

Major Ian Thomas - Part 3

by Major Ian Thomas

The Christian life is not a religion, but a person - Jesus Christ, and it's a life of simplicity, where we trust in Jesus and live in the power of his resurrection life.

Duration: 48:16

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Spiritual Mission"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following the instructions given by God. He uses the example of the apostles who were imprisoned but were freed by an angel with a message from God. The message was simple: go, stand, and speak. The speaker relates this message to our own lives, stating that we are the vessels through which God works on earth. He encourages listeners to go where they are sent, stay where they are put, and give what they have been given by God. The sermon also highlights the apostles' mission to preach the word of life and invite people to come alive in Christ.

Transcript

Well, it's my privilege once again to introduce Major Ian Thomas. Major Thomas is the founder of Torchbearers, which has a literally worldwide influence for the gospel of Jesus Christ. I shared yesterday, but many of you are new tonight, and that is when I first started growing as a Christian in the middle 70s, the very first book I read was *The Saving Life of Christ* by Major Ian Thomas.

And quickly afterwards, I read his other two books, *If I Perish, I Perish*, *The Mystery of Godliness*, and I would strongly encourage you to get a copy of each of those. We're about sold out, as I understand here, but you'll be able to pick them up other places. But what I discovered, and it's been a foundation for the whole of my life, is that there is a wonderful simplicity to the Christian life, and it's simply the person of Christ.

Christ for justification, Christ for sanctification, Christ for service. And it's Satan himself who tries to make it more complicated than God ever made it. And I so appreciate Major Thomas's just relentless, relentless focus on this great message.

So would you come bless us again, Major Thomas? I certainly feel it a very great privilege to be allowed to share this hour with you and this platform with distinguished guests, and not the least the Chancellor and General Howard Graves. What a lovely thing it is to be one in Jesus and to know that he's the only one who matters. The same yesterday, today, and forever, never changes.

He is the truth, the ultimate truth, fantastic. Nothing more boring than being religious. Nothing more exciting than being a Christian.

The sad thing is that countless religious people don't know the difference between being religious and being a Christian. And one of the greatest discoveries a redeemed sinner can make is that there's only one person who could ever and ever did or ever will live the Christian life, and his name is Jesus. Because he is the Christian life, the way, the truth, and the life.

Wonderful. So the privilege that all of us have is to introduce boys, girls, men, and women of any nation, kindred, tribe, or tongue, or race, or creed, or class, or colour to Jesus, so they may know him as the one who not only gave himself for us as he did, absolutely essential if we are to become a Christian, but infinitely more important even than that is that he rose again from the dead to give us not only himself for us, but himself to us, so that we can say and know that it's true to me to live is Christ. If I'm alive at all in any genuine sense, it's only because he, as my creator, redeemer, has come to take up residence and live his life in me and through me.

That's what it means to be a Christian. Christ clothing his deity on earth today with our redeemed humanity as he once then, two thousand years ago, allowed the Father to clothe his eternal deity with the humanity of a sinless saviour who was born alive. The only man who was ever born alive since Adam fell.

And Adam wasn't born, he was created. So the only man who's ever been born, the real man, is Jesus. That's why he's called in the Bible the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

And to know him is life eternal. Fantastic. Well, in the last couple of days we've been talking about the early believers.

And they were a pretty pathetic bunch until they made the great discovery that totally revolutionized their lives. Most of them from the beginning were trying to live a life they hadn't got because they didn't know what it meant to be born of God. They didn't realize that after the death of Jesus, which they finally discovered was the means of their redemption, what mattered most in their Christian lives was that their humanity was made as available to him now as God in them as the Lord Jesus in real humanity made his humanity available to his Father.

Then the church sprang into life. Terrific. And we've talked about it, how they first had to rediscover the Lord Jesus as the risen Lord, not a noble idealist who paid the price of being too progressive for his day and age, misunderstood by his peers and done to death by his enemies.

The disciples finally discovered that it was part of the plan, that it was to that end he was born and for that cause he came to the world to lay down his life a ransom for many. And that was a wonderful discovery. It took them a long, long time to accept it.

Finally did. But that wasn't enough. They had to rediscover him as the risen Lord.

Peter and others on the road to Emmaus, bumping into the Lord Jesus, didn't even recognize him because so far as they were concerned he was dead and buried. But they all looked miserable and they deserved to. Anybody deserves to look miserable who hasn't discovered that Jesus is the only one who can live the Christian life and are prepared to let him do it in and through them.

And so said the Lord Jesus, why so sad? What's your problem? What's bugging you? And said they, don't you know what happened at Jerusalem? And Jesus said, what things? He knew a whole bunch about what had happened in Jerusalem. It was through his wrists and through his ankles they drove the nails. It was onto his head they put the crown of thorns.

It was into his face they spat. Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn't know? Wasn't that pretty stupid? Their risen Lord. But they didn't know that he was alive.

Hadn't recognized it and weren't living in the good of it. But they made the supreme discovery that a Christian can make. And in rediscovering Jesus, a new joy, new Bible, new message, and a new responsibility.

And by the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom the Lord Jesus clothes his deity with our humanity a new enabling. Living in the power of his divine presence through whose indwelling we enjoy the illimitable resources of deity that he, God, makes available to every forgiven sinner, boy, girl, man, or woman. All there is to be had in Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and in whom we are complete.

Can't have more? Need never enjoy less. All you got to do is take and say thank you. That's the Christian life.

That's all that Jesus did. He took and said thank you. In every situation, threat, promise, responsibility, opportunity, suffering, he just said thank you Father.

And let the Father be God in him. As he now, as God, wants us to allow him to be God in us. It's all so simple.

Once you let God be God, to your amazement you discover that he's big enough for the job. And wonder why you were so stupid as to try to keep him in business. And sweat it out and be like Jesus and do his thing.

He's done his thing. So that he can be who he is, living where he does. In the heart and clothed with the humanity of every forgiven sinner.

That's the gospel. So once they had rediscovered Jesus and discovered that the Christian life wasn't a religion but a person, they only had one thing to talk about. And we talked about that last evening.

The message of the early church was not Jesus died 2000 years ago, but Jesus is alive here and now, right now. In all the fullness and power of his deity and revelation, resurrection life. Tremendous.

That's when the Christian life really becomes exciting. When you discover who is the Christian life. And share his life on earth on the way to heaven and then forever.

That's why it's exciting to read about the early church in what in our Bibles is called the Acts of the Apostles. It's a misnomer because it isn't the Acts of the Apostles. Let's turn to the first chapter of the Acts, the book of the Acts.

It was written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Dr. Luke. And Dr. Luke, by inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, was the one who gave us Luke's gospel. So the Acts, as it's called, the Acts of the Apostles, is a second book that Luke was inspired to give from God to you and to me.

And he says this, first verse, first chapter, the book of the Acts. The former treaties or book have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and began to teach. That's what Luke's gospel is all about, what Jesus began to do and began to teach.

Now he says, I'm going to read, I'm going to write you another book. And this book is about what the same Lord Jesus continued to do and continued to teach. No difference, same Jesus, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the one who was the author of Luke's gospel and the one who's the author of this book called the Acts.

The only difference was the body in which the Lord Jesus did it. It's very clearly spelled out in the fifth chapter and the twelfth verse. It's your commission and mine.

Twelfth verse, fifth chapter of the book of the Acts. By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. By the hands of the apostles, just their hands, his to work with, their feet, his to walk with, their eyes, his to see with, their ears, his to hear with, their lips, for him to speak with, so that he could give utterance to the eternal truth.

Their hands, their feet, their eyes, their ears, simply their humanity made available to the one who continued in and through them to do and teach the things that he had begun to do and begun to teach in the body that the Father God was pleased to give him when as a little baby he was born at Bethlehem. No difference in the author of either of the books, simply the body in which he lived. And of course that is the incredible understanding that you and I should have of the Christian life, that he has a new body on earth of which you and I, if we are redeemed, not otherwise, if we've been born of God, not otherwise, but if we have in true repentance said thank you for what he did and lived daily in the power of who he is, we are members of his body.

That's humanity on earth that the Lord Jesus occupies so that he may continue to do and continue to teach the things that he began to do and began to teach. That's the incredible and indescribable privilege of being a Christian, a member of the body of Christ. Look in the same chapter, the fifth chapter, believers, verse 14, were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

What does it say? They became Baptists? No. Presbyterians? No. Lutherans? Uh-uh.

Presbyterians? Uh-uh. Plymouth brethren? Oh no. Do you know what they became? Members of his body.

Multitudes, believers, added to the Lord. That's what a believer is. You've been added to the Lord if you're a believer.

You've become a member of his body corporate on earth, a member in particular of that body corporate. The flesh and blood with which he is now today pleased to clothe his divine activity, the miracle of being a Christian, God in action. I've reminded you that Philip came to the Lord Jesus and said, show us the Father, that suffices us, that's all we need.

And the Lord Jesus, have I been so long time with you? And hast thou not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen my Father. My Father, God, clothing his deity on earth with my sinless humanity because I deliberately chose for that reason to be born a human being and accomplish in that humanity that for which as creator God I first made Adam. To bring an invisible God out into the open where he can be seen, an inaudible God out into the open where he can be heard, so that he can be known and loved

and served.

So, Philip, when you look at me you see my Father in action. That body with which he is pleased at this moment to accomplish the redemptive act and the reconciling act that will precipitate that regenerative purpose, Philip, that allows a holy God without doing violence to his own righteousness to restore to man the life he lost when man believed the devil's lie that he could be a man without God. Humanism, that's where it all began, in the stupidity of Adam when he believed the devil's lie and substituted that for God's truth.

And man has been stupid enough all down the centuries to do the same and still does today. Added to the Lord, a member of his body. How can you be a member of his body? These fingers don't belong to you, they belong to me.

What's the seal of the fact that they belong to me and not to you? Because they possess my life. You don't boss my fingers around and I don't boss your fingers around. They're only members of my body because they possess my life.

Without my life, they're not members of my body. In World War II, serving in one of the most famous of the British regiments, the Royal Fusiliers with headquarters in the Tower of London, the only regiment allowed to march through the city with six bayonets, the only regiment to which the king, who then was the colonel of the regiment, gave the privilege of not standing up when the national anthem was played. He said, your loyalty, gentlemen, is never in doubt.

Please remain seated. That was all right, so I always do, just to demonstrate my loyalty. But in the Royal Fusiliers, in which I served during World War II for seven years and remain still a commissioned officer in the regiment, in the Battle of Monte Cassino, there was a tank on the other side of the valley, German tank, on the other side.

And one of my men, stupidly enough, exposed himself. And so the tank took a shot at us, but he knew he couldn't hit us with an armour-piercing tank shell. It would just go for miles.

So, wisely, he put in a high-explosive shell. But it would travel at the same speed, of course, as an anti-tank shell. It was a panzer, used also by the Germans as an anti-aircraft missile.

I said, just a minute, and he didn't wait. You see, the problem about a shell, high-explosive or armour-piercing, fired from a panther, is that it travels faster than the speed of sound. So, if it's a high-explosive shell, you hear it burst, and then you hear it come, and then you hear the gunfire, and that's a little late to duck.

So, he killed the man who exposed himself, took the leg off another, wounded one of my men twice, and missed me, until he reloaded, as I knew he would, and fired again. And a white-hot, jagged fragment of that shell just removed half of my finger. Still got a little knuckle.

Still got a little knuckle. Sometimes, to amuse kids, I give it a couple of eyes, so that it looks... Kids love it. My four boys, and all my sons are boys, they used to bring their kid friends just to see my finger.

Well, that was pretty stupid. How could they see a finger that wasn't there? But they loved it. Now, it doesn't embarrass me at all.

If it did, I know I could find somebody who would manufacture for me an imitation finger and stick it on, do it so well that nobody would even know that it wasn't a proper finger. Would it be a member of my body? Well, no. Just an imitation, a rubber dummy.

Lifeless. Not a member of my body. It looks like it.

Could be accepted as such by those unwitting and in ignorance of what happened there at Monte Cassino. Lifeless. No more a member of my body than you are a member of the body of Christ, unless you've been born again.

Unless you've been redeemed on God's terms, the shed blood of His incarnate, sinless Son, who died, that you and I might be forgiven. So, I never got an imitation finger to stick on there because it wouldn't be worth it. It wouldn't do as I told it to do.

It would be constantly disobedient. You could stand on it all day and I wouldn't complain. But if you trot on my little finger, I'd say, pardon me, you are treading on me.

And you'd say, oh no I'm not, I'm only treading on your little finger. I'd say to you, I couldn't care less whether you're treading on my little finger or my face. Get off.

And if you didn't get off, I'd give you, mobilising all the other members of my body, some needful assistance. Do you get the point? How do you become a member of the body of Christ? Only on God's terms by having restored to you the life that man lost in the day that Adam fell. New birth.

Regeneration. Not by any works of righteousness that we have done, Titus 3, 5 and 6. According to God's mercy He saves us. By the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

God giving us back on His terms the Holy Spirit whom God withdrew from Adam in the day that he believed the devil's lie and substituted it for God's truth. That's the gospel. Can't make it simpler than that.

You'd need a theologian to do that. That's why we have them, to keep the other theologians in business, to explain what they made complicated. The simplicity which is in Christ.

Isn't it gloriously simple? Liberating, emancipating. To know that He came, born at Bethlehem to give Himself for us, simply that risen from the dead He might give Himself to us. So that every moment of every day, now, not then only or in future days, but right now, every forgiven sinner can live in the power of His divine indwelling.

It was the one cherished ambition of the Apostle Paul as he puts it in the 20th verse, 10th verse of the 3rd chapter of his epistle to the Philippians and the 11th verse. That I may progressively come to know and become intimately acquainted with the Lord Jesus and enjoy the outflow that comes from His resurrection. Paul lived in the power of the resurrection life of Jesus.

That's why he tells us, Galatians 2.20, I, for what I was, am fit for nothing but what happened to the one who took my place, sentenced, executed and buried. I, judicially executed and the person of my substitute, am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, please don't get me wrong, I live.

But not I. Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in this body, the flesh, I live by simple childlike trust in the one who gave himself for me, gave himself to me and who loves me. That's the gospel.

Wonderful. Well, it took a number of years for the early church to discover the true Christian life. Not a religion.

It was religion that crucified him. Nailed him to a cross, spat in his face and mocked. If your God come down from the cross.

He could have done that and made fools of them. He didn't have to. And didn't want to.

Because to Pontius Pilate he said, to this end I was born. For this very cause I came into the world. To lay down my life.

Nobody takes it from me. I lay it down at my own free volition. A ransom.

Purchase price. That is calculated all down the centuries to set men, women, boys and girls free from the load of guilt that they've earned by being the heirs of a fallen Adam. Perpetuating the disobedience that has left this world bleeding and broken.

And still does. Early church. Didn't come alive until they recognised that Jesus had come alive.

And that they could share his resurrection. Every moment. Of every day.

Well, many were being added to the Lord. And the chief priests of the Sadducees. Who didn't believe in the resurrection.

Didn't believe in the spirit of God. Didn't believe in angels. Didn't believe anything that was beyond the capacity of man's own intellectual ability.

That's why they were so miserable. As I told the folks yesterday evening. That's how they got their name.

They were Sadducees. And anybody who doesn't believe in the resurrection life of Jesus and live in the goodness and power of it. Deserves to be sad.

You see. So what did he do? Well, he came full of jealousy. Because of the things that were happening.

To ordinary people. Through a very ordinary person. Jesus.

So he threw them into jail. That didn't faze them too much. They were accustomed to that kind of accommodation.

Again and again. They were thrown into jail. And delighted.

Reveled in it. Privileged to suffer for Jesus' sake. But while they were in jail.

An angel came and opened the door. The high priest and his friends laid their hands on the apostles. Put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the Lord came by night and opened the prison door. And brought them forth. And he had a message from God.

He said. Go. Just two letters.

Stand. And speak. That's all the angel had to tell them.

Go stand and speak. Go where you're sent. Stay where you're put.

And give what you've got. Those are his marching orders for you and for me. Still today.

Administered by the Holy Spirit who bears witness to the fact. That ours are the only hands today on earth he's got to use. Ours are the only feet with which he can walk.

The lips to speak. And eyes to see. And ears to hear.

Minds to think. And hearts to love. Go.

Go stand and speak. Go where you're sent. No matter where.

Stay where you're put. And give what you've got. And all that you've got to give is all that God has given you himself.

Nobody can have more. Nobody need ever enjoy less. Go stand speak in the temple to the people all the words.

Beautiful description of the gospel. Which is largely forgotten today. The words of this life.

Not the life to come. Not pie in the sky when you die. Not heaven when you're dead.

A new destination instead of hell. That isn't the gospel. All the words of this life.

What life? His life. God's life. Christ's life.

That's the gospel. That's why Jesus said I've come. I've come that you might have life.

And have it more abundantly. In an entirely new dimension. A dimension that a sinner born dead has never tasted until they've come and said.

Thank you Lord Jesus for the blood you shed on the cross to reconcile me to a holy God. So that by your indwelling in the person of the Holy Spirit. I could be recreated and restored to function.

And given by your divine indwelling. All that it takes to fulfill the mission for which man was created. In bringing an invisible God out into the open so that he can be seen.

And an inaudible God out into the open so that it can be heard. These are your marching orders. Go where you're sent.

Stay where you're put. And give what you've got. Life.

All the words of this life. Not the life to come. The gospel has very little to do with getting out of hell and going to heaven.

Though I'm delighted that I am going to heaven and not to hell. I never had too much ambition about going to hell. But that isn't the gospel.

That's the good news. The reconciling work of Christ dying in our stead. Satisfying the demands of a holy God.

But that isn't salvation. Don't just say I'm saved because I'm going to heaven instead of hell. Because that isn't salvation.

You're redeemed and reconciled to God on the absolutely indispensable sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. His death upon the cross. But only so that you and I on the grounds of that redemptive transaction might be qualified to become the recipients as forgiven sinners of his indwelling resurrection life.

Then you can say to me to live. Not to imitate or echo. God didn't intend us to try and copy him or just quote his language.

Otherwise he'd have made us apes or parrots. And God didn't create me just to be an ape to copy God or copy Jesus. Or a parrot simply to quote verses from the Bible and think that's my spirituality.

The devil knows the Bible and believes it. And the Lord Jesus constantly quoted. But he wasn't God because he could quote the Bible.

He was God because conceived of the Holy Spirit a little baby was born nearly 2,000 years ago. And God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Where was God when Jesus was born? In Christ.

That's why Jesus was the only man born alive. Because he was the only one who was indwelt by deity from the moment of conception. Fantastic.

So he preached. They preached. The word of life.

And told boys, girls, men and women. Why don't you come to the Lord Jesus? You were born dead, alienated, cut off, detached from the God who made you. But Jesus has died in your place so that he can come and share his resurrection life with you.

To every boy, girl, man and woman they told the good news. Come alive. That's what it means to know God for yourself.

For to know God for yourself is eternal life. They were on the job. And they were real.

And that was the stamp when finally the early church rediscovered Jesus. Reality. Why doesn't your dad go to the church my dad goes to? And the little friend says, he belongs to another abomination.

Well I've preached in almost every denomination or abomination under the sun. All over the world, literally. That's been my parish.

But the gospel and the fellowship of forgiven sinners indwelt by a living risen saviour isn't an abomination. It's precisely what it's intended to be. A fellowship of forgiven sinners enjoying the life of Jesus and making themselves available to him.

Presenting their bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God. Which is their reasonable, that is, only intelligent service because it's the purpose for which they were created. Wonderful.

So, you put, what do you mean put? Well are you completely convinced that whoever you may be and in whatever vocation you may be, you're in the place where God has put you? If not, then you're a very unhealthy member of his body. I expect my fingers to be where I am and tell them to do what they are supposed to do and expect them to do it. That's a Christian.

I don't expect my fingers to get into committee in the morning under the joint chairmanship of the thumbs and decide what they're going to do on my behalf. That's the popular idea of being a churchman. You get into committee, an enormous number of committees, and decide what you're going to do for Jesus.

He having said without me you can do nothing. So my fingers get into committee under the joint chairmanship of the thumbs and at ten in the morning, when I want to blow my nose, they scratch my back because that's what they decided in committee. That today is the church, it's called the church.

Can you imagine that? The Bible doesn't call it, it calls it the body of Christ. Pulsating with the divine energy of a living Lord, clothing his deity with their activity. Marvelous.

But the origin of that activity has always got to be Christ himself. He's got to be in us and we shall be talking before the end of this week a little more about this. He's got to be the origin in us of his own image.

He's got to be the source in us of his own activity. He's got to be the dynamic in us of his own demands. And at all times, exclusively, he's got to be the cause of his own effect.

So if a person is normal, he's been restored on the grounds of redemption and new birth to function, there's only one person to be congratulated. Jesus. Of whom, through whom, to whom are all things and to whom alone be glory.

A redeemed sinner whose humanity is available to the Lord Jesus. Put. In the place where he was sent.

Excuse me, Paul. Why are you in the ministry? They call you an apostle, a teacher and a preacher. Why are you in the ministry? Put.

What do you mean, put? Well, I was sent. And when? Do you know where to find that? In Paul's epistle to Timothy. Third chapter.

First epistle. And you'll find it. In the Bible.

A man who was sent. And who when? Excuse me licking my fingers. It's the only way I can turn the pages.

And every now and again I run out of lick. Because this hand is paralyzed. That's why with my thumb I keep making holes.

In the pages of my Bible. It's more like a sieve than a Bible. So, first Timothy chapter three.

I beg your pardon, chapter one. And the. Twelve verse.

First Timothy twelve one. I thank Christ Jesus my Lord. Who has enabled me.

For that he counted me faithful. Putting me. Into the ministry.

So, if you ask Paul why he's in the ministry. What would he say? Put. Not because I deserved it.

Or I was smart or holy. I was before, verse thirteen, a blasphemer. I was a persecutor.

I was injurious. People got hurt when I was around. I consented to the death of Stephen.

When they stoned him to death. And relished every moment as his blood ran in the gutter. But I obtained mercy.

Because I did it. In unbelief. My mind was still blinded by Satan.

But I was sent. And I'm put. No longer Saul of Tarsus.

Arch enemy of the early church. But Paul the apostle. Tells us a bit about it in the twenty-sixth chapter.

Of the book of the Acts. Acts in verse, chapter twenty-six. And in a moment I'll be there.

And we'll let him tell you. What he had to say. At that time.

Twenty-sixth chapter. Book of the Acts. And he tells us.

His vocation. At midday, O King. Speaking before the Herod.

I saw in the way a light from heaven. Shining about and above me. As we journeyed.

And when we were all fallen to the earth. I heard a voice speaking unto me. And saying in the Hebrew tongue.

Saul. Saul. Why persecutest thou me? It's hard for you to kick against the priest.

A guilty conscience. I said, who are you Lord? He said, I'm Jesus. Whom you persecute.

But rise, stand upon your feet. For I have appeared unto you for this purpose. To make you a minister.

And a witness. Both of these things which you have seen. And of those things in which I will yet appear unto you.

Delivering you from the people. Delivering you from the Gentiles. Unto whom now I send you.

To turn them from darkness to light. From the power of Satan to God. That they may receive forgiveness of sins.

And inheritance among them which are sanctified. By faith that is in me. I was sent.

And King Herod I went. And I'm put. And that's why King Herod you do not frighten me.

Paul the Apostle. He was sent. And went.

And he was put. Do you remember the time it's described for us in the book of the act? When forty men covenanted to murder him. Assassinate Paul.

On his way to be judged by the Roman Emperor. And a little boy, his nephew. Got wind of it and let the folks know.

And he was saved from assassination. How did they save him? Well the other believers, the other disciples stuck him in a basket. And let him over the wall of Samaria.

And you might have seen him there sitting in a basket. And you might have said, Paul. What are you doing in that basket? I mean you look like a dozen eggs.

What are you doing there? Paul would have said with a grin on his face. Put. What do you mean put? Well it's the only safe place to be.

There are forty men waiting to kill me. And the only safe place for me to be in the city at the moment is in the basket. So I'm happy to be put.

And stay where I'm put until God has accomplished his purpose in my life. Doesn't matter where you are as long as you're put. Do you remember when he was shipwrecked? On his way to be judged.

By the emperor. He had warned them that there was going to be a terrible tempest but they laughed at him. Because the wind blew gently.

How many people have been deceived by a gentle south wind. In the face of a coming storm. They were in a panic.

The crew had already thrown the cargo overboard and now they were throwing the tackling overboard. In a panic. And then suddenly somebody remembered, Paul's on board, he knows God, maybe he can do something about it.

Where is he? They couldn't find him. So finally somebody went down below and there he was in the hole. And they said, Paul, Paul, the ship is sinking.

All he was doing was eating his sack lunch. And so when they burst in and said, the ship is sinking. He said, so what? Well if the ship sinks, we'll sink, you'll sink, we'll all sink.

I said, Paul, God has told me that I'm going to preach the gospel in Rome. He said, you can sink if you like but I'm not going to sink. I'm the unsinkable saint.

And the ship did sink. And Paul preached the gospel in Rome. That's why you have the epistle to the Romans.

The only safe place is in the place where God puts you. Are you Jesus Christ? Well, yes. I mean, do you say that you're the Son of God? That you created the universes and put them into space and the stars into the far corners of the night? That nothing was made that you didn't create? You say you're God? Yes.

Co-equal in deity with the Father and the Holy Spirit and the triune Godhead, you say that? Yes. Then what are you doing on that cross? Why that hostile crowd milling around that Roman gallows? Shouting away with him, crucify. What are you doing there? Put.

What do you mean, put? Well, I was sent. And I went. My Father sent me.

Oh, by the way, as my Father sent me, so sent are you. Any questions? Lord Jesus, no questions. In the light of all you are and all that you have done, no questions.

How could there be any questions? I realised, Lord Jesus, there are no questions for me to ask, only instructions to obey. The coast guard saw the coloured flare that indicated that a ship was floundering and immediately getting the signal, he called upon the lifeboat to launch and go out in rescue. And just quite a short time later, the crew turned up, launched the lifeboat and in the crew there was a kid of barely 16 years of age.

He looked out into that wild night, heard the wind howl around his ears and saw the mountainous waves crashing on the shore. He grabbed the bosun, an old veteran of many such a call. Grabbing him by the arm, he says, Sir, we can't go out in that, we can't.

We can't go out in that. We'll never come back. Putting his muscular arm around the kid's shoulder, he said, Son, out there men are perishing.

We must go out. We don't have to come back. Our business is to answer the call.

It's your business and mine. We don't have to come back. Because one day there's going to be somebody waiting for us.

And we'll see him face to face. And we will have been restored to function. We shall see him as he is and we'll be like him.

Restored to image. Man again. As God intended man to be.

Lord Jesus, thanks. We don't have to come back. All we have to do is go where we're sent.

Stay where we're put and give what we've got. And we have the greatest gift that we as human beings could put on offer in the name of our wonderful Redeemer. Cleansed in his blood and dwelt by his Spirit.

Sharing his life, living every new day one step at a time. Enjoying all the illimitable resources of deity, letting Jesus be God in us. We just want, Lord Jesus, when you come to find us where you put us.

Not with empty hands but those that you were pleased to fill. And share with the needy, lost, fallen world. Thank you.

Dear Lord, Amen.

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