got to provide my need.

How about exercising your own faith and having the exhilarating experience of seeing God himself direct supply your need? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? By taking thought for raiment, consider the litters of field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spend. But they don't look as shabby as you do, and they don't wilt as you do. I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you? O you of little faith. Wherefore, take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? After all these things do the Gentiles see. They're on the grab the whole time, wanting to get something out of somebody.

The Gentile means, of course, the unregenerate, the lost, or the carnal baby Christian who's never grown up to know God for himself. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Why don't you take him seriously? Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

That means not your place in his kingdom, but establish in the hearts of others that which is essentially his kingdom, where he ought to be. For Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within you. So seek his kingdom.

Don't build a structure. Don't try to build an empire. Just introduce boys, girls, men, and women in such a way that they're prepared on the grounds of redemption through the precious blood he shed to allow him as the risen Lord to take up residence within their humanity, ascend the throne, and be God in the man, king in his king.

Seek that supremely. And inevitably, thereby, his righteousness. Because righteousness is God behaving.

And no boy, girl, man, or woman can produce righteousness apart from becoming part of his kingdom. You see, you can't enter the kingdom without becoming part of it. If you're not part of his kingdom, you've never entered it.

Because the kingdom of God is within you. Take therefore no thought for tomorrow, for the tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Well, that's it.

As spelled out by the Lord Jesus, by his servants, the apostles, and of course enunciated here in the seventeenth chapter of the first book of Kings. Because truth is timeless, it's eternal, it never changes. Because God never changes.

So as you're told, birds of a feather. Not only that, of course, but as we discussed last evening, when a God's friend, being told what to do, does as he's told, he'll meet God's friend. When a man meets God's friend, you can see God in action.

Something exciting is going to happen. It won't necessarily be sensational, it won't necessarily be spectacular, but it'll be miraculous. And not only that, you'll be the right man in the right place at the right time.

And through you, God, one way or the other, will be saying the right thing to the right person. And under those circumstances, you can afford to speak, even at the risk of being misunderstood. I don't mean that you throw your weight around, you're arrogant and like insulting people or, you know, stirring their feathers.

There's no virtue in that. But you have the right to speak with that authority that derives from your submission to God's authority. That was the authority with which the Lord Jesus spoke.

He said many comforting, gracious, kindly, loving things, but he said some very hard things too. Addressing the status quo of religion, in which he never sought a place, he described those who were the ecclesiastical bigwigs, the theological leaders of his day, as a bunch of vipers. He said, you're whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones.

By your church organizationalism, you long since, by tradition, have denied the truth of God's word. You've substituted man-made demands for those which God alone has the legitimate right to make. And to justify your behavior, you reinterpret the Bible to make the Bible say what you think it ought to have said.

But had you believed Moses, whom you reinterpret, but in whom you say you believe, had you believed him, you'd have believed me. He wrote of me. But religion has blinded your understanding.

The religion that you've created out of your own unenlightened study of the Bible, producing your own humanistic theology and philosophical propositions. He said, you're a bunch of serpents. You're whited sepulchres.

And you're very evangelistic. Because you compass heaven and earth to make one proselyte of your religion, and having done so, make them twofold more the children of hell than you are yourself. That wasn't particularly polite, would you say? But you have the right to say, you see, what needs to be said.

If the only person you want to please is God, what's called Stephen's apology. Do you remember the apology of Stephen? In the seventh chapter of the book of Acts, this is his apology. He said, you're stiff-necked and uncircumcised and heartless.

That's his apology. I don't know that anybody would be all that impressed if I went and apologized that way to them. But of course, apologia doesn't mean that he was making an apology for himself or even for God.

God forbid. He was simply telling them the truth. He said, as your fathers resisted God, so you resist him.

These were those who engineered the death of Jesus, the religious leaders of his day. And that was Stephen's apology. And they were mad.

It says they gnashed their teeth. Stoned him to death. He looked into heaven and saw Jesus standing in the right hand of God for him.

He was unashamed, unafraid. Father, lay not this sin to their child. He saw Jesus.

He said, I see Jesus. What was the Lord Jesus doing about it? He was watching. Watching wicked, evil, religious human beings stone a man to death because he loved his creator God and the Savior who came.

Who lived and died that he might be forgiven. What did Jesus do about it? Nothing. Nothing.

That's the way the Lord Jesus treats his friends. Because there's no fear of death. To those in whom death has been abolished.

Where was the Lord Jesus when Herodias had his head cut off? To satisfy the unholy demand of a man who was living in adultery with her. For she was Philip, his brother's wife. Where was the Lord Jesus when John had his head cut off? Well, he was in town.

What did he do about it? Nothing. Because his assignment had been accomplished. And as you can read in the 10th chapter of John, people went on believing long after John's head had been removed from his body.

Because they said everything that John said about Jesus is true. He had a message. The voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. You see, in the light of eternity, time becomes very irrelevant. Paul mentioned that.

He said, I'm in a dilemma. I'm in a straight betwixt two. He said, I'd like to be absent from the body and present with my Lord, which is far, far better.

Out of this dirty, smelly world, magnificent. Into His glorious presence forever. In the place that He's going to prepare for us.

I, having not seen nor ear heard, neither ever having it entered into the heart of men. What God has prepared for them that love Him. I'm almost impatient.

I'm in a straight betwixt two. For to me, to live is Christ. That's the only life I've got that's of any validity on earth.

Christ. For I'm crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, not I, Christ lives in me.

The life I live in this body, I simply live by disposition. That allows Him as my creator, redeemer, risen from the dead. To reoccupy this, my humanity.

So that I, this moment, can be His hands, His feet, His lips, His mind to think with, heart to love with. And my ears, His to hear with. To me, to live is Christ.

To die, of course, is gain. To be released from the limitations of my corruptible humanity. And all the dirt that is around me.

Absent from the body, present with the Lord. But, said He, so long as the Lord Jesus, living His life in me, wants to continue His ancient mission, seeking and saving that which is lost. So long as He has something through me to accomplish.

Notice this, for the furtherance of your faith and for the furtherance of your joy. Not mine, yours. I'll hang around.

I'll hang around. To close His activity with my, now, corruptible humanity. For the outward man perishes, but is inwardly renewed, day by day, by the one who never grows old, Jesus.

So long as He still has something to accomplish in and through me, that's fine by me. I'll hang around. But the moment He's done His job, so far as I'm concerned, I'm off.

Bye. Present with the Lord. Marvelous.

You see, when you're as available, sold out to the Lord Jesus, in that measure, which is never to completion, as the Paul, the Apostle Paul, firmly and unashamedly declared. He said, I haven't arrived. I haven't appropriated fully yet that for which I've been appropriated.

I know where it's at. I know that I'll only be evangelized in that day when the Lord Jesus has that total monopoly, in terms of my humanity, that He gladly gave the Father. While He walked on earth as man, in whom the Father had total monopoly of the Son.

I know, I haven't arrived there yet. That's what I've been appropriated for. I have not yet appropriated that for which I have been appropriated.

But I know where I'm going. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. In that day, when absent from this body, present with my Lord, delivered not only from the penalty of sin, and as on earth in measure from the power of sin.

In that day, I'll be delivered totally from the presence of sin. There'll be no rebel left. That old Adam nature will have been completely replaced by the one who once more is given the absolute right to clothe himself for eternity.

With what he created for me, in which it was my privilege to advertise his deity. I'll see him as he is, and seeing him, I'll be like him. And in that day, he'll look at me and see what God once saw in Adam, whom he made in his own image, himself.

Then I will have arrived. Then I will have been evangelized. Then I will have been restored to normality.

Then I'll be man again, forever. Now this was the only authority the Lord Jesus used. That which derives from a man's submission to God's authority.

Let's just glance at that just for a moment. In John's Gospel, in chapter 10. Verse 37, If I do not the works of my Father.

37th verse, 10th chapter of John. If it isn't demonstrably obvious to you that as man, I'm being told by my Father as God what to do. And I'm doing it.

Believe me not. Believe me not. However much you may love me, however much you may regard me, however much you may respect me.

You don't have the right to believe anything I say, even though what I say is true. Unless it's demonstrably obvious that there's only one person behaving. Clothed with my available humanity.

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. If for every step I take, I'm not being sent. If for every word I speak, I'm not being commissioned.

By my Father. If there's anything in me that has an origin other than the Father as God, living me as man, then don't believe me. You don't have the right to believe.

You see, we vest a man with authority on the base of who he is and what he knows. If ever there was a man who had the right to exercise authority on the base of who he was, that man was Jesus. He was the creator God, the Logos.

Who was in the beginning with God, was God, and by whom all things were made. He never exercised that authority. If ever there was a man who had the right to exercise authority on the base of what he knew, that man was Jesus Christ.

In whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. He never exercised that authority. The only authority he was willing to exercise as man was his total submission to his Father's authority.

Only what I do, which is my Father doing it, is of any validity. Only that word I speak, which is my Father speaking through my lips, making articulate what he wants to say, has any validity. Incredible.

But that's what it means when it says in Philippians 2 that he emptied himself, humbled himself, made himself of no reputation. Made himself nothing. The servant that Bob was talking about this morning.

They were in debate as to who was the rat and who was going to be the king. The empire builder. Promoting himself.

That was their debate. The Lord Jesus said, without my Father I can do nothing. The Father who lives in me, he does the work.

Don't congratulate me on what you see him doing. I'm not building an empire. I'm being told what to do and doing as I'm told.

And I'll be obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross. And as we were reminded this morning, if you follow Jesus, that's where you're going to end up.

But it's when they came to the cross, do you remember what happened? They did exactly what the Lord Jesus said they would. When the shepherd is smitten, like frightened sheep, you'll run away. You follow me to the cross, but that's it.

Period. That's where most professing Christians are prepared to follow Jesus. To the cross.

They'll cling to it and sing melancholy songs about it. But the last thing they want to do is die on it. Mind you, said the Lord Jesus, verse 38, if I do.

In other words, if my Father is telling me what to do, and I am doing what my Father tells me. Though you believe not me. Because you have a problem.

You knew me as a little baby, nursed in my mother's arms. You saw me as a little kid, romping in the street. Working at the bench, learning my trade as an apprentice.

I understand your problem. But though you believe not me. Just recognize a quality of life that I exhibit that has no possible explanation but God.

The mystery of God-likeness. Believe the works. You see, when you and I have entered fully into God's redemptive and regenerative purpose, we would have the authority to say what He then said.

I mean, would you actually have the courage to stand up in the presence of others who are still skeptical about the Christian life and say, you may find it difficult to believe that I'm the kind of man or woman that I am, you know, in terms of my faith in Jesus, but just watch me behave. 24 hours a day. When nobody else is looking.

You take a peep. Now, that's a test. In other words, are you prepared to evangelize with your mouth shut? Without having to vindicate yourself.

That's the only real test of true evangelism. No propaganda. No handouts.

Just by virtue of who you are and the quality of life that others recognize. Say to the Lord Jesus, just look at me behave. And recognize when you see me behave, even in every word that I speak, know and believe that the Father is in me.

And I'm in Him. Just watch me very closely and come to the conclusion there's only one possible explanation for what I do, what I say and what I am. My Father has God living in me as man.

I understand your other problem in terms of my context. Born in a manger. In a conquered country.

But just forget the circumstances and the context and just watch the quality of life. That's Christianity. Christ inuity.

24 hours a day. Preach Christ. If necessary, use words.

That was the authority the Lord Jesus used. Remember when a Roman officer had a servant that was at the point of death? First of all, he called some of the Jews and said, having heard of him, send for Jesus. And then finally changed his mind.

He said, I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy that you should come into my home. Just speak the word.

And my servant will be healed. Just speak the word. And then he went on to say this.

You can read it, don't turn to it now. Luke chapter 7. For I also am a man under authority. I also.

What do you mean by that? He recognized in the Lord Jesus a person under authority. I also am a man under authority. I'm a Roman officer.

I tell to one go and he goes. I tell another one come and he comes. He does it.

I'm under authority. Because the only authority I exercise is that which is vested in me by the emperor. So I know you're a man under authority.

So just speak the word. And it'll carry as much weight as mine does because I'm exercising that authority that derives from my submission to the emperor's authority. If any soldier or servant defies me, they're defying the emperor.

Do you know what the Lord Jesus said? Incredible. I've not seen so much faith in the whole of Israel. I'm a Gentile Roman officer who's come to the conclusion that the only authority as man that I exercise is that which is mine by virtue of my submission to my father's authority.

Needless to say, when he went home, his servant was healed. Authority. That's why we read last night, you see, that Elijah, by virtue of his submission to God's authority, was prepared to speak even at the risk of being misunderstood.

Me first. Me first. What I mean to say is God first.

Because God told me that he commanded you to sustain me. So you better do as you're told. Because if you don't, you'll remain in your own poverty-stricken condition.

You'll never live a life that is essentially miraculous. You'll never know what it is to know God for yourself. You'll die admiring me, maybe as a man of God, but you'll never know God for yourself.

You don't have to obey God. You don't have to sustain me, even though he's commanded you. But if you don't, all you can do is build your fire, bake your cake, divide it between yourself and your son, and die.

But she was God's friend. At the moment of extremity, she took the last that she had and placed it at God's disposal. That's all God needs.

Your extremity. All he needs is a woman like that. A widowed, poverty-stricken woman who's prepared in her extremity to take God's word and act on the assumption of what he says he means.

Like a little boy in the crowd. Five loaves and two fishes. God doesn't even bother to name him, because he's so famous in heaven.

But you'll meet him as soon as you get there. Because it isn't how famous your name is on earth that matters. It's how famous your name is in heaven.

And Jesus takes the five loaves and the two fishes of a small boy, his extremity, and feeds the crowd. Wonderful. This is the quality of life for which you've been redeemed.

Why settle for less? A handful of meal in a barrel. A little oil in a cruz. And two sticks to build a fire.

And bake the cake. Now, never read the Bible in a hurry. The word meal there in the original is the poorest of meal there was on the market.

In point of fact, it was so miserable it was almost given away to beggars. Human bankruptcy. But there was a little oil in a cruz.

In the Bible, Old and New Testament, what does all speak of? With relentless consistency. The person, work, and office of God, the Holy Spirit. In other words, the life that was in him, which is the light of man.

Remember Proverbs 20, 27. The spirit of man, the human spirit, is God's lamp. But in Bible times, a lamp never produced life unless there was oil in it.

If it deceived itself or was deceived by others and tried to polish its own image, it simply shared the darkness around it. And that's all that a Christian can do. That has long been misled into the idea that they've got to flex their muscles, grip their teeth, clench their fists, and do something for Jesus.

Polish their image. They share the world's night. And they produce no light.

It takes oil in a lamp to produce light. And oil is the life of God. Oil is the Holy Spirit within the human spirit, given access to the human soul, so that God himself, the creator within the creature, can teach his mind, control his emotions, direct his will, and so govern that man or woman or child's behavior that others see God behaving.

Have you admitted your bankruptcy in the sight of God? Have you ever allowed God so to change your heart that he could change your name? As we shall discover in this book, Jacob did. When at last God said, what's your name? And he said, Jacob, a sneak, a cheat, and a swindler. God said, thanks for calling yourself by your own name.

There's been a change of heart. Instead of criticizing Laban because he cheated you, you've now admitted that you cheated him as much as he ever cheated you. You've come clean.

Now change your name because you've changed your heart. It's wonderful when you change your heart and God can change your name. But you've got to get to that moment of extremity.

Recognize your own bankruptcy. Just a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruise, and what else? Where would God's plenitude, the oil in the cruise, meet man's poverty, a handful of meal? Where do they come together? Where two pieces of wood meet and the fire burns. The cross.

That's the beautiful picture that's given here. This is redemption. That place where two pieces of wood met that had been born upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus.

And there the fire burned. Not the fire that consumed the sacrifice. But the fire when the sacrifice, Jesus, consumed the fire.

Now we need to check on this because this occurs again. The point of fact occurs in the next chapter. So turn to Exodus in chapter 29.

Exodus in the 29th chapter. And here God gives his instructions concerning the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. Verse 38 of the 29th chapter of Exodus.

Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer slaying it and shedding its blood in the morning. The other lamb thou shalt offer at evening.

With the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hen of beaten oil. Both for the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. Take the lamb, shed its blood with a tenth deal of flour.

Just a handful of flour. A meal in a barrel. And the fourth part of a hen of beaten oil.

Just a little oil in a cruz. And where those two are going to meet is where the blood of the lamb is slain. And the fire burns.

With a fourth part of a hen of wine. For a drink offering. He passed the cup and said this is my blood.

Shed for you. The crushed grape. That bled.

That's the morning sacrifice. The other lamb, forty-one, thou shalt offer at evening. And thou shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning.

And according to the drink offering thereof. For a sweet savour and offering made by fire unto the Lord. The morning and the evening sacrifice.

This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations. At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. Where I will meet you.

But you can't come in unto the high priest once a year. Through the veil on pain of death. But there I'll meet you.

Speak there to you. There verse forty-three, I will meet with you. The children of Israel, the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.

I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation by my presence. The altar, I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons to minister to me in the priest's office. I will dwell among the children of Israel.

I will be their God. They shall know that I am the Lord their God. That brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them.

I am the Lord their God. In other words, in the morning and the evening sacrifice where the blood is shed. So that God's plenitude, just a little oil and a cruise can meet man's poverty.

Just a handful of meal in a barrel. I want you to know that that's where you're going to meet God. Himself.

Not the priest. Not the church. As an organizational entity.

You're going to be my people. I'm going to be your God. That's why the Lord Jesus died upon the cross.

Not to make us members of some denominational group, but to add us to the Lord as members of his body. And know that twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we'll live in his presence. And we will be as cognizant as Elijah was when he stood before King Ahab and said, There is no rain, no dew, except by my word.

And if you wonder how I can speak with this authority, it's because the God of Israel is alive and well and I stand before him. And you and I have got to live twenty-four hours a day fully cognizant of the fact that somebody's watching and somebody's listening. Jesus.

King in his kingdom. Elijah. The barrel of meal wasted not.

Neither did the crucible fail. According to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah. And this woman saw God at work.

But it came to pass after seventeen, the very seventeenth, that after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, she fell sick. He fell sick. His sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.

He died. And in her distress, holding this lifeless child in her arms, said she to Elijah, What have I to do with thee, thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my child, my son? We don't really know what she meant by that. I don't think that you and I have the right to know

what she meant by that.

But somehow you see, in the life of this woman there was a shadow. A shadow of the past. Have you come to expose me? Have you come to call my sin to remembrance? Are you humiliating me? This was the cry of despair.

My son's dead. You said that he and I would live. But he's dead.

I'm glad that God has drawn a veil over the shadow in that woman's life. Aren't you glad that God draws a veil over the shadows in your life? He doesn't allow us, he didn't even allow Elijah to go through that veil. He asked no questions.

He spoke to God. He said, give me thy son. He took him out of her bosom, carried him up into a loft where he abode and laid him upon his own bed.

That dead little boy. He cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sinned by slaying her son? He's dead. You offered life in her extremity.

He stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah. And the soul of the child came back into him again, he revived.

He was raised from the dead. Resurrection. You say, what does God do with the past? When a boy or a girl or a man or woman comes to the cross, where the Lord Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree, where he there was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, accepted in the beloved, that God for his dear sake who died in our place might remember our sins no more.

What does God do with the past? When you dare to claim redemption, he buries them in the depths of the sea. He puts them as far away as the east is from the west. That's infinity.

He puts them behind his back where he can't see them or ever be reminded of them. He remembers them no more. But you see, God can never give you back in life what hasn't first gone into the place of death with Jesus.

I'm crucified with Christ. To all that I am, to all that I have, to all that I've been, to every last shadow that ever clouded my soul, every fear, every lurking secret that still accuses me, I'm crucified with Christ. He took all of that and put it in the grave.

He buried it. Nevertheless, I live. Resurrection has taken place.

Out of the place of death, the cross, God has given me back my life. The past buried and the future restored in his resurrection. Elijah took the child, brought him down out of the chamber into the house and delivered him unto his mother.

And Elijah said, See, resurrection. Thy son liveth. But I want you to know that in his death there went into the past every last shadow in your life.

Every last sorrow that has burdened your soul is alive again. To a future as big and as bright as God. That's the message of the cross.

This is the good news of the gospel. That the Lord Jesus not only died for us objectively, paying the price, incurring in his person the consequence of man's guilt so that we may be acquitted, our sins to be remanded for his sake no more. For when God forgives, he forgets.

But that he, the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, might come and re-inhabit our humanity so that if any man be genuinely in Christ, he's a new creation. All things, every last shadow, every sin, all things have passed away. And everything has become new.

It goes on to say in the 18th verse of that 1 Corinthians 5, and the old things that replace the old things come from God. It's the quality of life that has its divine origin. In somebody who gave himself not only for you then and took the past and buried it, but he rose again to live in you now, every moment of every day.

And the woman said to Elijah, now by this I know, I know, that thou art a man of God, that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth. What confirmed the truth? Resurrection. You see, others have the right to believe the truth that is given utterance through your lips only when they see the evidence in you and the way you behave at his resurrection.

When you can say it, not just as a little piece of evangelical jargon, but the reality of your experience to me to live, is Christ. The life that is mine now is resurrection life. I've been raised from the dead.

And he's buried the past. And every horizon now beckons me, heavy with blessing and golden with prospect, as big as God. That's it.

That's the good news. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we want to thank you that you were willing for our sakes, though God, to empty yourself, humble yourself, make yourself nothing.

All that you knew as God who created man, man to be apart from God. It overwhelmed us. That the only authority that you ever claimed to exercise was that which your submission to the Father's authority was bestowed upon you.

Thank you. Thank you that you were willing to be crucified in weakness, nailed helplessly to a Roman gallows, mocked by a hostile crowd. They even gambled for your clothes.

You could have come down from that cross, made fools of the lot. But you set your face like a flint. You turned neither to the right hand nor to the left.

You were obedient unto death, even the death of that cross, so that you might take with you into the grave every last shadow in our lives and every sorrow that burdens our souls. That we might, in resurrection, step out into the dawn of an entirely new day and enjoy that quality of life you promised you came to give, more abundant, life in a new dimension, the life of God shared by forgiven sinners on earth, clothed with their redeemed humanity. Dear Lord, help us to settle for nothing less than what God had in mind when he sent you into this world.

Save us from religion. Deliver us from Christianity. It's time to get back to Jesus alone.

Thanks for your patience. We hope that by the end of this week you won't be disappointed. We don't deserve it.

You do. And we want you in us to have what you deserve, the right to be alive again, God and the man, the king and his king, in your own dear and precious name. Amen.

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