

Essential Principles of the Christian Life - Part 1

by Major Ian Thomas

The essential principles of the Christian life are that the form of scripture is the Word of God, the character of the Word of God is gospel, and the content of the gospel is Jesus Christ.

Duration: 44:31

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Galatians 3:8

Topics: "Principles"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes three simple principles of the Christian life. The first principle is that the form of scripture is the word of God, meaning that when we hold the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, we are holding the word of God. The second principle is that the character of the word of God is gospel, which is good news. This good news is centered around Jesus Christ, who died for our redemption and rose again for our spiritual regeneration. The speaker urges the audience to have faith in this gospel and emphasizes the importance of being truly redeemed, not just caught up in the enthusiasm of a gathering of believers.

Transcript

Major Ian Thomas. And all I want to do this afternoon is to share with you something of the glorious truth that is ours in the Lord Jesus and which we are privileged to pass on to our fellow man. For this is our mission to make Christ known.

What a thrilling and a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian. All that Christ is in all that you are. That's all that it means to be a Christian.

Some of you met one of my very dear colleagues, Stuart Briscoe, I believe, in Dallas in the earlier part of this year. In his book he says the secret of the Christian life is very simple. It is simply to discover why the Lord Jesus is the Lord Jesus, where he is, why he is, who he is, where he is.

That's the secret of the Christian life. Why he is, who he is, where he is. Well, if we're Christians, where is he? Clothing himself in a very wonderful and unique way with our humanity.

If you can't hear me, please indicate that back. Why he is, who he is, where he is. And we're going to explore together something of the essential principles of the Christian life.

Take our panoramic view of the message of salvation. Some years ago it was my privilege to chair ministry in a student conference in California at Forest Home with Dr. Bernard Rams, and he enunciated there simple principles that have become increasingly meaningful to me and giving him the credit that is his view. I'd like to reiterate those principles and build upon them.

Very simple principles. The first principle is this, that the form of scripture is the Word of God. That's the first principle.

That when we take the Bible in our hands, Old Testament and New Testament, the form of scripture is the Word of God. The Word of God. Something that God has said, and everything that God has said is something that God wants you and me to know.

And that's the nature of scripture. The form of scripture is the Word of God. The second principle that was enunciated was equally simple.

If the form of scripture is the Word of God, then the character of the Word of God is gospel. Whether in the Old Testament or whether in the New Testament, the character of what God has to say and what God wants you to know is gospel. A word very simply that means good news.

What God has said and what God wants you to know is good news. It's worth hearing and it's worth proclaiming. That was the second simple principle.

The form of scripture is the Word of God and the character of the Word of God is gospel, and the content of that gospel as a third principle is Jesus Christ. Did you get those three simple principles? The form of scripture is the Word of God. The character of the Word of God is gospel, and the content of that gospel is Jesus Christ.

The gospel which in the first place is redemption, and the gospel which in the second place is regeneration. It's two-sided. The Lord Jesus Christ died for me, that's redemption, and rose again to live in me, that spiritual regeneration.

And once I have been presented with those two facts, he died for me to live in me, I'm left with one moral obligation. Let it be. And that's what the Bible calls faith.

And briefly comprehend it, this is the whole counsel of God. For deriving from these principles everything else arrives that matters. Now, the Word, of course, is a means of communication.

And the scripture, which according to its form is the Word of God, is simply a communication between God and man. And the Lord Jesus Christ is also the Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made God, and the Word was God.

And this Word was made flesh. And the Lord Jesus himself is the living Word, a means of communication. And that is why you can never detach the scriptures as the Word of God and as gospel from the Lord Jesus as the living Word of God and as gospel.

You cannot separate the scriptures as gospel from Jesus Christ as gospel. The moment you detach the scriptures from the Lord Jesus Christ, the scriptures cease to be either redemptive or regenerative. And the moment you detach the Lord Jesus Christ from the scriptures, Jesus ceases to be redemptive and ceases to be regenerative.

Now, this is pathetically possible. You can have a Bible, which because it has been detached from the person of Jesus, neither redeems nor regenerates. And you can have a Jesus if you detach him from the revelation given to us of Jesus in the scriptures, who equally is impotent, neither redemptive nor regenerative.

He's just a sentimental concept, nothing more nor less than that. The gospel is redemptive and regenerative. In redemption, God provides for you in Jesus Christ the one by whom you have the power to become a child of God.

In regeneration, God presents to you in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the one by whom you can be what by redemption you've become. It's important that we should understand this. Redemption gives you the power to become.

Regeneration gives you the power to be what you have become. And it's sadly possible to know the Lord Jesus in his redemptive efficacy and through him have the power to become without enjoying day by day the power of the Lord Jesus by his indwelling Holy Spirit and enjoy the power of being what by his atoning death he's given you the right to become. To have the Lord Jesus for less than the one who died for us to live in us is to live in self-imposed poverty.

In the redemptive purpose of God, he puts you and me into Christ and that gives us the power to become. It's called justification. Clothed with his righteousness, God accepts us in the beloved because vicariously 1900 years ago he was clothed with your sin and with mine.

And now God looks at me in Christ. For redemption puts a man into Christ. It's a beautiful expression that we constantly have in the New Testament.

If any man be in Christ he's a new creature. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. To be in Christ means that by faith you have entered into the good of God's redemptive act.

But of course the thrilling and the wonderful thing is this that no man can be in Christ without from that moment Christ being in him. Redemption puts you into Christ but spiritual regeneration puts Christ into you. When you step into Christ makes you fit for heaven for it gives you the power to become a child of God.

But when Christ steps into you he gives you the power to be what by redemption you've become. And that makes you fit for earth. So redemption makes you fit for heaven.

Spiritual regeneration makes you fit for earth. And in the redemptive act which was accomplished by his atoning death there was a regenerative purpose which was designed to make you that a partaker of that divine nature in whom there is given to you all that pertains to life and God. And of course it's by redemption it's possible for God to look and see you in Christ.

By spiritual regeneration it's now possible for the world to see Christ in you. And that's really the object of the exodus. Now these are some very simple principles but it is equally essential however simple they may be that we drive that the scriptures in form are the word of God that the character of that word is gospel and the content of that gospel is Jesus.

That the gospel is twofold it's redemptive in that it gives you the right to become and it's regenerative in that it gives you the power to be what redemption has given you the right to become. And of course if in

the redemptive act there is a regenerative purpose at the end of that regenerative purpose there is a consummating climax and that consummating climax is enunciated for us in the first epistle of John.

Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not beloved now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is that is a consummating climax of the regenerative purpose that is precipitated by the redemptive act like him at the end product and this ultimately is what God is at in redemption when in the first of John in the third chapter the second verse we have become like him where have we got to we've got way back into Genesis chapter one the consummating climax simply presents man once more to God in his original image for the whole purpose of God in

redemption and in spiritual regeneration is simply to restore the man to his true humanity it's to make man man again as God intended man to be not i believe to inhabit some utopia that is to be established on earth the bible leads us in absolutely no doubt whatever that so far as God is concerned this world is a total write-off it's without salvation absolutely without salvation God is calling out a people to himself that on the basis of the redemptive act and by that regenerative process that is precipitated by that redemptive act might be restored to that image that makes once more an invisible God visible in terms of his humanity and that of course is how alone we may evaluate our own spiritual maturity not ultimately by what we know not ultimately by the office that we may have not

ultimately by the activity in which we may be engaged but ultimately the acid test of our spiritual maturity is the measure in which Jesus Christ once more is to is able to express his image in terms of our humanity the measure in other words in which we have been restored to that noble holy function for which man was made let us make man in our image after our life so God created man in his own image in the image of God created he is that's the end product so when salvation has gone full cycle it is a means whereby God has been able to move man from likeness to likeness and everything that is between man's created likeness and his recreated likeness is what we call gospel that's gospel not just come to Jesus and have your sins forgiven not just escape hell and one day get to heaven

everything between that likeness and image of God in which man was made and that likeness and image of God in which one day when he appears and we see him we shall be found in his presence everything between those two areas of likeness is God good news and nothing less than the end product will ever satisfy the heart of God the noblest and the holiest ambition that can burn in your heart or mind is that every boy girl man or woman my own children my own wife my husband my family my friends my business associates those who serve me across the council shall become compellingly aware in my presence that Jesus Christ is alive and he's alive in me because I have learned now why he is who he is where he is he died for me redemption to live in me regeneration and all I've got to do is let him

and walk by faith now that's the principle now if you'll turn with me to the third chapter of the epistles of the galatians galatians chapter three we'll see that this principle is clearly enunciated takes first of the third chapter of the epistles of the galatians in the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying in thee shall all nations be blessed there was a communication and the communication we're told in the eighth of galatians chapter three was by the scripture the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached there was a communication we'll notice in the 12th chapter of genesis that the scripture is equated with the word of God genesis chapter 12 and verse 1 now the Lord had

said unto Abraham get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be a blessing and I will bless them that bless thee and I will curse him that curses thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed who said that God it was what God had to say that he wanted he wanted Abraham to know and what God had to say then that he wanted Abraham to know is equated in the eighth verse of the third chapter of the epistles of the galatians as scripture for the form of scripture is the word of God a divine communication from God to man but that which was communicated by the scripture as the word of God was gospel the scripture

foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying indeed shall all nations be blessed good news so that the character of the word was gospel verse 16 galatians 3 now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made he saith not unto seeds as of many but as of one and to thy seed singular which is Christ so the scripture according to its form was the word of God the character of that word was gospel and the content of that gospel was Jesus Christ he saith not unto seeds as of many but as of one to thy seed which is Christ but the gospel that is ours in Jesus is redemptive and regenerate verse 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree that

was the redemptive act this was the vicarious atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus by virtue of which you and I in spite of our guilt may become accepted in the blood now in such a a gathering as we have had in these few days numbered amongst those of us who are sitting in this auditorium there may well be men and women of noble intention of sincere desire and holy ambition and yet you're not redeemed and that is why in this particular session this afternoon I'm laying particular emphasis upon the panoramic view of God's soul total redemptive and saving person because wouldn't it be wouldn't it be a tragedy if somebody were to take part in these meetings and be caught up as it were onto the tide the swell of the tide and feel the warmth of the fellowship of a company of God's redeemed

people and be swept along with a with a warm sense of enthusiasm and yet fall short of being redeemed are you redeemed has the gospel in its redemptive aspect become experiential in your life Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us the Bible leads us in absolutely no doubt that the death of Jesus Christ was not the tragic death of a noble martyr he didn't drift to disaster it was stern business to this end was he born and for this cause he came into the world to lay down his life a ransom for men and the only basis upon which you can know peace with God is upon the basis of his redemptive act that he has redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us for curse it is everyone that hangeth on a tree and when God preached the gospel to

this was the first word of that gospel it was redemption it was the means whereby you and I at enmity with God through sin might be at peace with God as though who undeservedly had been acquitted on the grounds of his vicarious and atoning sacrifice are you redeemed he died for you redemption let it that's it you say how do I let it by exposing your need as a guilty sinner to the adequacy of his atoning death and saying Lord Jesus I don't deserve it but you died for me my sins are as scarlet but because of the shed blood upon the cross they may be as white as snow thank you I take what you give that's it you let it Lord Jesus you came into this world as the good shepherd to lay down your life for the sheep you're prepared to redeem me you're prepared to present me to the father as

accepted before the father in you the beloved this is exactly and precisely what I want you to do you died for me and I want to let it is it possible that you as yet have fallen short of this faith response to God's

redemptive act in Jesus Christ what you're going to do about it supposing I'm talking to to somebody here some man or woman or boy or girl for that matter supposing I'm talking to to one of you here and you've never received Christ Jesus as your your savior you don't know that you're redeemed you don't know that your sins are forgiven it doesn't may be that you haven't known the facts but you do not at this moment have a vivid living vital assurance that all is at peace between your soul and God who what are you going to do about it well the one thing I ask you not to do about

it is wait for some kind of after meeting or altar call because that would be very stupid it's a crazy idea to my mind that folk have to wait for an after meeting or altar call or an invitation before they get redeemed you know the fact Christ died for you he has redeemed you from the curse of the law being made a curse for you all he's waiting for is that you should let him so if at this moment you know that you've never come to the place of complete and utter assurance of your redemption at this very moment while you're still listening to my next sentence in your heart say Lord Jesus as from this moment now I left wouldn't it be stupid to wait another 10 minutes I'm constantly amazed at the close of meetings sometimes when I speak to an individual I say when did you receive Christ as

your savior and they say well I I don't know that I have and I say wouldn't you like and they say yes with all my heart and I say didn't you listen to me as I was speaking in the service yes did you understand what I was saying yes and I can never for the life of me understand why they didn't then then accept Christ isn't it strange now may I encourage you at this very moment if you have never received Christ as your redeemer exactly and precisely where you're sitting now at this point of time say thanks and know from this moment that Christ is redeemed was that the blessing that God promised to Abraham in Isaac no did you think that redemption through the blood of Christ was the blessing that God promised to Abraham and Isaac did you think that you're wrong it was certainly part of the

gospel it was part of the good news but you read on with me in the 14th verse of the third chapter of the epistles of Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree that that in other words whatever has taken place in verse 13 is the premise whatever has taken place in 13 is simply the essential prerequisite whatever has taken place in 13 has simply cleared the way for what is now to take place in verse 40 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us for it is written cursed he's everyone that hangeth on a tree the blessing of Abraham redemptive the redemptive act the atoning death of Jesus Christ was simply the means to this end now that's where by and large the church

the true evangelical church of Jesus Christ has broken down it's because by and large effectually experientially we've stopped at the end of verse 13 and given only intellectual theological consent to verse 40 that there is so much spiritual poverty experientially in the lives of those who have been genuinely reconciled to God on the basis of the redemptive act because they never saw that in the redemptive act there was a regenerative purpose does that term confuse you regeneration regenerative purpose sometimes we get so familiar with terms that we use ourselves so often that we forget that to some it may still be confusing regeneration new birth to impart in by God of a life that you and I by natural birth do not possess that's regeneration and it's explained for us in the 14th verse

that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ on the basis of his redemptive act that we might receive the promise of the true faith that was the blessing that we might receive the holy ghost this is the very heart of the gospel this is the very dynamic of our faith this is what makes the christian life a practical working proposition that on the basis of that redemptive act because he

was made a curse for us upon the cross of calvary we now being reconciled to God as those who have embraced redemption by faith in him might receive the holy ghost and our redeemed humanity be inhabited by his deity in the person of his other self for he died for me to live in and my moral responsibility is to i've got to know why he is who he is where he is by his gracious

holy spirit the moment that you are redeemed jesus christ comes to take up residence within your humanity and you know why he does it because the end product of this regenerative purpose in the redemptive act is a consummating climate like you see god made man with the noble office in his humanity of making an invisible god visible that's a basic principle for no man has seen god at any time but a second basic principle is this that it is only god in a man who can be the origin of his own image that our likeness our god like that image of god that is that is to be demonstrated in terms of our humanity is not the consequence of our ability to imitate god or imitate jesus christ that the likeness of god and the likeness of the lord jesus in terms of our humanity derived from the exercise of

his dominion in the area of human personality that it is only as the lord jesus christ is sovereign in the area of my thinking sovereign in the area of my emotions and sovereign in the area of my will will his nature be transformed into human behavior and what happened when man fell into sin in the day that man believed the devil's line repudiated the basic basic principle is humanity that it takes god to be a man as god intended man to be the holy spirit was withdrawn from the human spirit and all that god had in mind when he sent his son to die upon the cross was that on the basis of redemption the cleansed forgiven acquitted sinner might have restored to him all that it takes to be a christian that's exactly precisely all that it takes to do because you see it takes god to be a man and

that's why it takes christ to be a christian because christ in the christians puts god back as the man that's the gospel it takes god to be a man that's why it takes christ to be a christian because christ in the christian puts god back into the man he died for you to live in you let him now why did paul write this as a corrective, as a corrective, for he was writing this epistle to those who had entered by faith into the redemptive efficacy of the death of Christ, but had completely missed the point, completely missed the point.

They were cheating Jesus Christ of that for which his blood was shed, his right in the power of his resurrection in the person of his Holy Spirit to occupy, monopolize and dominate their humanity. So what was the result? Having received the Holy Spirit as the instant and inevitable seal of their redemption, they proceeded then totally to ignore his presence. And reading from the Amplified New Testament and in the third chapter of this epistle to the Galatians, the words with which this particular chapter opens, the apostle writes, O you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians, that's the Amplified New Testament, but not unfairly or unduly amplified.

What he said was all of that. Let me ask you this one question. Did you receive the Holy Spirit as a result of obeying the law and doing its works? In other words, is the presence of God the Holy Ghost now within you, resident, the consequence of your deserving, the consequence of your own self-effort, the consequence of your own righteousness? It was a rhetorical question, and he knew perfectly well they knew the answer to that question.

Did you receive the Holy Spirit as a result of obeying the law and doing its works, or was it by hearing the message of the gospel and believing it? They knew perfectly well that if ever the Holy Spirit had been restored to their human spirit and they were no longer spiritually destitute of that divine content that makes man man, God, it was by faith alone, in the grace of God. So he goes on to say this, verse 3, Are you so

foolish, and so senseless, and so silly, having begun your new life spiritually with the Holy Spirit, having the God-imparted life, are you now reaching perfection by dependence on the flesh, the end product of your redemption which is the consummating climax of that regenerative process, can never be accomplished in the energy of the flesh? You have been redeemed through the death of Christ that you might be inhabited by the life of Christ in the person of his Holy Spirit to share his resurrection, so that Jesus Christ in you might once more become the origin of his own image, the source of his own likeness and the dynamic of all his own demise, and the foolish, stupid, senseless, silly Galatians. Having been redeemed through the blood of Jesus, we're living in self-imposed poverty, living as New Testament Christians in pre-Pentecostal poverty instead of post-Pentecostal plenitude.

Now, I asked you just a moment or two ago whether you were quite certain you had entered into the redemptive efficacy of the death of Christ, whether this part of the gospel had really become experiential. May I ask the greater number of those who are gathered here this afternoon, are you absolutely certain that you're not as senseless and stupid and as silly as the Galatians? Are you quite sure? Are you quite sure that you haven't looked upon your conversion as the totality of that part of your salvation in which Jesus Christ is involved? Are you quite sure? Are you quite sure that you haven't been living in a concept of the Christian life that dismisses Jesus Christ from the moment you've put your hand up a meeting or walked to the front or walked the aisle or stayed in some after-meeting and claimed redemption through his death? Now you've dismissed him. He's done his part.

He has redeemed you. He's paid the price. Your sins are forgiven.

You're on the way to heaven and he can get there and wait for you. Are you quite sure? Now be honest with yourself. Has this been the concept of your Christian life till now? That he has done his part, you know the Jesus who was, he's now relocated to heaven, and to you now he's the Jesus who will be, and in the meantime you live in a spiritual vacuum and you do not know by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, the day-by-day dynamics, the explosive, spontaneous expression of the life of the Jesus who is, and you wonder why your Christian life is flat.

An impotent, powerless, makes no impression. I want to tell you this, that the Jesus that I know is not the Jesus who was, nor the Jesus who will be. He's the Jesus who is.

He is the eternal I am. And the reason that he died for you was that he might live in you and you are to let him. And this is gospel.

This is gospel. This is a gospel meeting, right now. Because everything between the likeness in which man was created and that likeness in which he will be consummated in the presence of Jesus Christ, everything between likeness and likeness is gospel.

And the content of that gospel in redemption and in spiritual regeneration is Jesus Christ. Twenty-four hours in every day. Now, I'm not sure that that isn't where we shouldn't finish for this session.

May I just recapitulate? The form of Scripture is the Word of God. God's communication to man, something that God has said that he wants you to know. That's the Scripture.

The form of Scripture is the Word of God. The character of the Word of God is gospel. A gospel, a good news that is not only redemptive, that gives you the power to become a child of God, but regenerative, that by the presence of Christ gives you the power to be what by redemption you now have the right to

become, gospel.

And the content of that gospel, the one by whom you have the right to become and the one by whom alone you have the power to be what you've become, that content of that gospel is Jesus. And that is why you can never at any time detach your Christianity from Christ. For the moment you detach your Christianity from Christ and reduce it to a formula, a pattern superimposed upon you of certain Christian exercises in which you are engaged, however noble and lofty they may be--churchgoing, witnessing, preaching, tithing--all these things can become, as we have already been so vividly reminded, nothing more than a ritualistic reminder of something that has ceased to be reality.

And the moment you do that and detach your Christianity from the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, you've got nothing but a dead religion hanging around your neck. May God preserve us, therefore, from being stupid, senseless, silly, delusional, and enable us by faith, the faith that lets him enter into all the good of his redemptive death, and that regenerative process whereby, for every step we take, we share his life in the power of his resurrection, until that day that we see him and, seeing him, we are like him. Now, let's bow our heads in prayer.

Our God, we bless and praise thee for such a wonderful salvation. We thank thee for this good news, and we thank thee for the one in whom this good news was brought to its fulfillment, by whose obedience we have been reconciled. And loving Lord, we trust thee by thy gracious Holy Spirit to minister to the hearts of each one of us.

We know that thou hast not witnessed to men nor honor men, thou hast witnessed the truth and honor Christ. If there were boy, girl, man, or woman who entered this building this afternoon unaware of redemption, without that rich assurance of sin forgiven, we trust that already they may be witnessing and enjoying the evidence that only the Holy Spirit can give to their spirits, that a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing has happened, they've been redeemed. And in the measure, dear loving Lord, in which we have discovered that, claiming redemption, we have been cheating thee of that for which thy blood was shed, seeking to be made perfect in the entity of the flesh instead of living in the fullness of thy resurrection life, bring us to the place of total capitulation that gives to thee utter monopoly in every air of human personality.

And we ask it for thine answer. Amen. I'd like to ask for our panelists, if they would, to come forward, and I'd like to introduce them, and then we'll get right at the matter at hand, unless there's something I've missed.

On my left, to your right, Wayne W. Watt, Wayne O. Watt, I'm sorry. Wayne is an oil man from Wichita Falls, Texas. Next to him is Major W. Ian Thomas from England.

Next to him is Dr. W. David Stewart, who specializes in otolaryngology in Oklahoma City. And before we start, Wayne, would you take the hand mic and commit this time to the Lord? Lord, you've told us to be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let a request be made known unto you. And the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall be ours through Christ Jesus.

Lord, this hour is your hour. We pray that we might be anxious self and filled with thy spirit, that your will might be done and said in our hearts and minds, and the time would be redeemed.

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