

# God's Message to Dead Men

by Major Ian Thomas

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*The gospel is an offer of life, which is restored to spiritually dead men through the death and resurrection of Christ.*

**Duration:** 58:21

**Scripture:** John 3:16, Romans 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 1:27, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 5:12

**Topics:** "Salvation", "Spiritual Life"

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## Description

Major Ian Thomas delivers a powerful sermon titled 'God's Message to Dead Men,' emphasizing that all humanity is spiritually dead due to Adam's sin, and that Christ's death was necessary to restore life to those who accept Him. He explains that the gospel is not merely about forgiveness but about receiving the very life of Christ through the Holy Spirit, transforming believers from death to life. Thomas highlights the importance of recognizing our spiritual condition and the necessity of faith in Christ for true salvation, illustrating this with the story of Cornelius, a good man who needed to be saved. The sermon calls for self-examination and a genuine relationship with Christ, urging listeners to embrace the life that comes from Him.

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## Transcript

Yesterday evening in our consideration, we saw that all are not dead because Christ has died. In this particular context, though that in one sense is true, but in this particular context, in this passage, Christ died because all were dead. Because all that man is by nature and because all that man does by nature in his fallen condition is worth no more than the sentence of death imposed upon the Lord Jesus who took our place in our guilt.

We saw how that because of Adam's sin, man had become totally destitute of divine life, totally destitute of spiritual life, totally destitute of that quality of life which in the Bible is always described as eternal, everlasting life. That by nature, born of the fallen seed of a fallen Adam, we are spiritually dead. And because of that fact, the Lord Jesus, in the beginning with God and who was God and by whom all things were made, came to this earth in the fulfillment of a plan which had been agreed upon as between himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the triune deity, for forever the world was.

And he became man in utter absolute sinlessness and accepted in his person all that man by virtue of what he by nature is and by nature does deserves death. And because of his substitutionary vicarious and

atoning death, on those grounds alone, God in righteousness and without doing violence to his righteousness, is able to restore to repenting men and women and boys and girls who humbly accept the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. God is able to restore to such a quality of life that was forfeited by Adam in his sin.

And that this ultimately is the purpose of God in the preaching of the gospel. That the good news is God's message to dead men, physically alive, soulishly active, but spiritually dead. God's message in the gospel to you and to me, in our natural, fallen, degenerate, unregenerate condition, is that he is prepared to restore to us life.

And that's why of course it goes on to say in this fifteenth verse of the chapter that we've read, he died for all who were all dead, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for him. So that all those who live, in other words, so that all those who have been lifted out of this state of death, to whom life has been restored, might behave according to an entirely new principle of life. So you see in the fourteenth verse, a universal condition of all men everywhere, dead, by nature, by natural birth.

This is what Mr. Kirkby referred to yesterday afternoon as being in Adam. You and I are born by our physical, natural birth of our physical, natural parents in this particular condition, in Adam. And in Adam all died.

In Adam all forfeited God. In Adam all became empty of that divine content which alone enables man to behave as man, as opposed to behaving as an animal. God's own greatest presence.

But verse fifteen tells us of those who live. Verse fourteen speaks of all men everywhere. Verse fifteen speaks of those who by faith have appropriated the consequence of Christ's atoning death.

That those who live, who were dead but who have been made alive again, might live in an entirely new quality of life that is God-given, God-breathed, God-restored. And that is what Mr. Kirkby meant when he said that we could be in Christ. All born in Adam, by faith we may be lifted out of Adam into Christ.

Of course, this is what Paul refers to in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the verse forty-five. And so it is written, the first man, Adam, was made a living soul, and he died. And all succeeding generations of men have been dead in Adam, spiritually destitute and alienated from the light of God.

But the last Adam, a title given to the Lord Jesus, the perfect man, the word incarnate, who came to walk and live on this earth for thirty-three years and demonstrate all that man was intended by God to be, behaving, playing the role of man in perfection, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit, one who brought to life, who raised the dead. The first man, verse forty-seven, is of the earth earthy. The second man, the last Adam, is the Lord from heaven.

And the Lord Jesus, the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, came into this world to raise the dead as a quickening spirit, one by whose obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, whose substitutionary and atoning death would make it possible for a holy God to restore life to those who obeyed the gospel, would receive what guilty men do not deserve, but what grace gives guilty men the right to have, forgiveness. Now this is the nature of the gospel, and you will see at once that the gospel is an offer of life. It isn't even just an offer of forgiveness.

It's an offer of life, for which forgiveness is necessary. But forgiveness is not the end, forgiveness is the means to the end. The end is life, the means is forgiveness.

So the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was the means, the re-impacting of his presence by the Holy Ghost is the end. And it's very important that we should understand that, because there are all too many who confuse the means for the end, and think that all that the Lord Jesus did when he died historically, 1900 years ago, was to make it possible for a holy God to forgive, but that would be a very inadequate salvation. It is gloriously true that because he died 1900 years ago historically, there was executed in his sinless person all your sinfulness and mine.

All our guilt was atoned for in his one sacrifice, but that was not the end, that was the means. By means of his atoning death, you and I may become the recipients of his resurrection life. The life that he lived in his sinlessness qualified him for the death that he died, for by virtue of his sinlessness there could be imputed or credited to him our sinfulness.

So the life he lived qualified him for the death he died, and that of course is why he was born miraculously, to come into this world uninhabited by sin as you and I are inhabited by sin, and to be inhabited only by God, as you and I by natural birth are not inhabited by God. And for 33 years he lived the kind of life that qualified him for the kind of death, an atoning, saving, reconciling death, where he took your place and mine. Because the sinless savior died, my sinful soul is counted free, and God the justice satisfied to look on him condemned, and pardon me.

This is the language of forgiveness. He knew how wicked man had been, he knew that God must punish sin. So out of pity Jesus said, I'll bear the punishment instead.

The life he lived qualified him for the death he died, so that we might have forgiveness. But listen, the death he died, that we might have forgiveness, qualifies you and me to receive the life he lived. That's the gospel.

The life he lived qualified him for the death he died, but the death he died qualifies us, as forgiven sinners, to become the recipients, to receive the life he lived. And the moment you and I, by obedience to the gospel, in repentance to God, in repudiating our pig-headed self-will and independence, the moment we repent and say, God, I need you, and I want to get back to you, and I know that sin separates me from you, but your son died for me to remove my sin and to cleanse me with his own precious blood, and I'm coming back the way that you have provided in him. In that moment of time, you become accepted in the beloved, there is credited to you the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, you are found and accepted in him, in the rock of ages, blessed for you and for me.

And in that moment of reconciliation, there is re-impacted to you by the gift of his Holy Spirit, the very resurrection life of the one who died for and rose again for you and for me. That's why if you turn to Romans chapter 5 and verse 10, a verse from which I can never stray for long, as some of you may have discovered, we have the whole fullness of God's redemptive purpose and regenerative plan in a nutshell. Romans 5 and verse 10.

If when we were enemies, and our condition by nature as enemies in Adam was a condition of death, lifelessness, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, something infinitely more than the means used, this is the end desire, we shall be saved by his life. Now isn't that wonderful? If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more being reconciled, we shall now be saved by his life. It is the re-impacted life of the Lord Jesus, inhabiting your humanity.

It is this life that saves you, because this is the true life of a true Christian. And the life of a true Christian is simply the life of a normal human being. For God's redemptive purpose was to restore fallen man to normality, to make man, man again, as God intended man to be, the human vehicle of the divine life.

So the whole redemptive purpose of God in a crucified Redeemer was that he in the power of his resurrection might come and re-inhabit the redeemed humanity for which his blood was shed. So to receive salvation is not simply to receive forgiveness because he died historically in the past. To receive salvation is to receive the risen Christ to dwell within you and live his life through you, to behave, in other words, in terms of your human personality, so that all he is is displayed to the world in terms of your conduct and character.

It is to receive him, made possible only by virtue of the fact that his death has cleansed you from your guilt and reconciled you to God. Reconciled by his death, you are now to be saved as a continuing process by his life, by his gracious presence within you. This is the wonderful good news that God brings to us and which has been consummated in his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Ephesian epistle in the second chapter and reading from the Amplified New Testament, we read this, verse one of chapter two, you he made alive when you were dead, slain by your own trespasses and sins. Verse five, even when we were dead in Adam, slain by our own shortcomings and trespasses, he made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ. He gave us the very life of Christ himself, the same new life with which he quickened him.

Now that is what happens when a boy or a girl or a man or a woman convicted by the Holy Spirit awakened to the fact that they are spiritually dead, repents of their condition, turns in childlike faith to the Lord Jesus and says, I may not understand how it happened, but I thank you for dying for me. Cleanse me now through your precious blood and come yourself and live within me by your Holy Spirit. For it is in the person of the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus presences himself within you.

The Holy Spirit dwelling within you is Christ dwelling within you, for he is the Spirit of Christ. And that is why the stamp of genuineness, the hallmark of a born-again Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit within the human spirit, crediting the forgiven sinner with nothing less than the life of Christ, the very divine nature of God himself. That's why in the same epistle, the Ephesian epistle, and in the first chapter, and in the thirteenth verse we read, in him you also who have heard the word of truth, the glad tidings of your salvation, and have believed and adhered to and have relied on him, was stamped with the seal of the long-promised Holy Spirit.

That Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, the first fruit, the pledge, the foretaste, the down payment on our heritage, in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring complete possession to the praise of his glory. The moment you obey the gospel and put your faith in Christ, you are sealed, stamped, guaranteed as the blood-bought possession of Jesus Christ by his presence within you in the person of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this is the hallmark, this is the stamp of genuineness that must be sought as we examine our own hearts to know whether we are in the faith.

Turn with me again to the second epistle to the Corinthians and the very last chapter, and having written these two epistles to the Corinthian church and having given them much instruction, not to say rebuke, Paul the apostle now sets them an examination. That's quite a normal procedure. When instruction has been given, we anticipate that an examination will be set, and everybody always looks eagerly forward towards the examination.

Every schoolboy looks with eager anticipation and obvious enthusiasm to the end of terms, or the end of his school year. Now he's just on tiptoe for the examination, isn't that right? Well here it is, after the two epistles, verse 5, examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves.

You've had much instruction, and being a good scholar it may well be that you have memorized everything that I ever said to you. It might well be that you are confident to answer correctly every question that I might pose. But he says, examine yourself whether you be in the faith, and remember what faith involves, as we discussed faith last evening.

It isn't just believing facts. Faith involves a dependence that gives itself expression in obedience. Faith is always active.

That's why you can never have faith in a chair standing up. I can believe that it's a chair standing up, but I can't have faith in a chair standing up. You may instruct me as to the purpose for which a chair was made.

I might have come from England or somewhere where we don't have chairs. And you demonstrate the thing to me. That's to keep you awake.

So we are given to understand. It has four legs and a back and a seat. Now I know all the theory of a chair and the purpose which it was designed, and I believe you.

I give complete mental intellectual credence to everything you say, but I still don't have. In order to have faith in that chair, I've got to do something more than believe academically. In order to have faith in that chair, I now have to go to that chair and sit in it.

And if I have complete faith, then I take my feet off the ground. And now I'm totally, and I'm putting to the absolute test the validity of what you have claimed about that chair. Now that's the nature of faith.

And that is why it's so possible for you to be Christianized without being Christian. And maybe without any deliberate intention of being less than a Christian. So Paul says, examine yourself, lest you've been confused by knowledge that hasn't been translated into experience.

Know ye not your own selves, verse five, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobate, a word that simply means counterfeit, tested and rejected. Know ye not your own selves, not how that Jesus Christ was crucified for you, not how that he was incarnate word that came into this world on that first Christmas day and lived a sinless life and died a vicarious death and rose again from the dead and ascended to be with the father and share his glory again as he always had from the foundation of the world. These things you know in your mind, but he says, if you're in the faith, you know something more than that.

You know that the Jesus Christ who was born, if you're in the faith, in other words, that you have become a partaker of his divine nature, that your humanity has become a habitation of this God, Jesus Christ, by his spirit, that your body is now a temple of the living God, that you have been added to the Lord, that you have been baptized by the receiving of his spirit into body membership, that you are now a member of the ecclesia, you've been added to the body corporate of which he is the head and the life content and he now has the right himself in terms of all that you are to behave in the world in which you live with your two feet still firmly on the ground, not in heaven yet, but on earth. You have been raised from the dead. How did the Lord Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead physically? By re-impacting to him that which he had lost, physical life.

And the man whom they had buried because he no longer had physical life, and who after four days they said stank, to him the Lord Jesus restored physical life. And by restoring life to the lifeless, he was physically raised from the dead. And don't you see that by the restoration of the presence of the Lord Jesus to you, by the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling your human spirit and seeking to re-invade your soul to re-establish the Christ rule within the area of your total personality so that your whole humanity becomes available to God, by this process you too are life imparted to the lifeless.

This is what in the Bible is called being born again, the spiritual regeneration which is the renewing of the Holy Spirit. And Titus reminds us in verse five of the third chapter of Paul's epistle to Titus, not by any works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, new birth, a second birth, the renewing of the Holy Ghost whom God sheds abroad upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because the death he died as our Savior qualifies us to receive the life he lived as our Lord.

So it's incumbent upon me essentially tonight to ask you the question that Paul asked these Corinthians, he asked them to examine themselves whether they were in the faith. And this evening meeting is especially designed to help some who are not completely certain about their position in the Lord Jesus. You see the fact that you may be a reprobate, it sounds rather an ugly word, the fact that you tonight sitting here in this Katoomba convention may be within your own family circle, side by side with genuinely converted parents or brothers and sisters, or alongside some friend of yours whom you have accompanied here, maybe just up for the day, the fact that you are a reprobate, the fact that you are a counterfeit, who were you to be examined not by your own heart but by God himself at this moment, would inevitably be rejected because there's no spiritual content to you, because Jesus Christ does not yet live within you, that fact in itself does not mean that you're a hypocrite.

It doesn't mean that you're bad and hostile and deliberately repudiating God's word to your heart. It doesn't mean that at all. It could mean that, but it does not of necessity mean that.

Indeed I would be extremely surprised tonight if there were anybody sitting in this gathering who was hostile. I can't think why you would come if you were hostile. I can imagine lots of other places you could go to tonight if you were hostile to God and hostile to the gospel and hostile, but I can't see why you would come here tonight.

No, there are many who are not in the faith, in whom the Lord Jesus Christ does not yet live, and yet they are genuinely seeking after righteousness and genuinely seeking after God. But this wonderful miracle hasn't happened yet, and I think that it's far more likely that you're in that category if you're not yet truly born of God. I think that's why you're here.

In other words, using the term in its comparative sense, it's very possible for you to be a very good person and yet not to be saved. And by way of illustration, I want you to turn with me to the Acts of the Apostles and the 10th chapter and examine just such a case. A good man, a very good man, in the comparative sense of the term, in its human context, a good man who desperately needed to be saved.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, and this is how he is described. A devout man, one that feared God. Not only so, but his fear of God was so patently genuine, so obviously real, so convincing, that he feared God with all his heart.

Now that says a lot for a man. When a man's devotion to God is of such a genuine character that his own children subscribe, that tells me a whole lot about the character of that man. There's nothing that grieves me more than to see the children of converted parents growing up indifferent to the things of Christ, and sometimes hostile.

It wasn't so in this man's case. With all his house, and from the context we may also understand that there were those of his household servants, some of the soldiers who were under his command, who had been equally impressed. He was a devout man, he was one that feared God with all his house, he gave much alms to the people, he recognized need and want where he founded and took such means as were within his material power to put it, and he prayed to God always.

Was he a good man? Well, I think he would pass muster. I think this man could have slipped into this convention and we might all well have accepted him, by virtue of the reputation that he had earned, by his devotion to God, by his practice of religion in its truest sense, and by the wholesome, healthy, invigorating influence that he had upon his own family and upon those of his own household. I think that if he had had the opportunity as so many of us have had since our earliest days to learn the language of the saints, he could have come and spoken it, and prayed it and sung it, and nobody would have doubted for one moment, but that this Cornelius, but he wasn't, he wasn't saved.

God recognized that he was a man who was genuinely seeking to be saved. He wanted with all his heart to be at peace with God. A God whom, till then, he had never come to know in any real personal sense, and yet a God whom he worshipped with genuine devotion.

And God says, I'm not going to despise you, Cornelius, for your ignorance. If a man seek, he shall find. Now send for Peter.

Here's his address. And when he comes, he'll tell you what you ought to do to be saved. Now isn't that simple? And isn't that wonderful? The Lord Jesus gave this pledge that if a man seek, he'll find.

Now just imagine that God looks down from heaven, and he sees you sitting in this building tonight. You've been a faithful, loyal churchgoer. You have subscribed to the Christian creed.

You've recited it without hypocrisy, Sunday by Sunday. Insofar as it's been within your capacity, you have sought to do good. You've wanted to be saved.

You've wanted to know God. You've wanted to be acceptable by God. You have a personal affection, maybe in love and admiration for Jesus Christ.

And yet God sees deep down in your heart that the miracle has not yet taken place, whereby the Lord Jesus has been enabled on the grounds of redemption to come and take up. Now what will God do? Well, I want to say this. With the utmost conviction, God will not despise all your sincere endeavours of the past.

He does not despise your ignorance, but he will take every measure necessary to make it quite certain that you know how to be saved. And that may well be just precisely why you're here tonight, by divine appointment. It's a very thrilling and a wonderful process.

I never cease to thrill at this, that if God looks down from heaven anywhere at any time, under any circumstances, however unlikely, into the heart of a boy or a girl or a man or a woman And I want you to know and understand this, Christian friend, that to you and to me has been given the priceless privilege of

being mobile for God. Let this be a word to you who are already redeemed and whose humanity has already come to be inhabited by the Lord Jesus, now directed by his Holy Spirit as the hallmark of your sonship. You are to be available to him day and night.

Of the seeking soul. Now isn't that a priceless privilege? And this of course is the secret of soul winning. Simply being available to the Holy Spirit to be brought into contact with those whose hearts God knows are as genuinely questing as was the heart of Cornelius.

I can remember, told some of you this down in Sydney, driving along an outer barn in Germany and I saw a boy of 17 years of age about standing on the side of the motor road trying to hitchhike back north up to Hamburg. And I passed him because the car was so full. Having a number of passengers, my wife and her baggage.

And for that reason I thought, well now, don't squeeze anybody else in. The springs already were in reverse. But about 300 yards beyond, something inside said, go back and I'm so thankful to God for the obedience that was granted to me then to that tiny voice that always rebukes me for the occasions, the multitude of occasions when I've probably been too stupid, too dumb, too lazy, too idle or too busy to hear that voice.

But that occasion I did hear it and I did obey it and I went back. And I picked him up and that very evening he received the Lord Jesus. That was eight or nine years ago.

He's on our evangelistic staff today in Germany. Has been my German assistant for the last three years in our conference grounds in England. But that always thrills me.

Here's a boy standing on the road and God looks down into his heart. A boy who sees. He told me when he stepped into the car, I belong to a Lutheran church on the outskirts of Hamburg in Großglockenbeck.

I belong to the Evangelische Jugend, which is the youth organization of the Lutheran church. But he said, I don't know God and I don't know Jesus Christ. I ask questions and I get a cold, complicated, philosophical, theological, impersonal answer and it doesn't mean a thing to me.

And then rather wisely and quietly he said, I'd like to be a Christian. Long before he had ever said that to me, he'd said it in his heart. And when God looked down and saw him standing on the side of the road, you know what he did? He watched all the cars going by.

That's a fact. I don't know whether mine was the first that had a Christian in, but the moment he saw my car which had a Christian in, he said, stop! Pick him up. The eunuch in the desert, except that it wasn't the eunuch that was hitchhiking, it was Philip, that you're here today.

Maybe everybody till now has thought you were a Christian. Or maybe if they've had their doubts, you thought you were a Christian. And God hasn't despised you.

He's brought you here. He didn't send me to you, but he's brought you here this time. In this particular instance, Peter had to come to Cornelius.

And God gave him Peter's address. I wonder if God knows your address. It's a wonderful thing when God has you on his register, as those whom he can trust, to be dispatched at any time, day or night, under any circumstances, to make the truth known to the seeking soul.

And you'll remember how as God revealed himself in this way to Cornelius, and gave him his instructions to send for Peter, at the same time God was revealing his purpose to Peter as he was there on the roof, and feeling a bit peckish, he had asked them to get a meal ready down below, and while he was waiting, he fell into a trance, and here the sheep came three times, as was read to us in the passage from the 11th chapter, and there were the unclean beasts, ceremonially unclean to a Jew, and God said, Arise, Peter, slay and eat, and Peter said, Not so, Lord, I've never... There's no room, Peter, for religious prejudice, and there's no room for national pride. And after the third time, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there, and while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, get thee down, go with them, doubting nothing.

I sent them. Who was directing Peter's behavior? The Holy Spirit, for they that are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. If you want to recognize a genuine child of God, it's a man, woman, boy, or girl, whose life is disciplined by the Holy Ghost.

Discipleship, disciplinship, enables you to behave in harmony with his purposes. And Peter, filled with the Spirit, was available, and you remember, having lodged them for the night, he went with them. He asked them why they had come, and this is the answer that they gave.

I'll read it from the Amplified New Testament, because I think it's helpful. In the 21st verse of chapter 10, Peter went down to the men and said, I'm the man you seek. What is the purpose of your coming? And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, who is just and upright, being God-fearing and obedient and well-spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, has been instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house, and he has received, I want you to notice this in particular, he has received in answer to prayer, a warning.

God gave, in answer to the prayer of a good man, a solemn warning. He has received in answer to prayer, a warning to listen to and to act upon. God has given him a warning to listen to and to act upon what you have to say to him.

That's why we've come. If you are a good, unsaved person, then it will be my privilege and my solemn responsibility tonight to bring to you as God through Peter brought to Cornelius, a warning to listen to and to act upon. And so Peter accompanied.

And when he came, he discovered that Cornelius had gathered all his next of kin and his closest friends, and there they all were waiting. And Peter said, verse 28, you know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come into one of another nation? But God showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gain, saying, as soon as I was sent for, I ask therefore for what intent you've sent for me.

And Cornelius said, four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing. Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, thine arms are come up in remembrance before God. Send therefore to Joppa, call him a Simon, whose surname is Peter.

When he cometh, he shall speak unto me. The way Peter recounts it in the eleventh chapter, and in the thirteenth verse, he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, send men to Joppa, call the Simon whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words whereby thou, the message that this man will bring to you is a message from God himself, is to tell you what you've been

praying, you've been devoted, how you are to be saved. Well it tells us something about the character of the man that he didn't get all hot round the neck and say, who would ever suggest that I wasn't saved? Fancy suggesting that I of all people am not saved.

But that wasn't his reaction. Because you see, the characteristic of this kind of good man is that he always knows how bad he is. Good men always know how bad they are.

It's only bad men who think they're good. If you're a good person, you'll know how bad you are, and if you're a good person, you'll know how desperately you need saving. And that's why this good man had been fasting with prayer, because being a good man, he knew how bad he was.

Immediately he says, verse thirty-three of chapter ten, immediately therefore I send to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come, now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are come unto thee of God. What a wonderful congregation, to have a company of men and women who were there for the express purpose of hearing an authoritative statement from God himself through the servant's lips. We are here to hear what you have to say as God's word to our hearts.

We're not here to listen to your opinions. We don't want any suggestions, we simply want a categorical, thus saith the Lord. Because we're here because we mean business.

I wonder if that's why you're here at this convention. What a delight to meet a company of people who are expressly met to hear upon the lips of God's servants, what God has to say, and with the obvious intention of acting in obedience, not only to listen to, but to act. Of course this was a test, not only of Cornelius, in the very suggestion that he, such a good man, needed to be saved, it was a test too of God's servants.

He might well have come, if he had been of the ilk of many of those who would call themselves ministers of the Christian faith today, he might well have come and said, my dear Cornelius, I don't know who you are, if ever there was a man like you, that's what Peter might have said. But the extraordinary thing is this, or maybe it isn't so extraordinary. For Peter, on that bitter day of his denial, when the cock crew had discovered the utter bankruptcy of his own heart in spite of three years of enthusiastic, devoted service in the name of Christ, how desperately he needed God's gift of life, he preached forgiveness of sins to a good man.

He commanded us to preach unto the people, said Peter in verse 42, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. He preached judgment to a good man, to him give all the prophets witness that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. He preached judgment, and he preached faith.

This is the word, says he in verse 36, which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace, mercy by Jesus Christ. What was the message that Peter brought to a good man who needed to be saved? Judgment, mercy, and faith. These are the three weightier matters of the law.

For the Lord Jesus said of the Pharisees, he said, you take an immense amount of pains in serving the detail of religious externalism, but you omit, you neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith. Yes, the message that Peter brought to a good man who needed to be saved was simply the message that this Jesus was God's Christ. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, verse 38, with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.

And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree, him God raised up to heaven. This Jesus, whom God anointed, who lived that matter, this Jesus, God's Christ, whom he has declared to be his eternal Son, by the Spirit of holiness, in raising him from the dead, he commanded us to preach unto the people that it was he, this one, who was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. And it is to this Jesus, God's Christ, that all the prophets give witness that through his name, his matchless name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sin.

And Peter preaches redemption through the shed blood of Christ, reconciliation to a holy God, the certainty of sins forgiven. He is preaching the means of salvation in the name of Jesus to a good man who needed to be saved. And he has got just about half way through his sermon, when we are told that in verse 44, while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the words, and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

How does the Lord Jesus come to presence himself within the heart of a redeemed sinner? By the Holy Spirit. After that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And before ever Peter had got through his address, before ever he had completed his instruction, just so soon as he had made it clear that they might have an intelligent grasp of God's means of redemption, that Christ by his atoning death and glorious justifying resurrection had done everything necessary for a man who believed to know that his sins were forgiven, Cornelius was saying in his heart, hardly hearing another word that Peter had to say, Oh God, the knowledge of sins forgiven, but you tell me now, oh thank you for this message that has come to me on his lips, thank you.

And Peter might just as well have saved the second half of his sermon, for next time, because the work was done. I think that is true of most of us. Now don't say amen so loudly.

He mixed with faith the word he heard. And how did God answer his faith? By the gift of life. By the gift of life.

And Peter said, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? These Gentile dogs, these outsiders, these Roman aliens, they have received the life of God, they have received the presence of the triune deity in the person of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus has come to inhabit them, who dare forbid that they should be added with us? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, and you remember how the Judaists, the sect of believing Jews, who insisted that everybody, whoever became a Christian would first have to become a Jew, they remonstrated with Peter when he went and told them the story, now we are going to speak with them, and Peter says rehearsed the whole story. And he says, as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them at last and at the beginning, verse 15 of chapter 11, then remembered I 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 life gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? What was the gift that God gave to Cornelius and his family that God had already given to his disciples at the beginning? The gift of life, the life of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit on that wonderful day of Pentecost when the new body was presented to the Lord Jesus that he was to inhabit and through which he was to continue to work and teach and do his ministry all down the centuries till 1961 as we gather here in this meeting tonight. This same gift of life of which they had become the recipients by faith in Jesus had now become God's gift of life to Cornelius, and when they heard these

things they held their peace and they glorified God saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life, life.

What then was the difference between Cornelius as a good man and Cornelius as a saved man? Life, God's life. You see God cannot impart his life to an unforgiven sinner, no matter how he tries, no matter how good he wants to be, and there is only one way that a sinner can become a forgiven sinner, and that is by putting his trust humbly and simply in the Lord Jesus who died and rose again. That through his shed blood, his finished work, we might be reconciled to God and then thereof saved by his life.

And God graciously showed Cornelius what he had to do in order to be a forgiven sinner that he might have life. So the difference between Cornelius at the beginning of the story and Cornelius at the end of the story was the difference between life and death. Uninhabited by God, he was inhabited by God.

He was born of the Spirit, added to the body of Christ, and now he had within him the one person who is capable of living the kind of life that is satisfying to the Father in heaven. Christ himself, who on earth 1900 years ago did only always those things that pleased the Father, and who lives in you and me today, as he began then to live in Cornelius, to do only always those things that pleased the Father. Now isn't that simple? In order that he might be saved, he had to be brought to the cross.

That through the cross, reconciled to God by the death of Christ, he might begin to be saved by his life, imparted by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now tell me, have you ever been to the Lord Jesus like that? Has it ever suddenly dawned upon you, as those scales had come to your eyes, and almost as excitedly as Cornelius, and forgetting there was ever a preacher, and forgetting there was ever a platform, ever a convention, forgetting almost that you were in any kind of meeting, you suddenly say in your heart to God, I see it! Christ died for me, that my sins might be forgiven, that he might come, that my body might become his home and house, my hands to beat in tune with the heart of God in heaven, I see it! Christ died for me to live in me! That's what I've been waiting for. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you for telling me. Whoever it is that told me, thank you. Then you'll be saved.

Reconciled by his death, saved by his life. Just as simple as that. Is that why God brought you here? Is that why you drove up through the rain today? Is that why that friend of yours has been badgering you for the last three weeks? And at last you gave in and said, alright, I'll come.

I want to thank God for it. Would you just thank God for it? And say, Lord Jesus, thank you. Thank you for sending that man to tell me what I ought to do.

In order to be saved. That I might have life. Your life.

What I'm going to suggest is this. I don't want to embarrass you. I'm quite sure that if there are those of you, and I'm sure there will be some, for in such a gathering as this, there always are.

We're here tonight by God's divine appointment, simply because till now, you've never really been born again. You've wanted to be. You've tried.

But you'll be in the overwhelming minority. And I wouldn't want to embarrass you in any way tonight, but I do want to help you. To come tonight to that clear-cut, absolute, unshakable assurance.

Christ has redeemed my soul. And he lives in me. And so this is what I'm going to suggest.

I'm going to invite all the many, many, many Christians out here tonight to help me help you. And as I pray sentence by sentence, in much the language that in the silence of my own heart I used when as a boy I received Christ as my Redeemer, and nobody knew because I didn't tell anybody, there was no public appeal, I didn't stand or sit or do anything. I just prayed in my heart.

And as I re-echo now much the words that I used in the silence of my heart then, I'm going to ask every Christian fellow and girl and man and woman to pray those very words after me, distinctly and aloud, sentence by sentence. Now let's bow our heads and pray. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I am a sinner, that sin cuts me off from God, that I was born by nature dead.

But you died for me in my place. My sin was judged in your person. Your blood was shed to cleanse my heart from sin.

This I do not deserve. But it is thy promise. Now I know.

I am redeemed. I'm born again. I've received life from above, thy life, and for thy name's sake.

Amen.

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