

Life of Elijah - Part 4

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas explores the life of Elijah, emphasizing the need for divine empowerment over human effort and the importance of returning to God's appointed place.

Duration: 1:07:26

Scripture: Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of trying to live a Christian life by following certain religious practices. He realizes that his own nature has no desire to read the Bible, pray, or share his faith. He then emphasizes the importance of understanding that it is God who works in us to will and do His good pleasure. The speaker encourages the audience to recognize that they have received the same resources from God as he did, and therefore, they should live their lives fully according to God's will. He concludes by highlighting the significance of learning to 'expire' or die to self in order to truly 'inspire' and live a life that reflects Christ living in them.

Transcript

I'd like to say how deeply I have appreciated the very real privilege of sharing with you in these sessions. It's been so easy to talk to you. It's a delightful thing to have folks who have a warm heart for the Lord.

And we've explored together in the book, discovered some of the good things that God has to teach us. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire. But God wasn't in the wind, and God wasn't in the earthquake, and God wasn't in the fire.

But then the still small voice of God. It was at that juncture we concluded our session this morning. For any who may be joining us tonight for the first time, we've been considering the life of Elijah as he has been introduced to us in the first book of Kings from the 17th chapter onwards.

And we've arrived into the 19th chapter. This amazing man who had known so much of God's power, who stood alone, utterly fearless in the unshatterable confidence that he was in the place where God had put him. And then we found him preoccupied with himself and with his circumstance, the victim of self-pity, perpetrating the folly of feeling indispensable, substituting sweat for divine unction.

And all his peace of heart, and that sublime calm which is the birthright of those who in the place of God's divine appointing, dissipated in God. You know, there's a beautiful verse you might care to turn to in the prophecy of Isaiah in the 32nd chapter. Isaiah chapter 32 and verse 17.

The work of righteousness. And we've been talking about the work of righteousness or better defined righteousness at work, which is God behaving shall be peace. No matter what thunderclouds there may be gathering upon the horizon, no matter what threat with which you may be confronted when you're in the place of God's divine appointing and your humanity available to him allows his divine action as peace.

And the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever. In one of the questions that was posed this morning, how do I know that I've been sent, went and put. And as one of the panel rightly underlined, maybe the supreme umpire within your heart is the peace of God.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. Have that undisturbable calm because you have a deep, unshatterable conviction that you're in the place of God's appointing. Quietness and assurance forever.

When you find a man bemoaning his fate under the juniper tree, wishing himself dead, then you know that something's gone wrong with his relationship to God. He's become related to his circumstance. Just in parenthesis, turn to the 16th chapter of Leviticus, the instructions that God gave to the high priest, Aaron, in going into the holiest of all.

Thus verse three in chapter 16 of the book of Leviticus shall Aaron come into the holy place with a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh and shall be girded with the linen girdle and with the linen mitre shall he be attired. These are holy garments.

Linen. This is what makes the Old Testament so fascinatingly exciting to me. And you might say, so what? Linen breeches, linen girdle, and a linen mitre.

These are holy garments. Now, as most of you have already come to discover, the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible. And as I've often mentioned to folks, it's the cheapest because you bought the commentary when you bought the Bible.

And furthermore, the Bible throws an immense amount of light normally on most commentaries. So bearing what you just read in mind, then the 16th chapter of the book of Ezekiel. And here God gives similar instructions concerning the priesthood and their office in verse 16 of the 44th chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel.

They shall enter into my sanctuary and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me and they shall keep my charge. And it shall come to pass that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments and no wool shall come upon them whilst they minister in the gates of the inner court and within they shall have linen bonnets upon their heads and they shall have linen breeches upon their loins and they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. Isn't that great? No wool, God says, only linen.

Because if there's one thing I can't tolerate more than another, it's somebody who comes sweating into my presence as though he was bearing the whole burden upon his own two shoulders, God's last hope on earth. God says I cannot tolerate sweat. For the very simple reason that God never sweats.

Because he never has cause to sweat. He's omniscient, he's omnipotent, he's preexistent and self-existent and everything is going gloriously to plan, dead on schedule. In other words, no sweat.

And when a man ends up under the juniper tree, Eastern Airlines and all, I understand that's where they're going to pray. It means that sweat has taken the place of divine unction. In the 23rd verse of that same chapter, they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

You'll find the parallel passage in the epistle to the Hebrews and the fifth chapter where the apostle concerns himself with spiritual maturity. And if there's one thing that discerns between those who are still babies on the bottle and those who've grown up into spiritual adulthood and are capable of chewing meat, it's the capacity to discern between carnal sweat and divine unction. In that fifth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and he addresses himself throughout the epistle, you remember, to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the supreme object to what he has to teach concerning the Lord Jesus in the 11th verse of the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews of whom we have many things to say and hard to be out. Now he says, because they're complicated, but because you're dull of hearing for when, for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, you are become such as have need of milk. You're on the bottle, a bunch of suckers and not a strong meat.

Every man that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness. He is a baby, strong meat belongeth to them that are full age. Even those who, by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern between both good and evil.

They shall teach my people, the difference between the holy and the profane cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean to discern both good and evil, not the good in that which is obviously good, nor the evil that is obviously evil, but to discern the evil in what appears to be good. And it's one of the hardest things to discern until you've grown up. God says, I cannot tolerate sweat, the folly of feeling indispensable, assuming God's load and trying to do God's work man's way.

All through the record God has given to him is his word. He has given us some vivid examples of the finest of those who serve God, who had to graduate out of babyhood. Abraham was one of them who in carnal sweat produced Ishmael instead of receiving from God, according to promise Isaac in the birth of Ishmael, he was doing God's work man's way, the best that man could do for God.

And God said, thanks for nothing. That's your baby. And he's going to be a wild man and wherever he goes, he'll cause trouble.

And this said the apostle Paul in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Galatians is an allegory for Abraham said he, in that fourth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians had two sons. One was born after the flesh, carnal sweat, and the other was born of promise. All that Ishmael needed was Abraham as an explanation.

But for Isaac, there was only one possible explanation God. And we've seen already that that which is distinguished man from the animal kingdom. When he is in his normality is a quality of life that can be explained only in terms of God for you.

And I was so engineered that the presence of the creator was within the creature is indispensable to our humanity. And that's why whatsoever is not a faith that disposition that lets God do it is sin sin. It's carnal sweat.

And God says you're to clothe yourself with nothing that causes sweat. And I was a young man. I went to a voice trainer to learn how to sing.

And if you don't like the way I see you ought to hear me eat. Well, I went once to a voice train. Just once.

Because she didn't really consider it worth her while that I should go more than once. When I say she, I think it was a she. But she was a very buxom.

She she had muscles like elephant's kneecaps. She was enormous. And I'd hardly crossed the threshold into her studio before she barked at me.

She said, expire. I said, I'm too young. And I thought that was funny.

And I still do. But she didn't. And that became demonstrably obvious.

So I expired. She said, that isn't the way to expire. She said, this is the way to expire.

Oh, by that time she was half a size. She then barked at me again. She said, inspire.

So I inspired. And she said, that isn't the way to inspire. Before she inspired, she expired.

Man, did she then inspire. She sucked so hard. The pictures came up.

The piano began to move across the room. I thought she was going to swallow. And then she.

Then she said this, and it was one of the best sermons I've ever heard. She said, you'll never ever learn to inspire till first you've learned to expire. You'll only perspire.

Now that's the whole good news of the gospel in a nutshell. If you want chapter and verse, it's Galatians 2.20. I am crucified with Christ, expired. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I. Inspire.

Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live, I live by that disposition called faith. That allows him to be who he is, God living what he does.

And if you haven't learned to expire and be identified with him in death, no. As Ron has already reminded us in that song that we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing. And have learned thereby to inspire and recognize that in our Lord Jesus inhabiting our humanity, we've got all that he is.

And we can never have more and need never enjoy less. We may do our utmost with the noblest motivation, but all we'll do is swear. Perspire.

And God cannot tolerate swear. And that's why the heavy hand of God came upon Elijah in spite of God's incredible compassion and love and kindness. Back in the 19th chapter of the first book of Kings, the Lord said to Elijah verse 15.

Go. Well, that's what God had always said to Elijah. But there was just one difference on this occasion.

Go, God said, return. In other words, get back to where you belong. For remember the question that God posed to Elijah was a question that God need never ask you, me, or him if we're in the place where he put us.

What do is now here, Elijah? Go, return, get back to where you belong. See, when you return, you get back. Some of you will be returning at the end of this conference.

When you return, where do you go? Where you belong? Maybe through the mail, you get a package and somebody sends you a book. They borrowed two years ago. Apologize and return it.

Where's the book? Get back when they return it where it belongs. And God said to Elijah, return, get back to where you belong. Because that is the only place of peace and rest.

That's quietness and assurance forever. That's where you're back on base. Can you remember anybody else who needed to return? And get back to where you belong.

His name was David. A man who had known so much of God's power in his life. He knew how, even as a kid, to deal with bears and with lions.

Who looked so big until he looked at God and then they looked so small. He slew them. He knew how to do with giants.

And then there came a day when he forgot to remember. And falling in love with another man's wife, engineered his death and committed murder by proxy. And he had to get back to where he belonged.

His confession, as well, you know, is found in the 51st Psalm. You needn't turn to it. Allow me just to quote.

Against thee, thee only, said he, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression, my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop.

I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me what I don't have, a clean heart.

And renew God a right spirit within me. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways. Then sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a broken and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise.

And in deep contrition, he returned. And he picks up the story in the 116th psalm where he says this. The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell got hold upon me.

I found trouble and sorrow in the fourth verse of that 116th psalm. Then called I upon the name of the Lord. O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Gracious is the Lord and righteous. Yet our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple.

I was brought low. I was on my back. I was at the end of my rope.

And he helped me. And he says, return unto thy rest, O my soul. For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

Return. And when he says return, he recognizes the natural habitat for the soul at peace with God, his rest. The peace of God that passeth all understanding.

God said to Elijah, return. Return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when thou comest, anoint one Hazael to be king of Assyria. Secondly, Jehu, the son of Nimshai, shalt thou anoint to be king of Israel.

And thirdly, Elisha, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. Because you see, Elijah, you thought you only were left. Yet continued God, as he spoke to Elijah, verse 18, I have left me 7,000 in Israel.

All the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which shall, which hath not kissed him. In very simple terms, God said to Elijah, what? You're fired. You will now anoint your replacement.

You see, in the incredible kindness of God, he never crushed him. He sustained him and restored him. But when we carry heavy spiritual responsibilities, we have to accept the consequences of our own default.

And it tells us something of the measure of the man that he bowed beneath God's hand of judgment. He was dismissed. That's the price of feeling indispensable.

It was not so much then for his sake, though it was, as for yours and mine, that we might learn from Elijah's folly. That's why God so graciously, by his Holy Spirit, has recorded the story for you and for me. So we're told, verse 19, Elijah departed the Thames.

He found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen before him. And he with the 12th and Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him. And Elisha immediately left the oxen and ran off to Elijah and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow thee.

And Elijah, in a very offhand manner, said, Go back home. What have I done to you? I didn't ask you to follow me. I didn't ask you to follow me.

All I've done is what God commanded me. Now, please don't assume that Elijah was piqued. He wasn't taking it out of Elisha.

But you see, from the folly of feeling indispensable, he had learned the discipline of being spiritually disinterested. In other words, he got the point that God's eternal purposes or man's human destiny did not rest upon his shoulders. He now recognized that he only had instructions to receive and instructions to obey and let God take the consequences.

The discipline of feeling and being spiritually disinterested. Now, don't misunderstand what I'm saying when I talk about being disinterested. I'm not talking about being uninterested.

I'm absolutely certain, and the evidence is strongly weighted in this direction, as we shall discover in a moment, that Elijah was deeply interested in Elisha, but he was spiritually disinterested in the sense that a judge must be disinterested if he is to try a case between two industrial companies. He mustn't have shares in the one or the other. Otherwise, he cannot make a disinterested judgment.

You understand what I mean? It's in this sense that you and I at all times must be spiritually disinterested. It's one of the hardest things in the world if you owe your allegiance, say, to one particular Christian organization or denominational entity to engage in that which is the commission given to each one of us as redeemed sinners to make quite sure that our ultimate purpose is not to add men, women, boys and girls to us, but only and exclusively to him. In other words, there's no room in the family of God and in his timeless strategy for competitiveness.

And we were reminded of this early this morning in the panel. You remember the two boys who were talking, and one said to the other, why doesn't your dad go to the church that my dad goes to? The other boy said, well, he belongs to a different abomination. Well, the abominations are going to be with us as long as the poor.

And we can't do much about that. But the glorious thing is this, that within each abomination, there are the people of God who are gloriously united and enjoy that unique privilege of sharing his life together as fellow members of the one body and recognizing his total headship. It's right and proper that we should gather ourselves together and not neglect that as the manner of some is for the local assembly is the expression of the body of Christ on earth and has been commissioned to proclaim him.

And when we lift him up, the Lord Jesus pledged that he would draw all men to himself, but there must be no competitiveness. We are mutually supportive. And our ministry is to recognize in all who have claimed cleansing through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus and have become the recipients of his dwelling Holy spirit and whose names are recorded in the only church register that God will ever recognize the Lamb's book of life, that we are in the common purpose of the one of whose body we are members and whose life we share.

And it's in this spirit of disinterestedness that we must engage in that ministry to which God may have sent each one of us. Past the folly of feeling indispensable into the discipline of being spiritually disinterested so that God's purpose, whether we understand it or not, may be gloriously accomplished to his complete satisfaction. Turn to the second book of Kings and the second chapter.

Elisha returned back from Elijah, took a yoke of oxen, slew them, boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen he gave unto the people and that he'd eaten. Then Elisha arose and went after Elijah and ministered and the second book of Kings and the second chapter picks up the story. Learning the folly of feeling indispensable.

Practicing now the discipline of being spiritually disinterested in his final ministry on earth before he was caught up in a whirlwind to meet his Lord. He led Elisha past the comparative security of colorless conformity. In other words, it became his supreme concern that Elisha should know God for himself.

I wonder if that's your ambition in that ministry that God has committed here. It was that which burned within the heart of the apostle Paul. Remember the second chapter of his epistle to the Philippians.

He says more in my absence than in my presence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. You know what he didn't mean. He didn't mean work for your salvation for that would have been diametrically opposed to everything else.

The apostle said, not a works list. Any man should boast not by any works of righteousness, which we have done according to his mercy. He saved us by the washing of regeneration, rebirth, the renewing of

God, the Holy ghost, whom a person he sheds abundantly upon us through the one who saving work made it possible for God to restore to man the life that was lost in Adam.

So there's no doubt in our minds that what Paul didn't say was work for your salvation. What he said was this having received that salvation, live it up, work it out more in my absence than in my presence. Paul was strongly preoccupied with seeking to preach himself out of business.

He said, I'm not your crutch. I'm not indispensable to your spiritual wellbeing for it is God. He goes on to say in the next verse, remember 13th verse.

Now the second epistle to the Philippians, it's God who works in you both to will and do of his good pleasure. And he said, I want to, I want you to learn where your resources lie that everything that God ever gave to me in the day that Jesus Christ, his son invaded my humanity as Saul of Tarsus, arch enemy of the early church, blaspheme, a dangerous man. I want you to know that when the Lord Jesus came to inhabit my humanity, I received no more, no less than you received in the day that he, that self same Lord Jesus invaded your humanity.

Everything God gave me, he's given you. So go out and live it up because it's God himself who works in you both to will and to do with his good pleasure. And if it's God himself who works in you both to will and to do with his good pleasure, what would be illogical about anything which God wills for your life or mine.

Do you remember what else the apostle said in the fifth chapter of his first epistle to the Thessalonians? Faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it. What would be illogical about anything to which God calls you if he, the God of having called you to it is prepared to do for nothing. This is the very heart of the gospel, getting God back into the man, Christ in the Christian so that you and I, as human beings redeemed might pulsate with the divine energy as the human vehicles of his divine action, God in business.

The faith that lets God do it and gets God going. Remember how the Lord Jesus said, many are called, but few are chosen. Why of the many who are called are so few chosen? Because faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it and of the many who are called so few will let him do it.

The only thing that qualifies you is not that you've been called, but that you let him do it. And this was the supreme concern of the apostle Paul when he taught those who had been entrusted to him. He wanted to introduce them to that living, dynamic, adventuresome, full-blooded relationship to Jesus Christ that made them totally independent of him.

The longer you see those to whom you minister are dependent upon you for their spiritual well-being, the less effective has been your testimony. Introduce them to Christ until finally you've weaned them of yourself. They're off the bottle and they're on meat with teeth enough and despair to chew.

And this was Elijah's concern now in this his last assignment on earth in his ministry toward Elijah. Past the comparative security of colorless conformity. Squeezed into a mold, conformed only to pattern.

A man's spirituality evaluated only in terms of his submission to rules, regulations, or procedures. And that's the last thing that God wants. Came to pass.

First verse of the second chapter, the second book of Kings, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went forth with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, Tarry here, I

pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me. How do you know it'd been sent? Well, because God must have said, go.

And he went and was sent. And he knew where he was going to be put. Elijah said, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel.

In other words, I know where God sent me, but that does not impose upon you any obligation to go my way. Because I don't know where God's sending you. So why didn't you hang around? He sent me to Bethel.

Spiritually disinterested. He didn't lay any obligation, whatever, upon Elisha to identify himself or his ministry with Elijah or his. He said, you are at liberty to receive your instructions.

I will not play God in your life. One of the greatest dangers in our present generation are the countless people who want to play God in our lives. You'll find holy little huddles down every road where somebody wants to play God in your life and squeeze you into their miserable mold and conform you to their pattern.

You may be absolutely certain that such have never really come to know God for themselves. As Elijah knew God for himself. But Elisha said, as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.

So they went down to Bethel. And it would be fun, I thought, just to accompany them on the way and maybe listen in to what could well have been their conversation. I imagine that on the way Elijah would have said to Elisha, you know, Bethel, interesting place.

The place where Jacob first met God. And we talked about this yesterday. Bethel, the house of God, which is a beautiful picture in the Old Testament of conversion.

That's where, remember, he dreamed with his head in a stone and the ladder came down and angels ascending and descending. It was his first encounter. For, remember, God had pledged in Abraham a seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

He bore Isaac, according to promise by God's divine intervention, who bore twins. One of them was Esau and the other Jacob. And Esau was the older of the two by a short heel.

And as such should have inherited the birthright, but he despised it. Remember, you see, Esau was a man's man in his own estimate. He had hairs in his chest like barbed wire.

He could go out into the forest and carve his lunch. Humanly speaking, Jacob was a sissy. He hung at his mother's apron strings and learned to stir the porridge.

I'm reliably told that he was 70 years of age before his mom let him have a date. And that was only after he had stolen the birthright from the man who despised it. And then Esau sought to engineer his death.

Because, remember, those who despise the birthright are always filled with hatred towards those who enjoy the blessing that they themselves reject. Esau said to Jacob, feed me, I pray you, with that same red potage. I'm faint.

Therefore, was his name called Edom, which means red. And Jacob said, tell me this day, thy birthright. And Esau said, behold, I'm at the point of dying.

What profit shall this birthright do to me? Remember, it was inherent in the birthright. The birthright was the pledge that God had given, confirmed now in Abraham that in his seed, Christ, all the families of the earth should be blessed. It was the spiritual birthright that God on the grounds of redemption was going to restore to man the life that was lost in Adam.

And Esau threw it out of the window. He says, I don't need that kind of stuff. I don't begrudge you, Jacob, if you need it.

You are crippled. You need religion. I don't need religion.

And we're told later, Malachi, that God hated Esau. He says, there's nothing I can do for Esau. He's a profane man.

We're told Hebrews chapter 12. God said, I love Jacob. Not because of what he was, but for what I could make him.

Because Jacob knew his own need. We reminded ourselves, was it yesterday? There came a moment at last when Jacob in the presence of God called himself by his own name. God changed it.

Israel, Prince with God, Bethel is where it began. But that isn't where it ended. You see, Elisha, there comes a moment in a man's life when for the first time he meets God.

But that's only the threshold of an onward march where he comes to know God in all the palm fullness of his omniscient and omnipotent deity. So don't get stuck, Elisha, at Bethel. You know, that's where a whole lot of people get stuck.

At Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel, verse 3 of chapter 2 in the second book of Kings, came forth to Elisha. And they said to him, knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? They wanted him, is he to conform? They said, you're strutting around bathing in Elijah's limelight.

He's going to be removed. And what are you going to do then? You look pretty stupid on your own. They said in so many words, it's time you became really respectable.

Why don't you enroll in our Bible school and get a degree? And they wanted him simply to conform and bear their stamp. Those who had settled for Bethel and nothing more. The tragedy is that more out of ignorance than malice, the vast majority of those who've claimed redemption through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus have got stuck at Bethel.

To be saved simply means you've made your decision for Jesus. That you've changed your destination from hell to heaven and your great ambition now is to keep God off your back until you get there. Let him interfere as little as possible in your own way of life and the fulfillment of those cherished ambitions that you've long nurtured from your earliest days.

We're in an age of easy believism, of cheap grace. Well, all you've got to do is make your decision and you're on your way to hell and the only on your way to heaven. And very often, alas, it's true the other way around.

But the only thing that is the criterion of a successful ministry is how many decisions you can register, no matter what kind of spiritual substance it may truly represent. And the big temptation is to get stuck right

there and settle for that easy believism that is something so pathetically less than what God had in mind when he sent his son. Not to get us out of hell and into heaven, which is purely incidental, marvelous as indeed it is, but supremely to get God back out of heaven into us.

Not just that we might have our inheritance in him who died that we might be forgiven, but supremely that he, our creator redeemer, might have his inheritance in us. And the absolute right to exercise his total unchallenged sovereignty in every area of our being. But so many get stuck at Bethel.

Because nobody ever tells them there's something more than having your sins forgiven. I'm thankful, profoundly thankful for those who, as I mentioned the other day, first led me to Christ. They told me that Christ died, that I might be forgiven.

It's just one thing they forgot to tell me, but the one who died for me rose again to live his life in me. And so for seven miserable years I try to live the Christian life without reckoning upon the one who alone is capable of living the Christian life, Christ himself. If you lead a boy to Christ to claim him as a redeemer, but don't tell him that the Christ who died for him rose again to live within him, how do you teach him to live the Christian life? All you can do is program him.

Just tell him to read his Bible, have a quiet time morning and evening, say his prayers, give a few tracks away, read his Bible and go through the procedures. And this I did with considerable intensity and genuine, sincere desire to serve and love Jesus Christ. But what I discovered, of course, as many of you also have discovered, that that old Adamic nature that is within us has absolutely no ambition, whatever, either to read its Bible or pray or witness to its friends.

And life becomes a chore as it did indeed for me. How often have you heard it said as the criterion for Christian behavior, think what Jesus would do. Ever heard that? Well, what are you presupposing? If you say to somebody, think what Jesus would do, what are you presupposing? The presence or the absence of the Lord Jesus? You're presupposing his absence.

Think what Jesus would do if what? He was there, but he's not. So think what Jesus would do were he there, but he's not. And when you've got an idea of what you think he would have done had he been there, but he's not, you do what he would have done had he been there, but he's not.

So who's going to do the doing? You're going to do it with the best will in the world, with the utmost sincerity, motivated from without. You're going to try to do what he would have done had he been there, but he's not. So you're teaching people to practice what? The presence or the absence of Christ? The absence of Christ.

And that's, you see, a message of despair. It isn't think what Jesus would do. It's, isn't it exciting, son, that the Lord Jesus, having redeemed you, rose again from the dead, has come to indwell your humanity, clothe himself with you, and in every situation, no matter what it may be, a threat, promise, opportunity, responsibility, or temptation, you can bow yourself out, bow him and say, Lord Jesus, it's going to be fantastic to see what you're going to do in this situation.

If you need hands, mine are available. If you need transportation, my feet are at your disposal. If you need to make articulate something that you want to say, my lips are yours to speak through, my eyes to see the need, my ears to hear the cry.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the sheer joy of knowing not only that you died for me then, but you rose again to live in me now. Thanks. You're in business.

It's the Christian life. But if you don't do that, you're dumped at Bethel. Redeemed, yes, you've met God.

You know him for yourself as your savior from the penalty of sin, but you don't know him and the power of his resurrection. But motivated out of love for him, a sense of gratitude and duty, you'll try to live for him and become ever increasingly more discouraged until you're fit to quit. Can you remember any folks like that described in the word of God in the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians? Galatians and chapter three.

I'm going to read this in the amplified New Testament. It's a little bit more succinct. It's amplified in the sense that the English language is poorer than that which God deliberately chose in which to give us the original inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And that's why the translators into the English language are hard put to find adequate words to explain really what God said. And so it needs to be amplified so that we get the full sense of what God was saying in your Bible. Probably it says foolish Galatians.

What God actually said was this by the lips of his servant, the apostle Paul. Oh, you poor, silly, thoughtless, unreflecting and senseless Galatians. And that's amplified, but not exaggerated.

That's exactly what God meant. Let me ask you, he says, this one question in verse two, did you receive the Holy Spirit as the result of obeying the law and doing its works? Or was it by hearing the message of the gospel and believing it? In other words, if your humanity has been, has been re inhabited by God and the Lord Jesus has come to take up residence within you in the person of his Holy Spirit, was it as a result of your obeying the Lord and God thumping you on the back and saying, well done, this is your reward. Or, and they knew better than that.

It was a rhetorical question. Or was it through your hearing the good news of the gospel that for his dear sake, who died in your place, bearing the cost and consequence of your guilt. God, in response to your faith that claims him as redeemer has restored to you in the person of the Holy Spirit, the life that was forfeited when Adam fell.

Then they knew the answer because they were Christian. He was writing to the church in Galatia. They knew perfectly well that if Christ lived within them in the person of the Holy Spirit, it was only because they had been exposed to the good news of the gospel that he who died for them came that they might have life.

So he goes on in the third verse and says, are you so foolish? Are you so senseless? And are you so silly? Having begun your new life spiritually with the Holy Spirit, are you now reaching perfection by dependence on the flesh? He said, can you be that done that having begun a brand new life, God imparted through the presence of the Holy Spirit, you ignore his presence. Lock is it where the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, now inhabiting your humanity up, down in the cellar. And as though he might still just be dead, still in the tomb or best in heaven, peeping through the clouds, watching you do your best for Jesus on earth, you ignore his presence and in the energy of the flesh, sweating it out for God, do your best.

Try to be made perfect. Can you be that done? He said, can you so completely miss the point? But in spite of the fact that when the Lord Jesus gave himself for you, it was only that risen from the dead, he might give himself to you because you were so engineered that the presence of the creator within the creature is indispensable to your humanity, that without him, you can do nothing because man in normality must be distinguished from the animal kingdom by quality of life that cannot possibly be explained apart from the presence of God within the man. Did I mention that before? Says Paul, can you be that dumb that God in his infinite compassion should send his son to accomplish the redemptive act so that you could have restored to you the life for which you made the life of God and you ignore him as though he went there.

Can you be that dumb? Can you imagine driving down the road? Very simple, old illustration. And you see a lady on the side of the road with a head under the hood of her car, which is stole. Now, the kindness of your heart, you stop to you say, madam, can I help? Well, she said, that's kind of you.

Thanks. This thing won't go. So you step into the front of the car, switch it on.

And as you anticipate empty tank. So you say, madam, would you please take your head from underneath the hood? And I'll tell you exactly why this car won't go. Doesn't know what it takes.

You've got an empty tank, but I've got a rope in the back of my car in the trunk. And I'll tell you to the next gas station. And this, you did when you get there, you say to the man, fill her up.

I mean, the car. And the man does just that. He fills the tank of this good lady's car.

Then to her great embarrassment, she discovers that she has no money. Well, you say, madam, please don't be embarrassed. That's my pleasure.

I'm so happy that I passed at the right moment to be of some assistance and you pay the bill. In other words, you pay a debt. You did not.

Because she owes a debt. She could not pay. What's that called in the Bible? Redemption.

That's what the Lord Jesus graciously accomplished on the cross. Redemption. So she thanks you, of course, profusely.

You get back into the car and you're just about to drive off when just in a friendly way, you lean out of the window to wave goodbye. And to your amazement, you see this lady pushing the car home with the full tank. What would you say to her? I think you'd say, oh, you poor, silly, thoughtless, unreflecting, senseless woman.

I've told you here because you had nothing in the tank to fill it up. I paid your bill to get you home. And you push the thing back with a full tank.

That's Bethel. If that's where you got dumped. Do you know why you in God's timeless economy came to Christ and claimed him as your redeemer? So that he having paid the debt he did not owe because you owed that debt, you could not pay.

He, by his gracious Holy Spirit, might fill the tank and give you, by his divine indwelling, all that it takes to get home. The tragedy is that 90% of those who are truly converted have never come to discover why it was that Christ came to this world who said, I'm come, not that you might have forgiveness, though forgiveness alone is to be found through him. He said, I'm come that you might have life.

I've come to give you a full tank. I've come to give you, by my presence within you, all that it takes to be a man. To God's holy satisfaction.

How long ago was it that you allowed the Lord Jesus to pay the debt he did not owe? Because you owed that debt, you could not pay. How long ago was it? Six months, six weeks, or could be 30 years. How long have you been pushing a car with a full tank? How long, like a foolish Galatian, have you been sweating it out for God and trading that for divine unction? Instead of stepping out into the dawn of every day and saying, Lord Jesus, fantastic, that you not only gave yourself for me, you've given yourself to me.

And all that you are I've got, can't have more, need never have less. This is the rest of God. This is the peace of God, that passeth all understanding.

That's why the Lord Jesus says, come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I'll give you rest. Rest. He says, come to me.

Don't learn some new technology. Don't learn some new methodology. Don't go to the bookshop and take off the shelf a whole bunch of new editions of Total Woman or Total Man, and all the gimmicks that will get you there.

Just say to the Lord, come to me. Come to me. I've paid the debt and I've given you a full tank.

Why don't you get on board? Switch on, put your foot in the gas and go for a ride. Come to me. I'll give you rest.

Because the moment you're prepared to do that, there won't be a single hill that'll frighten you. You'll know you've got enough and despair under the hood, and all you've got to do is put your foot in the gas a little harder, and draw upon the resources that are there. Enough and despair.

I'll give you rest. If you were digging a hole in the ground, I wanted to give you a rest. How do you think I'd do it? Stand on the edge of the hole and sing you a little ditty about digging? That wouldn't give you a rest.

That would give you a heart attack. I could write 10 new concepts on how to dig on a piece of paper and let it flutter into the dirt. Would that give you a rest? I could give you a fantastic demonstration on the edge of the hole of a new technique on digging, how to get it over your right shoulder without putting it in your left eye.

Would that give you a rest? Well, of course it wouldn't. There's only one way I could give you a rest. If you were digging a hole, and that is if you'd get out and let me get in, you'd drop the spade and let me pick it up.

If you would vacate and let me occupy it, then I could give you a rest. And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus meant. Without me you can do nothing.

So why don't you drop the spade? It won't be inactivity. It'll be Christ activity. Why don't you get out and let me get in? It won't be complacency or indifference.

It'll be God let loose in the world in which you live. God in action. And that's what it means to be being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Never to be determined by the nature of the act, only to be determined by the origin of the act, who's doing it. That's all. So that in every new situation, one step at a time into that situation which that step takes you, you bow yourself out and you bow Christ in and say, Lord Jesus, fantastic that I have all that you are for this precise moment in this precise situation.

And I want you to know that I reckon upon you, not only is the one who died for me then, but the one who lives in me now and you're in business. All my humanity is gladly available for you at your disposal in any way you wish to dispose of me in this situation. But you're the one who's in business and it's going to be exciting to see how you handle it.

And you vacate and he occupies. And magnificently he deals with the situation and you have an experience of his adequacy which becomes a memory. And that memory is stored so that in the next situation which the next step takes you, that memory undergirds your faith in his competence and you learn more easily now to bow yourself out and bow him in and say, Lord Jesus, do you remember how you handled that last situation? Well there's another one here 10 times worse.

That gives you 10 times more opportunity to demonstrate just how big you are. Thanks very much. And you bow yourself out and bow him in, you vacate and he occupies and once more he really fantastically handles the situation.

Now you've had two experiences of God's adequacy and you've now got two memories. And two memories now undergird your faith in the next situation. See what I mean? And so you're accumulating memories of his adequacy through each new experience, all of which will be different of his integrity.

And before long, instead of repeating what somebody told you or what you read in the book, you'll be speaking out of the abundance of your own heart because you know God for yourself. That's called walking in the Spirit. It's getting to know God on a personal level and all the dynamic of his divine indwelling.

You vacate and he occupies and you vacate and he occupies, you vacate and he occupies and you vacate and he occupies and you discover the Christian life is one vacation after another. Until finally you're always on vacation and he's always in business. Then you can say to me to live is Christ.

And you've discovered what it means to be a Christian. Isn't that gloriously simple? Well, can you settle the lesson there? So why not get on board, switch on, put your foot in the gas, and go on vacation? More, says Paul, in my absence than in my presence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, conscious of the one whose life you share and of the illimitable resources that become yours by virtue of who he is, God, living where he does.

But whatever you do, don't settle for Bethel. But Bethel is where you begin. That's where you begin.

If you can't go on and discover all the good things that God has provided for you until you've begun where God began, beneath the shadow of that cross, where he in the sinlessness of that humanity in which was seen the perfection of deity was made sin for you that you might become the righteousness of God in him. And I'm going to make this suggestion tonight because we're almost more than halfway through. It'd be sad, wouldn't it, if anybody was still a little uncertain as to whether or not they had received Christ and had begun.

Now, don't be nervous. I want you to be relaxed. All I'm going to suggest is this, because if you're like, in any way like I am, you find it difficult to go and talk to somebody else and unburden your soul, though there are lots of folks who would be so happy to help you.

But I recognize that very often folks have to face the wrong issue when they're invited to accept Christ. Very often they're invited not so much to receive Christ as to muster up enough physical courage to take some action for which they're not been equipped, because Christ has not yet come to be their strength. So I'm not asking you to make that kind of a decision.

The only thing I'm going to ask you to do, if it's necessary in your heart this moment, is do I or do I not want to know Christ as my Redeemer? Do I want to be absolutely certain that at my invitation, though I don't deserve it, He as my Creator and my Redeemer has come to dwell within me, has reconciled me to God, and by His presence renewed to me that life that was lost in Adam, born again. If so, what I'm going to suggest is that I invite all the Christian folks here, and most of us are numbered amongst those who can already say, I am redeemed. I'm going to invite them to pray with me, as once I prayed in all the simplicity of a child in that boy's camp that I told you about, and asked Christ to become my Savior.

They're not praying it for themselves, because you don't pray this prayer once, because when He comes He says, I've come to stay, I'll never leave you nor forsake you. But these Christian folks, because they love you, and they love you because they love Christ, and they love Christ because He loved them, I'm going to ask them to pray after me very simply, aloud, sentence by sentence. Then without any embarrassment to you, if this final decision to step into the salvation that God has provided in Christ has eluded you, then add your voice to ours, as though nobody were here but just you and the Lord Jesus, and settle, settle the issue right now.

And I'm going to ask you to do anything more than that. I'm going to ask you to stand up, raise your hand, or stay behind, or sign your name on a piece of paper, nothing. Because the only issue I want you to face is, do I or do I not want to know, want the Lord Jesus to know that He's woken? If you do, tell Him so tonight.

If you don't know quite how, pray with us. And I have the right to tell you, the moment you invite Him, He will come. The moment you plead His precious name, the Father is unabound, not just to you, but to His dear Son, the Lord Jesus, to receive you.

He cannot reject you without rejecting His Son, and betraying Him in all that He accomplished on the cross when He died in your place. It's as simple as that. So the Lord Jesus, accept a man, a grown-up adult man, become like a little child, and be converted.

He cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The first thing a child learns to do is take. The second thing a child learns to do, having taken, is to say, thank you.

Thank you. Take and say thank you. And the Lord Jesus, until you're prepared to come in your need and take what you don't deserve and say, thank you, you'll not enter the kingdom of heaven.

That's what it means to be converted. And I just invite you tonight to take and say, thank you. Then go on your way rejoicing.

And the Holy Spirit who comes instantly at your invitation will bear witness with your spirit, your God's child. Otherwise it wouldn't be here. And I'm only here because you claim cleansing through the one who

alone bore your sins upon the cross.

You're accepted in the beloved forever. And your name now is written in the Lamb's book of life. Isn't that a marvelous thing? So let's pray together.

I'm going to pray very simply, sentence by sentence. Christian folks, out of their love for the Lord Jesus and their love for you, are going to pray after me. And if you've never been sure and settle the issue right now, add your voice to us.

And you're talking not to any one gathered in this room, save the one who alone can save you, Christ himself. Let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that on the cross, in the sinlessness of your humanity, you died for sinners, a debt you never owed because they owed a debt they could not pay. I am one of those sinners, Lord Jesus, for whom you die. Thank you.

I never deserved what you did. But you have promised to receive me. If only I will come.

And I want you to know, Lord Jesus, tonight, right now, I come. I receive you gladly into my life as my debt payer, my Savior, my Redeemer. I plead your precious blood, your life laid down on my behalf.

I don't deserve it. But it is your free gift which I now gladly take. And I say thank you.

Because you have promised. And I trust your word. Because you've spoken.

That is all I need to know. I am redeemed. My sins are gone.

I've been forgiven. You have come, Lord Jesus, to live in me. I was dead.

By your presence, I'm alive again. Born of God. A child of God.

Forever. And nobody will pluck me out of your hand. Thank you so much.

In your own dear and precious name. Amen. Thank you.

If you made that the language of your prayer, just before you sleep tonight, thank him again. Say, Lord Jesus, you remember what I told you? Thanks. You're still there.

And when I get up tomorrow, it'll be the first time that I step out into the dawn of a new day, sharing the life of my Creator. And it's going to be exciting, Lord Jesus, to see what you're going to do as you live your life in me. You're in business.

And the next morning, thank him again. And the day after. And keep on thanking.

The more you thank him, the more you'll know it's true. And next time I see you in about 25 years time, you'll be terribly old by then. You'll still be thanking him.

So thanks again. Trust we're not too late tonight. We're a little later than we should have been.

But don't forget to get on board and put your foot in the gas and enjoy the ride. Thank you.

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