

God Imparted Life

by Major Ian Thomas

The Gospel's purpose is to impart life to us, as seen in the life of Jesus Christ, and this is achieved through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which restores God's life to the soul of man.

Duration: 1:17:48

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Galatians 3:13-14, Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:22-23

Topics: "Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of redemption and sonship through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that through faith in Jesus, believers are reconciled to God and become sons and daughters. The preacher highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in confirming this sonship and enabling believers to cry out to God as their Father. He challenges the audience to fully embrace the truth of the Gospel and not just settle for a watered-down version of Christianity. The preacher urges believers to be fully committed to God's purposes and to be willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the Gospel.

Transcript

Thank you very much. And that's what the Gospel's all about. Because the life that the Lord Jesus lived, 1900 years ago, only condemns us.

The Christian life is the life that He lived then, lived now, by Him, in us. Because the life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died. But the death that He died qualifies us to receive the life that He lived.

And this was the tremendous discovery that the Apostles had to make. For as we saw last evening, though for three solid years they were exposed to the teachings of the Lord Jesus, and to the supreme example of the Lord Jesus, without exception, every one of them, at the end of three years, were a total abject failure. They neither wanted the cross, nor did they believe in His resurrection.

But in the upper room, after the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, and He appeared to them, and was in their midst, and showed them His hands and His feet, and they touched Him, in the rediscovery of the risen Lord, they found a new joy, a new Bible, a new message, a new responsibility, and were promised by the risen, living Lord Jesus, the new enabling, whereby they were to enter into the good of His atoning death, by becoming the recipients of His resurrection life. That's where we closed our session last evening. And if you'll turn with me now to the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Acts chapter 1, we're

going to talk for a little while, at the outset of this evening session, about the fulfilment that the promise made, the Lord Jesus, the promise the Lord Jesus made to them, in the upper room, which was but a reiteration of the promise that had already been made and recorded for us, in the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel.

In the first chapter of the Acts, the former treatise, have I made of Theophilus of all that Jesus began, both to do and to teach. And what Luke is here, quite obviously, conveying, is that having recorded in Luke's Gospel the things that the Lord Jesus began to do and to teach, he's now about to put on record the things that the Lord Jesus continued to do and to teach. And the only essential difference between the record of the Acts and the record of Luke's Gospel, is the humanity that was used by the Lord Jesus for the accomplishment of what He wanted to do and teach.

But it was the same Lord Jesus Christ. The same life, but instead of His activity being clothed with His own humanity, as in Luke's Gospel, now His activity was clothed by the redeemed humanity of the Apostles and the disciples. But the activity recorded was not the activity of the Apostles, it was the activity of Jesus Christ.

It's a misnomer to call it the Acts of the Apostles. In point of fact, it's the record of the continued Acts and the continued teachings of the Lord Jesus, clothed with the humanity of forgiven sinners, who on the basis of His atoning death, had entered into the good of His God-imparted resurrection life. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandment unto the Apostles whom He had chosen.

To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, you have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Verse 8, ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. So that during this period of forty days, from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus until His ascension, when He went to be again to share with the Father the glory that had been His before ever the world was, He instructed His disciples.

It was a six weeks short term Bible school. And it preceded that climactic event whereby the disciples became the recipients of the indwelling resurrection life of the Lord Jesus through the gift to them of His other self, the Holy Spirit, or paraclete, the Comforter. Which the Lord Jesus describes here as the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

And which Peter, as we shall later discover, describes as the beginning for him, and the beginning for the other apostles, and the beginning for the church. In other words, between the upper room experience where the Lord Jesus stood in their midst and showed them His hands and His feet and they touched Him, and the day of Pentecost when the promise that He gave them there was fulfilled, there was a time-lapse in which they were intellectually convinced of His resurrection but had not, as then, entered into the good of it. But they were commanded to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until this endowment of power came upon them.

Now we want to focus our attention for a few moments tonight upon this which is here described as the baptism with the Holy Ghost and about which today there is considerable confusion. We have to recognize that until Pentecost the disciples were not spiritually regenerate in the New Testament sense. This is something about which folk are a little bit confused.

The church was born at Pentecost. That was the beginning. For it was on the day of Pentecost that the Lord Jesus fulfilled the promise that He gave to them that He would, on His ascension to the Father, pray the Father that He would give the Holy Ghost who was then with them in His person but who as from the day of Pentecost would be in them.

And by the baptism of the Holy Spirit they were to be added to that new body corporate called the church in which the Lord Jesus, Himself the same Lord Jesus, the very same Lord Jesus, would continue to do and to teach as in His own humanity He had already been doing and been teaching. What happened on the day of Pentecost was simply that these 120 men and women on the grounds of Christ's redemptive act entered into the regenerative purpose for which Christ died. The restoration of the life of God to the soul of man.

An entirely new and unique situation was created on the day that the Holy Spirit came to take up residence within the redeemed humanity of these 120 men and women. For the Lord Jesus now instead of having the body that the Father had prepared for Him miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit and fashioned in the womb of Mary and born at Bethlehem instead of having that body now the Father had presented to the Lord Jesus a new body. A body made up of 120 men and women each of whom as forgiven sinners became members of that body in particular.

And this was the baptism of the Holy Spirit which of course must not be confused with what elsewhere in the New Testament is described as the fullness of the Holy Spirit. If you turn with me to the first epistle to the Corinthians in the twelfth chapter 1 Corinthians and chapter 12 here we read in the twelfth verse As the body is one and hath many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body so also is Christ. The reference of course is being made to the human body that just as you and I in our human body have many members in particular that make up that body fingers and feet, ears and a nose and eyes these members of the body being members in particular are nonetheless identified in one corporate whole and they are identified as I mentioned to you the other evening by the common possession of the same life and being subject to the same head so also is Christ.

Verse 13 For by one Spirit, the Holy Spirit are we all baptized into one body. If you and I have become members of the body of Christ it is only because we have been baptized into that body by the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

For as some of us have been discussing in some detail in the morning sessions the essential consequence of man's fall into sin was the forfeiture of the life of God which constituted death as the penalty of sin for the wages of sin is the absence of life death. The absence of what life? Physical death? Physical life? No. The wages of sin is the absence of God's life so that you and I are born into this world totally destitute of the life of God alienated from the life of God physically alive, soulishly active but spiritually dead.

We're cut off from God's life. This is the natural condition in which the natural fallen man as the fallen seed of a fallen Adam is born into this world. On the grounds of redemption being now reconciled to God through His atoning work upon the cross God is prepared for His dear sake whose death has made it

possible to restore those who claim by faith the good of His redemptive act God is prepared to restore to such His presence by the gift to them of His Holy Spirit and this is the regenerative purpose that lies behind the redemptive act and the moment the Holy Spirit the third co-equal member of the triune deity in whose person the Father and the Son are equally comprehended the moment the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence within the human spirit of the redeemed sinner in that moment of time that individual be it man, woman or child of any nation creed or class or color is instantly the possessor of nothing other than the very life of Jesus Christ Himself and is by the presence of the Holy Ghost thus baptized into body membership.

Now, this is the beginning for any individual as Pentecost was the beginning for the church in general in the epistle to the Ephesians Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace G-R-A-C-E God's riches at Christ's expense that's grace the unmerited favor of God to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He, God, hath made us sinners accepted in the beloved Jesus in whom, Jesus, we have redemption How do we have redemption in Jesus? Through His blood What's the result of the shedding of His blood?

The forgiveness of sins Because we deserve it? No, according to the riches of His grace Now, there's the redemptive act This is the basis of our reconciliation to God In Jesus we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace But that isn't salvation That's our reconciliation This is the premise of our salvation This is the prerequisite of our salvation that we have redemption through His blood even the forgiveness of sins But that wasn't the purpose for which Jesus died Verse 13 In whom, the Lord Jesus, ye also trusted after that you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation In other words, having heard the gospel or the good news of your salvation having been exposed to the possibility of reconciliation to God on the grounds of redemption having forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Jesus as the vicarious and atoning sacrifice you trusted You entered into the good of His atoning work upon the cross In whom, the Lord Jesus after that you believed when you, by faith, had invoked His redemptive activity you were sealed, how? with the Holy Spirit of promise The moment you entered into the good of His atoning death you received that for which He died the restoration of God's life by the gift of His Spirit to your spirit whose presence within you alone and exclusively, verse 14 is the earnest of your inheritance That word earnest is an old English word that simply means guarantee stamp, hallmark the only valid evidence that a man is redeemed the presence of the Holy Ghost In whom also after that you believed you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise who Himself is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory Every redeemed sinner is sealed of the blood-bought poverty of Jesus Christ by the restoration to his human spirit of God the Holy Spirit And this is the only valid hallmark of a true child of God And no matter how a man or a woman or a child may claim to be redeemed may claim to be regenerate may claim to be a child of God may claim to be saved if there is not the presence of the Holy Spirit within the human spirit of that individual they are an imposter they are a reprobate they are a counterfeit Now this of course is the strength of what Paul had to say to the Corinthian church as we have already cited from the last thirteenth chapter of the second epistle where Paul having written two long letters to this particular company of professing believers he says now in the life of all that I have to say to you examine yourselves and prove yourselves whether you be in the faith or not And what was the criteria?

That they were accredited by some religious society? No That they had learned by heart a certain number of Bible verses? No What was the criterion? That they had been baptized as believers? Most certainly No What was the criterion? Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith Prove your own selves He said

know you not that Jesus Christ is in you unless you are a counterfeit Now how is Jesus Christ in you?

The Lord Jesus Christ comes to you in the person of his Holy Spirit on the grounds that he has given himself for you upon the cross The Lord Jesus takes up residence by his Holy Spirit within the human spirit of every redeemed sinner And this constitutes our body membership of the true church of Jesus Christ If you turn with me to the third chapter of the epistles of the Galatians Galatians chapter 3 and verse 8 The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham So by the scripture being the record of what God had to say the gospel was made known to Abraham in that God said to him In thee shall all nations be blessed So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham So God's saving purpose was explained to

Abraham and there was promised through his seed the blessing Now we are left in absolutely no doubt of course as to the one indicated by God when he spoke of Abraham's seed This is indicated very clearly for us in the 16th verse of the same chapter Galatians 3 verse 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made He said not unto seeds as of many but as of one In other words what God had to say did not concern a race of men or some national culture that they would offer to mankind but specifically what God had to say to Abraham was to Abraham and to his seed singular not as of many but as of one end of verse 16 to thy seed singular which is Christ In other words whatever the blessing may have been that God promised should come through the seed of Abraham it was to come through the

person of the Lord Jesus Now what was the blessing that God promised should become yours and mine in the person of Jesus Christ It was gospel for the 8th verse tells us that the gospel this good news was preached right there and then to Abraham promising the blessing Now by your understanding of the gospel in your connotation of the word what would you have imagined God was promising by this gospel to Abraham and to be consummated in the person of Jesus Christ Well of course you might imagine that what God was promising to Abraham to be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ was the forgiveness of our sins our deliverance from the punitive consequence of our guilt that one day we would go to heaven and share his kingdom forever but of course that isn't true as Paul here specifically is

at pains to explain because it is at this very point that the Galatian Christians have got a weak gospel and because at this point they have got a weak gospel they had a weak Christianity and it was to correct the weakness of the lives they lived derived from the weakness of the gospel they had that Paul is writing this epistle to the Galatians because Paul knew perfectly well that if these Galatian Christians persisted in a weak gospel they would destroy themselves in every future generation because Paul knew perfectly well that a weak gospel can never reproduce itself in strength it can only reproduce itself in greater weakness and the Galatian Christians had completely missed the point of their salvation and the situation as it applied to the Galatian church then is by and large the

situation as it applies to the Evangelical church of Jesus Christ in the 20th century our gospel today by and large is as weak if not weaker than the gospel that was being embraced by the Galatian Christians and of course if we were to persist in our day and generation in propagating a weak gospel then we are sowing the seeds of inevitable calamity and disaster in the next decade and if we propagate a weak gospel we may anticipate that we'll have absolutely nothing but trouble with our children when they grow up in our Christian homes and I believe that by and large the reason that there are so many rebel children of Evangelical believers is that they have only been exposed to a weak gospel and they've never been introduced to the true spiritual content of their faith and they had only

impinged upon them, projected upon them certain external patterns of Evangelical behavior and they've never been introduced to the dynamic of a living faith that's calculated completely to revolutionize a man's character in other words as I've sometimes described it, we have reared a whole generation of professing Christian boys and girls who are no more, quite frankly no more than Evangelically house trained but without any, any real spiritual or moral convictions they've simply learned Evangelical language and we're constantly being shocked at their bad behavior and I'll tell you who's to blame a generation of Christians who precede them who have simply perpetuated in their children a gospel as weak as the gospel they know that's why you may anticipate if you persist in a weak gospel

that your churches will be half empty in 15 years time and you'll have a whole amount of surplus real estate on your hands in another generation what was the blessing that God promised in the gospel that he preached to faithful Abraham verse 13 of Galatians 3 Galatians 3 verse 13 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 well there you are you say there you are there's redemption that was the gospel Christ died for our sins that's exactly what we believe that's exactly what we've been preaching Christ died for our sins yes you're right Christ died for our sins but that wasn't the gospel nor was that the blessing that God promised to faithful Abraham because you haven't read the 14th verse all

you've read in the 13th verse is the premise the prerequisite the essential precursor all you've been introduced to in the 13th verse is the threshold over which everybody inevitably must cross if they are to enter into the good of that for which God sent the seed of faithful Abraham 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 to this end the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ through the Jesus Christ who was made a curse for us in that he was nailed to a cross through that Jesus who was the seed of Abraham came to implement the redemptive act through him there may now come upon us as the Gentiles the blessing of the gospel which God preached to faithful

Abraham that, continuing in verse 14 we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith so why was Christ made a curse for us? why did he die upon the cross? why was his blood shed? that you and I having forgiveness of sins through his vicarious sufferings might receive the seal of God the Holy Ghost and our humanity be reoccupied re-inhabited and re-monopolized by God himself nothing less than that is involved in gospel and if I presume to stand before men and women and boys and girls and simply invite them to come to Jesus and have their sins forgiven and expose them to nothing more than that of God's total demands upon every area of their humanity in every crack and crevice of their human personality so that body, soul, spirit mind, emotion and will they become the

unchallenged blood-bought property of Jesus Christ in all that they are and all that they possess I am doing violence to the truth that God has entrusted to me Christ redeemed you upon the cross so that in the power of his resurrection he might come and re-inhabit your humanity in the person of the Holy Spirit so that you might be added by his presence within you to that body corporate of which he is the head and you have become on the grounds of redemption and through spiritual regeneration a member in particular and this is the baptism with the Holy Ghost chapter four of the same epistle verse four when the fullness of the time was come God sent forth his son made of a woman made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons there was a

redemptive act that guilty sinners might be reconciled to a holy God and instead of being enemies they might become sons but because you're sons because you Galatian Christians have by faith invoked the

redemptive activity of the crucified Jesus because you're sons what's happened?

God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts who bears witness to your spirit from within that you are now children of God and you cry Abba Father and that was why he died to redeem you that restored to sonship you might receive the Holy Ghost that your humanity might be re-inhabited by Jesus Christ himself what then will be the only valid characteristic that distinguishes a true child of God from other unregenerate human beings well it's quite obvious Romans chapter eight verse fourteen as many as are led by the spirit of God how many? as many as any more than that? no any less than that? no can you remember any other verse that commences that way?

John's Gospel chapter one verse twelve as many as how many? as many as any more than that? no any less than that? no as many as John one verse twelve as many as received him to them gave he power to become sons of God even to them that believed on his name that's how you become a son of God how do you become a son of God? you receive him how do you have to receive him? as a great philosopher? as a supreme example? as a wonderful man? as a supreme teacher? no no as many as received him believing on his name what's his name?

Jesus why do they call him Jesus?

Matthew one twenty one thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins in other words there is a specific dimension in which you have got to receive him you've got to receive him believing on his name and if you believe on his name Jesus for he saves his people from their sins you simply credit him as you receive him with the office in which he came Redeemer and that's what it means to receive him believing on his name you can't receive him as a teacher Nicodemus did that but he didn't redeem him you can't receive him as an example because the life he lived will only damn you as surely as the Lord damns you because on the basis of your performance you no more fulfill the life he lived than the Lord God gave when you receive him in order to become a child of God

you have to receive him in the office in which he came behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world and as many as received him believing on his name to them gave God power to become what by nature they weren't sons of God that's how you become a Christian now you may not yet have become a Christian because as yet you may not have received him believing on his name if I were in a strange city on vacation and was wanting to buy some bread I'd find a baker and if I was in some little country district perhaps in Europe I'd see a little sign outside it's a big brass dish and Becker I if it was in Germany or Baker in England and I'd go inside and I'd say I'd like some bread and the man would say I'm sorry I don't sell bread I only sell cabbages and coal and I'd say to you but

it says Baker outside he says yes I know it says Baker outside but I only sell coal and cabbages what would you say to that man you'd say you're not as good as your name you're not faithful to your name I came in here believing on your name that's what it means if you went into the hairdressers because you saw barber outside and the man came and stuck a thing round your neck and then said which is the tooth that hurts you might be a bit alarmed and you would say I came in here to have a haircut and he'd say I'm sorry I only take teeth out but it says barber outside he says I know but I only extract teeth well you'd say you're not as good as your name you see now the wonderful thing about the Lord Jesus is that he is as good and as great as his name Jesus is the sweetest name I know and

he's just the same as his holy name that's the reason why I love him so and when you receive him believing on his name God gives you for his dear sake the right to become in other words you've gone

over the threshold you have fulfilled the first prerequisite of salvation but only the first prerequisite on the grounds of his death you have been reconciled to God but from now on what is going to be the characteristic of your life as one who has become because you are numbered amongst the as many as who have received him believing on his name what's going to be the stamp and characteristic of your daily walk the only thing that can ever add validity to your claim to have become they that are led by the spirit of God they are in the process of being the sons of God as many as received him

believing on his name to them he gives the power to become crisis but as many as are process of being daily walk one step at a time one day at a time one breath at a time as many as are led by the Holy Ghost they are being sons of God and you only have a valid claim to have become when it becomes patently obvious to everybody that you are being what you have become because everybody without dispute has to admit that you are being directed controlled educated and mastered by the Holy Spirit for to this end Christ died for you that being now risen from the dead he by the Holy Ghost might come and live in you and the presence of the Holy Spirit alone is the earnest of your inheritance he's going to ask you whether you were baptized he's going to look for your name in the Lamb's book of life

as one who as a sinner claimed redemption through the blood of the Lamb and to whom there was given life how are you given life by the presence of Christ within you who is your life in the person of his other self the Holy Ghost that's why it's called the Lamb's book of life because all who claim the atoning cleansing efficacy of the blood of the Lamb receive the Holy Ghost and by his presence share the life of Jesus Christ that's why there will be absolutely no mistakes in God's final round up because there is a double seal your name is recorded in heaven in the Lamb's book of life and your name recorded in heaven is countersigned by the Holy Spirit resident within your human spirit and if he is not there you are none of his and you can come banging on the gates of heaven saying Lord God

let me in and he will say depart from me you worthless of iniquity I never knew you oh but we've cast out devils in your name we did many wonderful works we preached in your name God doesn't recognize preachers because they're preachers he doesn't recognize deacons because they're deacons he doesn't recognize Presbyterians because they're Presbyterians or Baptists because they're Baptists God only recognizes forgiven sinners who've been washed in the blood of the Lamb and who bear the indelible stamp of the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit within their human spirits and there are tens of thousands of accredited church members who are going to discover too late that they were never regenerated they were never born again they never became the children of God and they never

were the children of God they claim to have become and there are some of you sitting right here who are kidding yourself and I hardly blame you I hardly blame you because you have been encouraged to kid yourself but God doesn't God loves you too much God cares for you too much He loved you enough to send His Son to die for you and He can't be satisfied with anything less than your redemption He can't be satisfied with anything less than your spiritual regeneration Romans chapter 8 and verse 9 You are not in the flesh spiritually destitute but you are in the spirit Here is the criteria If so be that the spirit of God dwell in you That is the criteria You are not in the flesh you are in the spirit only if the Holy Spirit of God dwells in you If continuing in verse 9 If any man have not the

spirit of Christ he is none of his Jesus Christ will disclaim such individual He can hammer as hard as he likes upon the gates of heaven but he will be disclaimed by Jesus Christ because the only reason the only reason why a person will not possess the Holy Spirit is that that person has not been redeemed and the only reason that a person has not been redeemed is that that person has never repented toward God and

has never put his trust in Jesus Christ He has never received Him believing on His name Now the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the human spirit which is God's instant God to man would response of man's man to God would repentance and man to Christ would faith That is the baptism with the Holy Spirit Because instead of being lifeless and destitute of God's presence in the

moment that you claim redemption and are forgiven for Jesus' dear sake the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence and to stamp you and to seal you as the blood-bought property of the Savior And by the presence of the Holy Spirit you possess nothing other than the very life of God By the exceeding great and precious promises you have become a partaker of the divine nature And if you don't know where that's to be found it's the fourth verse of the first chapter of the second epistle of Peter And it is the coming of the Holy Spirit who shares with you the divine nature that gives to you all that it takes to be that for which man was created The image of God And this you will find in the preceding verse of the same first chapter of 2 Peter 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3 According as His divine

power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and God-likeness through the knowledge of Him, Jesus When you really come to know Him God gives you according to His divine God source power all that pertains all that it takes for life and God-likeness It doesn't derive from your ability It is given It is yours only by virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ Himself is living today in you the life that He lived then in His own body For the Christian life is the life that He lived then in His own body lived now in your body That's what constitutes a Christian For Christianity is Christ Christ's inuity and if Christ isn't in you you're a counterfeit you're a reprobate So you can see that the Christian life is essentially an exchange life It's Christ's life instead of your life because

you have presented your body to Him with vacant possession as once He in the humanity that the Father prepared for Him fashioned in the womb of Mary presented His body to the Father with vacant possession So the Christian life is an exchange life and this is what Paul is emphasizing in the letter that he is specifically writing to a church in Galatia that is suffering from the consequences of a weak gospel Galatians 2.20 I the self that the old principle the Adamic nature the self life the I the self that sin makes of me I am crucified with Christ God has written me off for what the sin principle within me can make of me as a total loss He's identified me with His Son fit for nothing but the dung heap has buried me to His cross and in His eternal and potential purpose has buried me with

Him and intends to keep me in the place for which alone I am fit the grave I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet it is not the self that sin the old Adamic principle makes of me it is the self that Christ makes of me when my mind my emotions and my will are placed at His disposal as He indwells me by His Holy Spirit within my human spirit so I the old nature am crucified with Christ nevertheless I the new divine nature live yet not I I don't lay any claim to this life it's a God imparted life it's the life of my Saviour Jesus who not only gave Himself for me when He died but has given Himself to me when He came by the Holy Ghost to indwell my humanity the life that I now live I live by faith that invokes the activity of a second party who is the second party Jesus Christ now

alive and living in me I share His resurrection I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I Christ lives in me and the life that I now live I live by faith for every step I take for every deed I do for every decision that I make for every day that dawns I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me so to me to live is Christ it's just as simple as that and this kind of experience begins when you're baptized with the Holy Ghost you are baptized into the body and this is what happened at Pentecost so that Peter without any challenge to his sincerity to his willingness to sacrifice for he had forsaken all

he'd left his home he'd left his family he was prepared to be separated from his wife he'd left his boats he'd left his nets he'd given everything he

knew to Jesus Christ and yet for three years in spite of Christ's teachings and in spite of Christ's example he was nothing but an abject downright failure and at the jibe of a servant girl denied Christ to his face and cursed to reinforce his betrayal now I want to ask you something at any given moment in those three years if there had been a challenge to dedication how many do you think of the apostles who would have been out the front every one of them and there wasn't one regenerate one amongst them at that stage of their discipleship in other words in the hypothetical event of their dying before the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead I believe they would have been saved they would have been numbered amongst the Old Testament saints just like John the Baptist but John the Baptist of

whom there was no greater prophet in the Old Testament would be the least and the least in the kingdom greater than he because John the Baptist was never to know on earth that indwelling of the life of Christ which is the privilege of the new church born at Pentecost you could have challenged any one of those apostles on grounds of determination on grounds of dedication on grounds of enthusiasm you could have challenged any one of them to give themselves to be a preacher how many of them would have volunteered every single one of them and without exception they would all have run away again and left Christ to die alone neither wanting his cross nor believing in his resurrection and yet every one of them dedicated to the task of the ministry it's possible for you and me with the utmost

dedication and with complete sincerity and with as much zeal as the Jews themselves to practice religion including the Christian faith without having any real spiritual content to what we profess to believe now the Lord Jesus knew this and that's why he was patient he said to Peter I've prayed for you so that when you are converted because you're not converted yet when you are converted you can strengthen the brethren this was the Lord Jesus talking to the apostle Peter he says when you're converted you'll be able to strengthen the brethren Peter wasn't converted because Peter had never become convinced of his own spiritual bankruptcy he still insisted that he was the man who could though all men forsake you said he to the Lord Jesus I'm the man who won if there's one man that you can

count on it's Peter that's my name P-E-T-E-R got it and Jesus Christ was totally unimpressed he says before the cock is crowned twice you will have denied me three times because you have not yet discovered yourself in all your abject poverty an utter and total and downright bankruptcy and it was only out of the bitterness of self discovery when he went out and wept bitterly that Peter began to graduate now on the day of Pentecost the Lord Jesus came in the person of the Holy Spirit he indwelt the humanity of these 120 men and women and the same Peter who'd cursed and sworn and denied Jesus Christ these same people who'd ridiculed the women as being hysterical and had denied and repudiated the testimony of the two and refused to believe them who when Jesus appeared thought he was a ghost

rather than believe that he had fulfilled his promise this same Peter stood up and on the day of Pentecost preached with such power such clarity such understanding and with such incision that men and women cried around him sirs what shall we do and 3000 were converted to God and 3000 other men and women and boys and girls in claiming Christ as Redeemer in publicly acclaiming him as their Lord received the Holy Ghost and the body of Jesus Christ instead of having 120 members in particular now had 3,120 members and this was the church the church of Jesus Christ and there was added daily to the church such as should be said and this was the description given by the church in the early days of a convert nobody was invited to join an organisation they were invited to be added to the Lord this

is how they described a convert do you remember we cited yesterday from the 5th chapter the Acts of the Apostles you turn again to the 5th chapter verse 12 Acts 5 by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch and of the rest durst no man join himself to them I like that of the rest durst no man join himself to them in the early days of the church it was so patently obvious what was involved in becoming a Christian that nobody dared under any circumstance dared to pretend that they were Christians the Apostles made it abundantly clear and it was demonstrated by the quality of the lives that they lived that if a boy or a girl or a man or a woman were to claim redemption through the blood of Jesus it

meant nothing more or less than from that moment they became totally available to the indwelling presence of the risen Lord and body, soul, spirit mind, emotion and will hands and feet money and all that they had gift or talent was automatically and without challenge at the disposal of Jesus Christ that's what it meant to be a Christian and that was normality that was pure normality these were the normal basic terms of reference and for this good reason nobody who wasn't prepared to mean business in coming to Jesus Christ and wasn't prepared to honour him as Lord nobody dared join himself to them because they would have been ripped apart and the mask would have been torn from their face within a matter of minutes is that the kind of gospel we preach today do we make it really

difficult for people to call themselves Christians I mean on God's terms of reference that isn't the emphasis today the emphasis is get them in at all costs increase the score make it as shallow and cheap and weak as we can so long as we get by and enhance their reputation believers verse 14 real believers what was the characteristic of a real believer believers were the more added to whom the Lord that's who they were added to they were added to the Lord multitudes both of men and women but everybody who openly confessed to become a believer knew that they were being added to the Lord this was always the description that they used if you look in the 11th chapter of the Acts when the mighty spiritual awakening took place amongst the Gentiles to the surprise of the Jews Barnabas was sent

who when he came verse 23 and had seen the grace of God was glad and exalted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord for he was a good man he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith and much people was added where unto the Lord the preoccupation of the early church was that boys and girls and men and women might be added to the Lord there was no partisanship there was no come and sit on my chair their primary task was the evangelization the evangelization of the total world by the total impact of the total church added to the Lord and they were excited when a boy was genuinely converted to God put his faith in living belief in Jesus Christ they said the Lord Jesus has got another pair of hands the Lord Jesus has got another mouth to speak with the Lord Jesus

has got two more eyes to see with he's got another couple of ears to hear with he's got two more feet to walk with here's a boy he's been added to the Lord he's sealed by the presence of the Holy Spirit of the blood-bought poverty of our glorious and risen and living and reigning redeemer and they were called converts where did the rock set in precisely at this point precisely at this point because the moment the early church departed from the principle that a boy or a girl or a man or a woman of any nationality creed or color cleansed in the blood of Jesus was added as an individual member by baptism with the Holy Ghost into the body corporate of the redeemed church the moment they departed from their principle that's when things went wrong this was the first mark of carnality in the

early church and it divided itself basically into two categories and the first category you'll find in the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians and the third chapter and I'll be as hasty as I can but we need just to see

these two categories that we might get a true, valid panoramic view of the situation Paul writing to the epistle in the epistle to the Corinthians and incidentally as I reminded some of you at lunchtime he was writing to that church which above all the others prided themselves on their spirituality because they were the loudest in the practice of certain charismatic gifts and yet it was to this particular church that Paul has to write I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spirit I could only speak unto you as unto carnal still dominated by the flesh which is

hostile to God and is not subject to the law of God I fed you with milk not with meat for hitherto you were not able to bear it neither yet now are you able you are yet carnal you're fleshly your baby's in Christ you've been regenerate you are born again you have received Christ as your redeemer but you haven't yet grown up for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions are you not carnal and walk as men that simply means that your behaviour patterns are characteristic not of the redeemed led by the Holy Ghost your behaviour patterns are characteristic of an unregenerate world within the church community you're playing party politics within the church community you are idolising the personality cult within the church community you have become partisan and denominational

for while one said verse 4 I am of Paul and another I am of Apollos are you not carnal isn't this a mark of your carnality so what was the first evidence of carnality in the early church that they departed from the principle that a man redeemed in the blood of Jesus and genuinely converted to God is added to the Lord instead they substituted that a man converted was added to a man I am of Paul I am of Apollos I am of Cephas and of course this is a mark of carnality that has been perpetuated all down the history of Christendom I am of Luther I am of Calvin I am of Hux I am of Swingley I am of Mennon I am of Derby we're Lutherans we're Calvinists we're Wesleyans we're Derbyists or anything else you like you might even be a southern bat and this is a mark of carnality this isn't a mark of

spirituality this is a mark of carnality brother while one says I am of Paul and another I am of Apollos are you not carnal? who then is Paul? who is Apollos? we are servants only we are ministers by whom you believed even as the Lord gave to every man we gave you nothing if you've received anything what is valid if you've received anything which will last for eternity it's only that which God has given you we gave you nothing we simply introduced you to the principle of faith whereby you have invoked the activity of God's own redemptive and regenerative work I planted Apollos watered that's all we did who gave the increase?

God so then verse 7 notice this very carefully neither is he that planteth anything and understood neither he that watereth anything would you tell me this if a man is not anything what is he? nothing that's all he is neither is he that planteth anything and if he is not anything he can only be nothing and that's all you are and that's all that I am and my sole office if I am to be faithful in the discharge of my responsibilities this week is to be nothing simply a mouthpiece and if anything is to be given to you this week that is valid for eternity I don't have it only God God gives the increase and he that planteth and he that watereth are one now that was the first mark of carnality the adding of men to men and it was apostolically repudiated for they that planted them and they that

watered them were one I and my brother Apollos I and my brother Peter we are one we are only servants God is the only person who quickens the dead he is the only person who can replace death with life now what was the second category as opposed to these who added men to men instead of to the Lord you will find recorded in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles those who added men to movements certain men verse 1 of chapter 15 of the Acts certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and

said except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses you cannot be saved no matter what you believe about Jesus no matter how you may have put your trust in him even though you have received him believing on his name unless you have told the party line and you have submitted yourself

to those demands that we ecclesiastically make upon you to make you acceptable within our particular religious community you cannot be saved we don't recognize do you know anything about that and this was the first major crisis in the Christian church when therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem and to the apostles and elders about this question are we commissioned by God in the preaching of the gospel to add men to men men to movements or men to the law and this was the first crisis conference that was held in the city of Jerusalem under the chairmanship of James and when they were come to Jerusalem verse 4 they were received of the church and of the apostles

and elders and they declared all things that God had done with them but there arose certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed they were believing Pharisees that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses in other words although they professed to be believers themselves they were jealous of their party machine they were anxious that the free invitation of God through Jesus to be reconciled to himself and share the resurrection life of Jesus Christ was going to be bad for their own particular business and so they added to the gospel as some detract from the gospel so others add their traditions and make it a close shop and when they had been much disputing verse 7 Peter rose up and said unto them men and brethren you know how that a good while

ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe now you know the instant to which he is making reference Peter is here making reference to the conversion of Cornelius the first Gentile convert a good man who needed to be saved a good man whose goodness couldn't save him but a good man whose goodness God did not despise for God never despises goodness even in the unregenerate don't kid yourself on that sometimes we talk about good works as though God hated good works God does not hate good works unless we deliberately once enlighten substitute good works for Christ's work but those who are ignorant of Christ's work are honored in the good works that they do in their ignorance because all too often it is the symbol and symptom of a

questing and a seeking soul and we know that God's angel visited Cornelius and he said your arms your good works and your prayers in your unbelief not knowing Jesus have been brought up before God and are held as a memorial in his presence and because he knows by this evidence that you are a seeking soul I want you to go said the angel and call a certain man by the name of Peter and he will tell you what you ought to do God knows you want to be saved God knows you want your sins forgiven God knows you're trying to find peace with God your maker but you're going about it the wrong way Cornelius God doesn't despise you for that you've been doing it in your ignorance but God says if a man seeks he'll find so send for Peter and he will tell you what you ought to do and you remember that when

Peter came he preached Jesus crucified and risen and that there would be forgiveness of sins for all who repenting would believe on his name do you remember and Peter goes on at this conference and says verse 8 God which knoweth the heart bear them witness giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us he put no difference between us and them he purified their hearts by faith God honoured those who believed and personal relationship that had been entered into on the part of Cornelius his family and his servants and his friends and God recognized the faith relationship that embraced God's grace that invoked his redemptive and regenerative activity and on the basis of that faith relationship neither circumcised nor

baptized God gave them the Holy Ghost whose presence is the criterion of

believing we believe verse 11 that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they and in summarizing the event in the 11th chapter on his return to Jerusalem where those of the believing circumcision contended with him because he a Jew had dared to go into the house of a Gentile dog Peter described it this way Acts 11 as I began to speak verse 15 the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us when at the beginning and we on the day of Pentecost were baptized into the body of Christ by the presence of the Holy Ghost within us sealing us as forgiven sinners so as on us at the beginning God the Holy Ghost came on him and remembering the word of the Lord how that he said John indeed baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost for as much then as God gave

them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ what was I the condition that I could withstand God so we understand from Peter's statement here that the condition was believing on the Lord Jesus Christ that the result was the gift of the Holy Ghost and this he equated with what the Lord Jesus had promised as the baptism of the Holy Ghost and when they had heard these things verse 18 they held their peace and they glorified God saying then hath God also to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews granted repentance under what? life repentance under life this is the gospel that we have to preach men and women it's repentance under life we preach repentance toward God faith in the Lord Jesus as redeemer that we might receive life whose life? his life by the presence of

his Holy Spirit to whom we gladly now yield the totality of our being body soul and spirit to become a body holy filled and flooded with the Holy Ghost and only the presence of the Holy Spirit and only as we walk in the Spirit are educated directed controlled monopolies dominated by the Holy Ghost do we bear the characteristics of our sonship and nothing less than this will do and if you are not being directed by the Holy Spirit and if it isn't patently obvious to your own children in your own home and your workmates at the factory bench or your colleagues down in the city block if it isn't patently obvious to the neighbors across your garden wall that your life is being directed and dominated by God the Holy Spirit you should tonight have severe doubts as to your redemption you should

begin to ask yourself have I ever truly become because if I'm not being what I have professed to have become it is doubtful whether I ever wanted to become what I wasn't prepared to be this is gospel this isn't deeper life this isn't convention this isn't luxury this isn't an option this is normality this is the gospel that was preached by the early church and because of the strength of their gospel they evangelized the then known world in one generation and changed the face of nations and for generation after generation though they were thrown to the crocodile burnt at the stake the torch of faith has been handed down to you and to me in our day and generation I want to know how many boys and girls who profess faith in Jesus Christ who have been converted on the basis of a weak gospel

today would throw themselves into the mouths of lions God help us when the testing time comes unless you and I are prepared to get back to first base and embrace the whole counsel of God and stop playing church and become Christian God has commissioned to become totally expended in these last dangerous hours of a period of we don't have time to play the fool and to pretend years ago on the coast of Britain a coast guard recognized the distress signal of a sinking ship in a violent storm and as the emergency was signaled to the coast guards they turned out and the team went down and they got the boat down to the water's edge and in the crew there was a boy who had been just joined the crew this was his first call and in the darkness as he heard the howl of the wind and the thunderous noise

of the waves as they beat down upon the shingled shore his heart sank and in terror he gripped the arm of the old bus and he said sir we can't go out in this we can't we can't go out in this we'll never come back and the old man veteran came out of many such an emergency with his gnarled hands his rugged but kindly face put his great arm round the kid's shoulders and pointing out into the darkness he said son out there men have perished the call has come we must go out we don't have to come back that's not our business our business is to answer the call bow our heads in prayer Amen I want you to think in the presence of God in the presence of Christ what's the quality of your Christian life if the criterion is that in every area of your being and every strata of your life business home

recreational money time thoughts ambitions if the criterion is that you are being constantly directed controlled dominated mastered by the Holy Ghost are you a child of God or is it all a fairy story a make-believe a thin veneer an evangelical crust if you want reality stark naked reality to become totally expendable for God to recognize his call and to go out into the dark places of the earth you tell him sir just tell him sir don't promise him anything you wouldn't trust your own promise because you know your own heart too well too well just tell him sir tell him to begin a mighty work in your own heart but out of the bitterness of self-discovery you might graduate into that fullness of life which God imparts to those who become expendable to God we don't have to come back that's not

our business our business is to answer the call Lord Jesus thank you for the cross and you've told us and we've told you That unless we're prepared to make that cross our cross, forsaking all that we are, we cannot be your disciples.

Some of us tonight, Lord Jesus, want to be your disciples, desperately. We're just trusting you to make it real in our experience.

Do what you need to do to put us in the place where you want us. We ask it for your name's sake. Amen.

Would you take your hymnals, and we're going to turn to number 231 as our closing hymn. There'll be no invitation in the popularly accepted sense. You've already had it, and God calls upon each one of us to do stern business by your bedside.

There are some folk for whom the moral issues of this week are going to have radical consequences, revolutionary consequences. God changed your destination some time ago when you were converted. God's just about to change your destiny.

That's why you can't do this in a flash. It's not the impulse of a moment. It's not some emotional response.

This is calculated to make you totally expendable for God. If you really embrace all that Christ is, monopolizing your being, that's the most dangerous thing you could do in terms of your own human ambition, and all the preconceived notions that you may have for life. Some of you fellows and girls, you may be at college.

For all you know, the moment you give Jesus Christ right away in your life, he's going to cancel out everything that you ever envisaged for the future. That's why I'm not going to ask you to enter into this kind of covenant with Jesus Christ lightly. I know what it meant for me.

It'll certainly mean no less for you. Let's make this the language of our heart as we close with this song. Then we shall pronounce the benediction and we'll go home.

But as morning by morning, night by night, as God enables me, make known to you God's terms of reference for normal Christian living, before the end of this week, I'm going to ask you, having entered in the silence of your own heart into some new covenant with Jesus Christ that allows him as God to be God in terms of your humanity, I am going to give you, before we finish, the opportunity to bear glad, hilarious testimony to the fact. But I want you to face the issue before then. I don't want you to wait till then to face the issue.

The invitation that I shall give at the end of this week will be to those who have entered into this relationship and just can't hold back. They're just so excited about the prospects that you want the opportunity to bear a testament of the fact that you've become wholly expendable for God. And the future's going to be as exciting as God himself.

Oh love, oh love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee, I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. Oh cross, that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust, life's glory dead.

And from the ground, the place of my burial, there blossoms red, life, your life, eternal life, God's life, that shall endless be. And thy grace, Lord Jesus, greater than all my sin, thy constraining love, dear heavenly Father, the indwelling power and presence of God, the Holy Spirit, be our abiding portion now and always until we see the Saviour, unashamed, at his appearing, face to face, and seeing him like him, forever, with the Lord, amen.

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