

Poor, Blind, Beggarly Believer

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the necessity of understanding Jesus' death and righteousness for true salvation and acceptance by God.

Duration: 1:12:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 7:30, John 8:20, John 12:23-24, John 13:1, John 17:1

Topics: "Spiritual Need"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a simple illustration used by Jesus in John 12:23-24. Jesus speaks of the hour of his glorification and uses the analogy of a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying to illustrate the purpose of his coming into the world. The main point of the illustration is that through his death and resurrection, Jesus would share his life with countless others. The speaker emphasizes that sin separates man from God, and it is through Jesus' atoning death that this separation is overcome, allowing for the sharing of his life with believers.

Transcript

As the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, once more tonight will delight to take us into the treasure house and boast, boast of God's Son, so that he may become precious and real and vital in our experience. Tonight we're going to turn to one of the simplest illustrations that the Lord Jesus used. And of course, he delighted to illustrate the most profound spiritual truths in the simplest possible way.

And this is one of them. And it's found in John's Gospel and the 12th chapter. John chapter 12, verse 23.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Admittedly from that introduction, we recognize that this is to be an hour of unusual significance.

Which at first, we might find a little strange, because the testimony of the Lord Jesus was this, I do only, always, those things that please Him. In other words, there was never a moment at any time, on any occasion, in the 33 years in which as God incarnate, he walked this earth as perfect man, in which everything that he ever did or said or was, was anything but an absolutely valid expression of his Father's mind and will and purpose. Therefore, at first we might think it a little strange that there could be any moment of time of greater significance than another.

But this is an hour to which reference is made on several occasions. For instance, in the 7th chapter of John's Gospel, in verse 30, they sought to take the Lord Jesus, but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. In the 20th verse of the following, the 8th chapter, these words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple, and no man came to him, for his hour was not yet come.

In the 13th chapter, and the 1st verse, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And in his prayer recorded, glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee. And of course in the same chapter, the chapter from which I quoted the 1st verse, and the 27th verse, 1227, said the Lord Jesus, now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour.

So quite obviously, this hour was to be one of unusual significance, and of course the Lord Jesus, as you know, leaves us in absolutely no ambiguity as to what was to occur on that occasion. For he goes on in the 24th verse of that 12th chapter of John, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

I'd like to read you those two verses, out of the amplified New Testament. In the 23rd and the 24th verse of John 12, Jesus answered them, the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified and exalted. I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains, it remains just one grain, never becomes more, but lives by itself, alone.

It remains and lives alone, will never ever become more. But if it dies, it produces many others and yields a rich harvest. Now there, in all its sublime simplicity, is the illustration used by the Lord Jesus to comprehend the total purpose for which the Father God in heaven, together with the Holy Spirit, sent him as the Son incarnate into this world.

What's the main thrust of the illustration? Not his death, of course, though his death will be imperative, for without it, he will live and remain alone. The main thrust of the illustration is this, that when a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it is not that it might perish, but that through death its life might be released in resurrection, to be shared with countless others. And in this marvelous, simple way, the Lord Jesus spelled out, loud and clear, the purpose for which, as God incarnate, he came into this world, lived that sinless life, and then died that atoning death, it was to the end that through death, in resurrection, he might share his life with you and with me.

Without which death he would live and remain to be eternally lonely. You see, it's sin that separates man from God. The wages of sin is death.

So that had the Lord Jesus never ever been God, as God he was, but just supposing he had never ever been God, but just man, man as God created man to be, man so perfect that the Father God from heaven could look down with utter satisfaction and find in the person of the Lord Jesus the kind of man that in the counsels of eternity God intended man to be. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, of whom we read in God's word, in him there was no sin. So that had he never ever been God, but only, always, only man, he would have had the absolute right to enter into God's presence.

And stay there forever, as God, as man. The inalienable right to live and remain forever, to be eternally lonely. You see, there are some folk who would have us believe that the Christian life simply derives from our ability or attempt to emulate the beautiful life that he lived.

That there was no particular significance in his atoning death. They would have us believe that his death was simply the... of the life of a noble idealist, who philosophized, and who paid ultimately the price of being too progressive for his age. He died the death of a martyr.

There's no particular atoning efficacy in the blood that he shed. The significance of his coming was simply the life that he lived. There was no particular significance in the way he was born, and there was no particular significance in the way that he died.

In point of fact, there are some who will go so far as to say in point of fact it wouldn't really have mattered whether he was born or ever die. For he is the composite man. He is simply the one upon whom we gaze, and in our noblest endeavors, and motivated by the sincerest desire, we seek to copy the life he lived, and the measure in which we emulate his example, that is the measure in which we have become Christians.

In other words, you do your best to be like Jesus. All right, let's examine that for a little while. Born as he may have been, and there being no significance in the death that he died, the only important thing being that he lived that kind of life as a target that we should aim at, just supposing the Lord Jesus did only come into this world to live that kind of life, and then return to be with his Father in Heaven.

What could the life that the Lord Jesus lived then, in its perfection, in its sublime majesty and beauty, what could that life have done for you and for me now? Now that's an important question, because if you and I are going to stake our eternity upon our capacity to emulate the example that he set, and copy the standard that he established, we need to know, for our intelligent satisfaction, what actually his life then, purely as an example, could do for you and for me now. Is it a solid, genuine premise upon which we can establish our claim to be I am a Christian, because I am making Jesus Christ my example, he is the one whom I emulate, it is the life that he lived I try to copy. And I believe that I am a Christian, because to the uttermost of my ability, I am trying to do just that.

All right, then if that is going to be the ground upon which I ultimately expect to stand before God and find acceptability in the presence of my creator, I need to have some solid substantiation of that hypothesis. Therefore I suggest that it would be very intelligent, a very sensible thing for us to do, to take a few minutes of research, and discover what in point of fact, the life that he lived then, could do for you and me now. Let's turn to the 10th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, as a starting point for our research.

Romans and chapter 10. And here the apostle says, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is this, that they might be saved. His prayer and concern for his own kith and kin in Israel says the apostle Paul is that they might be saved.

And of course, that presupposes that they're not. But his concern is that they might be. For, he continues in the second verse, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, they practice religion, they're found regularly in their place in public worship, they testify their faith, they conform to the requirements imposed upon them by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, they practice their religion with no little sincerity and no little integrity.

Says the apostle Paul, I have to credit them with this, they practice religion with a zeal of God. But, not according to knowledge. So he is concerning himself here with sincere men and women who practice religion, with a zeal of God, but they're not saved, and the reason is that they are practicing religion, not according to knowledge.

I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Now if you do something which is not according to knowledge, of course you do it being uninformed in ignorance. So there must have been something of which they were ignorant in the practice of their religion, which disqualified them from being saved.

Now what was the nature of their ignorance? They practice religion not according to knowledge. What then was the nature of their ignorance? Well we're not in doubt about that. The next verse goes on to tell us, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness.

They were ignorant of God's righteousness. Well what did that do for them? If they were ignorant of God's righteousness, what was the damage that that did to them in their practice of religion? Well being ignorant of God's righteousness, in other words the minimal requirements that he as their creator has the absolutely reasonable right to make upon them as creatures made in his complete and total image, being ignorant on the basis of their practice of religion to settle for a standard of righteousness that fell tragically short of the standard of righteousness that God as creator has the right to demand of them. That is the nature of their ignorance.

They were ignorant of the righteousness of God, and being ignorant of the demands of that righteousness were prepared to settle for another kind of righteousness that in God's eyes is totally inadequate. Let me read the total verse of the third verse there of the tenth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. They've been ignorant of God's righteousness, and in that ignorance going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

You see if you're ignorant of the demands that God's righteousness makes upon you then you will go about to establish your own righteousness on some standard that is other than God's standard. And of course the standard by which they evaluated themselves and established their own righteousness was a standard that was being arbitrarily set by the ecclesiastical authorities of their day and the scribes and the Pharisees. In other words, respectable religion.

Because the scribes and the Pharisees had presumed to substitute their procedures for the demands of a holy God. Now they were ignorant of God's righteousness because from their earliest days, from their earliest childhood they had been taught by the scribes and the Pharisees that so long as they attended church on so many occasions, so long as they paid their tithe, so long as they did this and they did that, so long as in other words they conformed to the requirements of their local church as such, that in itself would be equated with the kind of righteousness that would be acceptable by God. You do, said the scribes and the Pharisees, your stuff and we'll take responsibility of getting you into heaven.

Now, bear this in mind if you had been a little child and for the earliest days from the year dot you'd been taught that all you had to do was to go to church, pay your tithe, do this, do that, exactly what the priest and that would represent righteousness and God would accept you on the basis of your performance, well wouldn't you expect to get to heaven? Once you'd done your stuff? After all you put the penny in, you ought to get your gum. How tragic that there are tens of millions of people today in the world who are reared in the same abysmal ignorance of God's righteousness, and in their pathetic ignorance, are settling for a righteousness which is abysmally inadequate. Do you know what the Lord Jesus said about the righteousness to which they submitted? He called it the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, the respectability that was credited to those who were good churchgoers and conformed to reasonable

ecclesiastical requirements.

Said the Lord Jesus, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Any ambiguity about that? Could the Lord Jesus have spelled it out more categorically than that? Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise, under no circumstances, enter into the kingdom of heaven. They being ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

Of course if in the ignorance of God's righteousness and its demands that that makes upon you, you go about to establish your own righteousness on some other basis of evaluation, all that you produce by virtue of your behavior is not God's righteousness but self-righteousness. And self-righteousness is hopelessly, hopelessly inadequate. For, verse 4, the same chapter, Christ is the end of the lawful righteousness to everyone that believes.

In other words the Apostle Paul as we shall discover in a moment, recognizing that there is no boy, girl, man or woman who has ever been born into this world since Adam fell, who could ever, on their own, satisfy the minimal demands of a holy God, of a man made in his own absolute image, recognizing that fact, sees as the only possible hope for any boy, any girl, any man or any woman to enter acceptably into God's presence, is that that boy, that girl, that man, that woman should be clothed upon with a righteousness that is not inherently their own but which has been credited them in the infinite mercy of a holy God, in the beloved Jesus, wearing the wedding garment of his sparklessness. As the Lord Jesus indicated in his parable of the wedding breakfast. And you will remember the invitation was given to all in the highways and the byways and the alleys to come to the wedding, wedding feast.

But in the parable there used by the Lord Jesus of course, as the custom was there were servants at the door, equipped with the wedding garments that each guest must receive, placing it over their own clothing, so that each might find equal acceptance in the presence of their royal host. But here's a man who comes and says, I don't need that. I consider that I'm completely adequate.

I'm offended at the suggestion that I am not adequately attired for such an occasion. And the faithful servant at the door says, I'm sorry sir, but I have received strict instructions from the king, that no boy, girl, man or woman invited to this wedding feast is to be allowed in other than clad in the wedding garment that he by royal decree has made available for those who have been invited. I am sorry sir, I do not have the authority to let you in other than wearing the wedding garment.

And that man, in proud indignation, considering himself completely adequate, incensed at the suggestion that he needs anything other than what he is and has got, stalks off in a rage. But in the parable you remember that the Lord Jesus told, marvellous illustration, an unfaithful servant, runs up, taps him on the arm and says, sir, I understand exactly how you feel. If I were you, I would be just as angry as you are.

I think it's preposterous that a man in your position, your standing, your financial backing, your family pedigree, your culture, your education, should receive such an insolent rebuff. But I tell you what sir, I'll get you in. I'll get you in.

Come with me. So he takes him round the back. I don't know how he got him in, but he got him in.

He got him in, the unfaithful servant. That's really the name of the parable. It's the parable of the unfaithful servant, who defied his king, lied to a man, and said he could get him in.

And he got him in. And my, he was just as pleased as punch. All these stupid simpletons, who at the door had received the wedding garment, and here he was, stalking around, advertising his own adequacy.

Yes, everything was fine, until the king came. And there was a strange hush. And every eye followed the gaze of the king, as he focused upon one man, without a wedding garment.

And there was a hush. Every heart beat that little bit faster, as the king, never for one moment shifting his gaze, walked straight across to that man, and he said, friend, how camest thou in, without a wedding garment? And the story tells us, that though this man had so much to say, to the servant at the door, in the presence of the king, he was speechless. And the king said, bind him hand and foot, and cast him out, into outer darkness.

Yes, a marvelous picture, you see, of a man who practices religion, not according to knowledge. Who insists on parading himself in the presence of a holy God, in a self-righteousness, that he considers he has achieved, in his ignorance of the minimal demands of God's righteousness. Those minimal demands, that have been penned, as I have already reminded you, by the finger of God upon tables of stone, that were placed in the hands of Moses in Mount Sinai.

In which God plainly indicated, I as God, made you in my image, and I expect of you, that you give a valid expression, in all that you do, and say and are, of my absolute righteousness. And when, as I have reminded you, that the law says, thou shalt not steal, God is simply saying, I as your God, made you in my likeness, as my creature, and I am not a thief. And when the law says, thou shalt not bear false witness, God is simply saying, as your creator, I made you in my image.

And my controversy with you, is that having created you in my absolute likeness, so that all creation can look at you, and know what God is like, by what you have been doing, and what you have been saying, and what you have been, you have been telling lies about me. That's why the Bible tells us, of course, that God isn't measuring how good you are, God isn't measuring how bad you are. He's not particularly interested, because so much of that, is the accident of birth, the kind of family you were born into.

He's not measuring how good you are, he's not measuring how bad you are. The only thing that God measures, is how good you're not. For there is no difference, all have sinned, and come short of the glory.

And any boy, any girl, any man, any woman, who has been instructed in the righteousness of God, knows perfectly well they have come short. And there is only one possible remedy for each one of us, who has come short of God's glory, and that is that there should be credited to us, something that we do not deserve, nor could ever earn. The righteousness of Christ, which satisfies every demand that the law might make upon a man.

For Christ is the end of that law, for righteousness to everyone who believes. Any boy, any girl, any man, any woman, who is prepared to admit, I fall short of God's righteousness, I can never attain to it, but I claim by faith what I do not deserve, to have credited to me the righteousness of the one, who upon the cross, had credited to him my guilt. And God has pledged his name, his honor, and his glory, to accept for his dear sake, who bore our sins, in his own body on the tree.

Who suffered the just, for the unjust. Christ, the end of the law for righteousness. Let's paraphrase that.

The Lord Jesus, by the life that he lived, was the last word in righteousness. There was not a single moment at any time, in any situation, or by any act, in which the law, in its minimal demand for the holy God, upon man, his creature, could point the finger of accusation at Jesus Christ, and find him guilty. For you see, sin is the transgression of that law, and he was without sin.

All right? For thirty-three years, the Father God, looked down from heaven, and recognized in the person of his Son, a man, a real man! Who by everything he ever did and said and was, gave a valid expression of God's absolute righteousness, and said, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, who by everything he does and says he is, completely satisfies every demand that we, by the law, make upon a man. So what could the life that the Lord Jesus lived then, do for you and for me now? Well that now is a very simple question to answer. Because you see, if the life that he lived, satisfied the demands of the law, then we may say that the righteousness that was demonstrated by his life, may legitimately be equated with the righteousness demanded by God's law.

If the life that he lived satisfied the law's demands, then the righteousness of his life, demonstrated the righteousness demanded by the law. There could be absolutely no difference between the two qualities of righteousness. Because by everything he did, everything he said, and everything he was, he satisfied totally to his Father's satisfaction, the minimal demands that he has, through the law, imposed upon man.

So the righteousness of his life, may be equated with the righteousness demanded by the law. Now we're one stage farther then, in our research. Because if the righteousness of his life, may be equated with the righteousness demanded by God's law, it is quite obvious that the life then, that he lived at that time, can do no more for you and me now, than the law can do for you and me now.

Alright, what can the law do for you and for me now? Let's have a look, in the same epistle, but the third chapter. And of course our research, is of paramount importance. Because almost certainly in such a congregation as this, there are men and women and young people, who are actually expecting to get to heaven on the basis of doing their best.

Of achieving a righteousness that they hope will be satisfying to their creator. And of course nothing could be farther from the truth. What does the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans say? Well, verse 19.

We know that what things whoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law. Well that's reasonable enough. Whatever the law says, it quite obviously says to those who are under that law.

In other words, when I walk down the street and I see a speed limit sign, 35 miles an hour, as a pedestrian, I'm not unduly concerned. I don't usually walk that fast. I say to myself at once, that is for the cars.

That is for the motorcyclists. That is for trucks. But that isn't for me.

We know that what things whoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law. In other words, there is no man, no woman, no boy, no girl in this building here tonight. Who does not have the inalienable, unchallengeable right, if he, she so desires, to look up into God's face and say, I don't need your Jesus.

I don't need the cross. I don't need his shed blood. I don't need redemption.

I don't need this conversion stuff. I don't need to be born again. I demand as your creature to be judged by you as my creator on the basis of my performance in satisfying the demands of your law.

If your law is what you as God demand of me as man, I demand to be judged on the basis of my performance. Now, my dear friend, I want you to know that you have the absolute unchallengeable right to demand of God to be judged on that basis. Nobody is going to deny you that right.

I certainly cannot, and would not, and will not. Nor God himself. If you opt in that direction, God will bow to your choice.

But out of kindness to you, out of sheer kindness to you, he tells you exactly in advance what the inevitable consequence will be if you insist as his creature upon being judged by him as your creator on the basis of your performance in satisfying the demands of his law. Read on. We know that what thingsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Could God in fairness, could God in kindness have spelled it out clearer than that? He says if you want to be judged by him on the basis of your performance in satisfying the demands of his law, you may.

But all that the law will do will be to stop your mouth, expose your sin and prove you guilty. Here's a simple illustration, just to give you a breather. Because I'm asking you to think.

And that's always strenuous. I might, and this is a simple illustration I've used many many times, I might say to you I consider myself to be somewhat of an amateur mason. In other words my peculiar hobby is a bricklayer.

I build things in my spare time. Now it isn't strictly true, but supposing it were. And so in my backyard I build dinky little things, you see.

And when I build some dinky little things, to satisfy my pride, to satisfy my ego, I invite one of the neighbours, and his wife, to dinner. I give them a very good meal, and I take them out into my yard, and I say what do you think of that? And being a good neighbour, and having had a good meal, they say magnificent. I'd like to congratulate, man, he said that's terrific.

I wish I'd got your gift. And of course I agree wholeheartedly with everything he has to say. That was the object of the exercise.

But you know when you've done that enough times, finally it gets a little tedious, a little boring, because you know perfectly well they don't know the first thing about it anyway. So on the next occasion when I have produced something rather unusual, I decide that I will invite a man whose name is tops in the trade. One of the finest.

And I give him an unusually good meal. And then I bring him out, and I say now what do you think of that? And as he gazes at it, and my chest swells, and my chin sticks out about seven and a half inches, I can see him drinking in obvious admiration. And I say well what do you think? Well he says that's not bad.

I say I beg your pardon? Well he said I said it isn't bad. I said what do you mean it isn't bad? Of course it isn't bad. I did it! Oh yes, he says I can see that.

And I'm getting a little hot around the neck. Like somebody who's been going to church for years and suddenly is confronted by a man in the pulpit who has the impudence to say that he's a sinner who needs to get saved. Ought to be born again.

That it's time he obeyed the command of Jesus Christ to all men everywhere to repent and be converted. And of course if we don't agree with that, then the special services conducted throughout this country yesterday were just a religious facade and nothing but unadulterated hypocrisy. He says I can see that.

Well a little hot around the neck, I say well what's wrong with it anyway? Well he said please don't get angry with me. He said I think it's a magnificent effort really, for a beginner. And I'm getting a little hot around the neck.

Now he says you see, if you had taken the trumpet and looked at it from where I am looking at it, you would see that in point of fact it's sort of leaning, it's about two and a half inches out from top to bottom. And not only that, but if you had looked at it from here, you'd see there's a sort of uneven bulge in the middle. And by this time I'm just about to explode.

No he says please don't explode. Make such a mess. He says just wait a minute.

And he slips back into the house and out of his jacket, maybe you won't be able to see that from here, but he produces a plumb line. And he brings his plumb line against my wall. And a sort of sickly grin spreads across my face.

Because you see it's about two and a half inches out from top to bottom. And when I look at it from the place where he's looking at it, there's a sort of ugly twist and bulge in the centre. And do I hate his plumb line? Say what has this plumb line done for my wall? Made it straight? No because no plumb line has yet been invented that can make a crooked wall straight.

All that a plumb line can do is prove a crooked wall crooked. That's why crooked walls hate plumb lines. That's why you see it's only those who are not good who don't like to read the Bible and don't like to understand what it's saying.

The most encouraging thing to me in the Bible is that God makes it abundantly clear that a man who's good enough to know that he isn't good enough will always be saved. You can check that in the story of the conversion of Cornelius who was a man so good in the eyes of his fellow man that as an occupying officer of a Roman army even the Jews whose nation he occupied couldn't help but look upon him with the utmost affection and the utmost respect. And yet that man was so good that he knew he wasn't good enough.

That's why all really good people always get saved. Not because they're good but because they're good enough to know that they're not good enough. That they've fallen short of God's glory.

Well if the law can only stop your mouth, expose your sin and prove you guilty as God's plumb line and that of course is why he gave us the law 430 years after God promised Jesus as the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. Galatians chapter 3 verse 17 430 years after God pledged the birth of his son Jesus who in my eyes of our redemption 430 years after that God gave the law

to pig-headed proud men and women that were the kindest who were exactly kind of a savior. In other words, continuing in that third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

That we might be justified, justified just as if I'd never sinned justified by faith in the one who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. So that if the law is our schoolmaster to teach us that we're sinners and the life that he lived demonstrated the righteousness that is demanded by the law what could the life that the Lord Jesus lived then do for you and for me now if he did no more come into this world, live that life and go back to heaven. The life that he lived then if he had only done that and gone back to heaven to live forever would have done no more than the law can do for you and for me now because if you choose, so choose to be judged by God on the basis of your performance in imitating his life that satisfies that law then his life will condemn you as soundly as the law condemns you because you can no more imitate his life to God's satisfaction than you can satisfy the demands of God's law to God's satisfaction.

Both would condemn you. Message understood? Then why did Jesus Christ come into this world two thousand years ago to live the kind of life that satisfying the demands of God's law can only stop your mouth and mine, expose our sin and prove us guilty? To depress us? To make us feel miserable? To grind us in the dirt? To mock us? No. It was the life that he lived that qualified him for the death that he died.

As some of us saw last evening. The love of God constrains us for we thus judge that if one died for all then we're all dead. The only way one died for all was that all being dead can't die because dead men can't die, they can only stay dead or come alive and that dead men might come alive, there came into this world one who was capable of dying because he wasn't born dead because you and I were born the fallen seed of a fallen Adam and he wasn't.

Said he to Pharisees, you are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. You were born by natural animal birth and as such you were born into this world of the heirs of a fallen man.

I was born miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit not inhabited by sin but inhabited only by God. To present my body in totality, body, soul, spirit, mind and emotion and will 24 hours every day, 7 days every week for 33 solid years to my father as God through the eternal spirit through whom my father having given himself to me without measure might teach my mind, control my emotions, direct my will and govern my behaviour so that for 33 years by everything I do and say and am clothed with that flesh and blood presented to me by my father on that first Christmas morning when I was nursed in my mother's arms I might give a valid, unspotted, unblemished, unsullied expression of my father's mind and will and purpose.

And then, having lived as man, spiritually and physically alive to his total satisfaction for 33 years I could look up into my father's face and say Father, the hour has come that this grain of wheat may fall into the ground and die because Father, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it will remain, yes it will live, yes but it will remain and it will live, Father, forever lonely and Father, because they're dirty, because they're sinful, because they've transgressed our law because they've fallen short of our glory because as the fallen seed of a fallen Adam they forfeited our life No boy, no girl, no man or woman out of any nation, kindred, tribe or tongue no matter what their culture, no matter what the colour of their skin no matter what their financial stability no

boy, no girl, Father, no man, no woman on this earth, this planet that we made to be inhabited by man in our image not one boy, girl, man or woman, Father, can ever come alive but because, Father, we agreed in the eternal ages of the past that on the cross you should credit me with their guilt and I would die in their place forfeiting your presence, Father that life that they by nature do not possess you can credit to them my death in full and final settlement of their account and on the basis of that atoning sacrifice be prepared to restore to them by the gift of the Holy Spirit that life that was lost in Adam that by the restoration of the Holy Spirit in life, death may be abolished and I in him may inhabit their humanity, Father as at this moment you by the same Holy Spirit inhabit

mine but of course it will depend, Father, whether they are prepared to admit themselves to be the sinners that they are and will humbly accept me as their Redeemer and present then their bodies to me, Father as I now sinlessly present my body to you so you see the life that he lived qualified him for the death that he died because the sinless Saviour died my sinful soul is counted free and God the just is satisfied to look on him condemned and pardon me now, presuming that admitting yourself to be the sinner that you are you would deter Christ and say, Lord Jesus, thank you I'm one of the sinners for whom you died my sin was added to your burden that you bore in my place the choir in their ministry to us in song posed the question why did they crucify him? you don't need to ask that

question he bore our sins in his own body on the tree he suffered the just for the unjust he was wounded for our transgressions and he was bruised for our iniquities and the cost of our peace with God was laid upon him the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleansed us from all sin this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners well, presuming that you have admitted that under the intuition of the schoolmaster, the law you've admitted that you're guilty and you've turned to Christ and humbly accepted him as your redeemer and for his dear sake God has accepted you in the beloved you're acquitted and you're free great and I'll tell you something you have the right to know that and you don't even have to wait for me to complete

this sentence you certainly don't have to wait for any kind of public invitation you certainly don't have to wait for any kind of after-instruction at the conclusion of this service if there was ever any doubt in your mind as to whether you were a redeemed sinner when you came through that door into this church building before ever I have completed this sentence in your heart you could say Lord Jesus, thank you for what you did for me upon the cross and here and now I enter into the good of it though I don't deserve it I take what you are prepared to give and you would have the right to know as you went out of that door tonight that for his dear sake who took your place the father is in honor bound to him to receive you and you could kneel by your bedside tonight and say Lord Jesus this

is the very first time I'm going to bed and to sleep as a forgiven sinner and when I awaken in the morning it will be as a child of God forever isn't that terrific now that's the gospel I mean that's the beginning of the gospel because assuming that you do that or have done that does the knowledge in itself that your sins are forgiven because he died in your place does that knowledge in itself give to you the power to be a different kind of person no the knowledge that your sins are forgiven because he died for you may create within your heart a desire to be different out of a sense of gratitude or duty or genuine love but it doesn't in itself give you the power to implement that desire and this of course is the main thrust of the parable that the Lord Jesus is here using because you see

if the life that he lived qualified him for the death that he died this is the fantastic news of the gospel the death that he died qualifies you and me now to receive by the gift of the Holy Spirit the life that he lived

that's the gospel the life that he lived then qualified him for the death that he died but the death that he died then qualifies you and me now as forgiven sinners to receive the life that he lived and the Christian life you see is the life that he lived then lived now by him in you and that's the only thing that makes the Christian life a working proposition because if we cannot imitate his example nor copy his life any more than we can satisfy the demands of God's law then his death for us in acquitting us and paying our debt might well indeed make us fit for heaven but

it would leave us mortally unfit for earth but the glorious fantastic news of the gospel is that the Lord Jesus having by his death accomplished that redemptive transaction that allows a holy God to receive you as an acquitted sinner forgiven and cleansed forever on that basis he the risen Lord comes by the Holy Spirit to reinvade your human spirit and from within your human spirit by your consent he will reinvade your human soul he'll teach your mind control your emotions direct your will and govern your behavior and you can say then to me to live is Christ for I am crucified with Christ I'm the one whom the Father identified with him who died in my place nevertheless I live yet not I a marvelous thing has happened God has accepted me for his sake as a forgiven sinner and the life that I

now live I live through faith Jesus lives in me I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I not I Christ lives in me not just as a figure of speech not just as a sentiment not just as a fidelical jargon but as a glorious thrilling robust hilarious adventuresome full-blooded reality so that I can step out into the dawn of every new day and know that he being who he is living now where he does in my heart can never ever at any time be less than big enough for any situation that will ever arise any threat that may confront me or decision that I need to make or responsibility that I need to carry all the illimitable resources that are in him are now in me in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in whom we are complete say that's something that's historical biblical

life-transforming gospel and as some of us are discovering in the morning sessions this is the discovery that the apostles and the disciples had to make who for three solid years with the utmost dedication and sentimental attachment and a considerable amount of loyalty and enthusiasm hadn't a clue what it was all about who didn't want the cross nor believe in the resurrection and who when they were confronted by the women who testified that the tomb was empty and that they had been rebuked by the angels for looking for the living among the dead they said I don't care again what changed their lives when they discovered that the grain of wheat went into the ground and died not that his life might perish but that his life might be shared with them through the person of the Holy Spirit in the

power of his resurrection that the redemptive act was designed to precipitate a regenerative process the life of God restored to the soul of man who has been born without exception spiritually destitute and dead ever since the day man died and the invitation of the gospel to you and to me is come alive for only two things can happen to the dead stay dead that's why you don't have to do a thing to go to hell just stay dead or come alive may I ask you a very simple question have you ever yet exercised your option or do you like Paul's own kith and kin have a sincere earnest zeal of God but not according to knowledge it may just be possible that there is somebody here tonight who has been listening to the counsel of an unfaithful servant who has persuaded that he'll get you in God help you

if you believe it Jesus said I am the way I am the truth I am the life the word of reconciliation behold my hands and my feet a word of emancipation this will set you free and a word of participation for the moment that you come to me and place your trust in me as your redeemer in that moment of time I will seal that transaction by restoring to you my life in the gift of my spirit and then we will live together forever so God

says come alive why don't you trade your inadequacy for his sufficiency why don't you trade your poverty for his wealth your weakness for his strength why don't you trade your state of death for his life an old Indian beggar was sitting fingering the rice in his bowl and suddenly suddenly heard the sound of carriage wheels an Indian Raja a prince and he hoped that as

the wealthy Indian prince rolled by in his carriage he might toss out of the window some coin out of charity but to his amazement and delight the carriage stopped and the prince stepping out looked across to the beggar and said he to him beggar will thou give me of thy rice a curse beneath his breath I a beggar give him my rice and angrily he thrust his hand into the bowl and took out one grain and placed it in the prince's hand and the prince said is that all that thou wilt give me and in his rage he thrust another grain of rice into the prince's hand and the prince bowed and said thank you beggar turned stepped back into his carriage and drove off and white as a sheet in his rage livid the beggar began to finger the grains of rice in his bowl when suddenly he saw something glitter and

taking it out he found it was a little pellet of gold just the size of a piece of rice and he looked again and he found a second and feverishly he searched for more but there were no more and suddenly to his dismay he discovered that for every grain of rice he'd received a grain of gold and as the tears coursed down his cheeks he cried oh Roger if only I had known thou shouldst have had all my rice my rice for your gold his spotless righteousness for our impurity his majestic wealth for our poverty it behoves us for the bankrupts that we are to trade and say Lord Jesus there's not one of us in this building here tonight that deserves one iota of what with your pierced hand you wait to give but I'm ready to trade if never before right now thank you you died that I might be forgiven and you

will live to make me good I'm through for tonight but have you exercised your option are you willing to trade I don't give too often what is popularly called an invitation sometimes it can be very very meaningful and it's legitimate and has a valid place when we unashamedly identify ourselves as a forgiven sinner for Jesus sake with God's people and before the end of this week it may well be that I will give you such an opportunity to affirm your faith relationship to Jesus Christ now tonight I'm not going to give such an invitation but at the same time I want at the close of this service to allow no boy, no girl no man or woman to leave this building and yet to say deep down in my heart I wanted just what that man was talking about but he didn't tell me quite exactly how to see Christ so

I know that you will forgive me if without any embarrassment to anybody tonight I give you the simplest opportunity in childlike faith if never before to abolish once and forever any doubt that may linger still in your heart as to whether or not you've exercised your option and as whether or not God has accepted you in the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness forgiven, acquitted, saved forever and this is how we're going to do it a great number of those of us present can look back with profound thankfulness to God to the moment when understanding intelligently the issues at stake we turn to Christ thanked Him deliberately and personally invited Him to introduce us to the Father as those whom He redeemed that this might be sealed instantly by the restoration to us factually,

experientially of His presence through the gift of the Holy Spirit through whose presence we come alive born again we can look back to that and we've lived in some measure in the good of it now, you folk who can thus look back may I ask you tonight to help me in a very simple way help any boy any girl any man any woman deliberately intelligently at this moment to receive Christ as their Savior I'm going to pray as once I prayed as a boy unknown to anybody in the silence of my heart nobody knew the night I received Christ it was a transaction essentially between myself and Him but I can tell you from a quarter to nine

Saturday night 13th of August 1927 I've never ever once doubted the transaction that took place between my heart then and Jesus Christ and it is the only solid reason why I'm

here tonight so I'm going to pray very simply now as I once prayed then just sentence by sentence in the simplest possible language and I'm going to invite you folk who know and love Jesus Christ to pray after me just like one big family aloud not for yourself because you know as I do you can only pray this once for yourself then it's sealed forever but I'm going to ask you to do this so that any person with any doubt in their heart tonight without any embarrassment to them can add their voice to ours just as though nobody were here but they and the Lord Jesus that's how we're going to do it then with a word of encouragement I shall pronounce the benediction and you can go home now are you in doubt as to whether or not you've exercised your option I'm not challenging your churchmanship

you've had a zeal of God but it may well be not according to knowledge and eternity is at stake your relationship to God maybe you've never quite before this understood his terms of reference may I invite you if there is the sincere desire in your heart to be a genuine real Christian to know Christ for yourself not in a creed but in your heart may I invite you in the name of the Lord Jesus to join us as we pray I shall ask you to do no more than that because I'm perfectly satisfied that he by his Holy Spirit instantly will bear witness with your spirit that he has accepted you in the Saviour's name for he the Father can do no other without betraying his Son would you like to do that now let's pray I'm going to pray very simply sentence by sentence Christian folk because they love him who

has saved them and because they love you are going very simply in exactly the same words to pray aloud after me so that you may engage at this moment specifically deliberately intelligently and exercise your option we in his name invite you to join us as we pray speaking not to us but to him let us pray

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