

Tables of Stone

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the adventure of the Christian life through invoking God's activity and being sent to fulfill His purpose.

Duration: 1:14:45

Topics: "Law Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing our dependence on God and His ability to work through us in every situation. He highlights that every day is an opportunity for God to demonstrate His adequacy in our lives, even in the midst of difficulties and challenges. The speaker shares a story about a man joining a lifeboat crew and facing his first emergency, illustrating the need to trust in God's power and provision. The sermon concludes with a reference to John 15:5, reminding listeners that we are branches connected to the vine, Jesus, and that our effectiveness comes from abiding in Him.

Transcript

With Maker Ian Thomas speaking. What a fantastic privilege it is to be a Christian, to be a redeemed sinner, utterly undeserving, completely unmerited, and yet at peace with God our Maker, and excited to step out into every new day, knowing that it's going to be the sheer adventure of sharing life with Him, our God, on Earth, on the way to heaven. What more can you ask for there? And problems, marvels, difficulties, threats, trials, perplexities, all of them providing our Lord Jesus with a new and fantastic opportunity to demonstrate His adequacy in deity.

That's what makes life so interesting. Specific dialogues are no problem. Wouldn't it be remarkable if it went to difficulties, but every day, you see, is an opportunity for Him to demonstrate afresh that He in us is gloriously adequate.

No emergencies. The Chinese word for emergency is dangerous opportunity. That's a beautiful definition of an emergency as far as God is concerned.

It's just a dangerous to ask opportunity to Him. That's all, and you and I have been called upon to live that quality of life. What is impact going to be? Well, we believe that in the purpose of God, in the measure in which we reconcile to our Creator, indwelt by our Lord Jesus, empowered by His Spirit, we make ourselves available to Him so He will continue in and throughout to discharge His ancient office of seeking

and saving that which was lost.

Let me read these few verses to you. It's from the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Romans chapter 10, verse 30. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, invoking all that he is.

Don't forget that definition of what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. That's the lovely way in which it's put in the Amplified New Testament, invoking all that he is. The word invoke, as you know, simply means to draw upon his resources and bring him into action.

You invoke another person's activity, and when you call upon the name of the Lord, you invoke his activity. By your attitude of faith that continues to be whole, you release his activity in terms of your humanity. You let him loose.

You turn it over to him. Calling upon the name of the Lord shouldn't say that is to say every boy, girl, man, or woman convicted by the gracious, loving, holy Spirit of their need as sinners, turning to the Lord Jesus for the sake he came to be, invokes his redemptive activity, puts him into action. I'm one of the sinners.

You died to save. Thank you so much. I want you to get to work on me, because I'm one of the sinners.

You died to save. And the promise of God, his pledge, is this. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, without a shadow of a doubt, absolutely without any ambiguity whatever, shall be saved.

Saved in the fullest possible sense of the term, because you see, when you call upon his name, you not only invoke his redemptive activity, you invoke his regenerative activity. You recognize that he's not only going to move into your experience to redeem you by his death and reconcile you to God, he's going to move into your experience and all the power of his resurrection by restoring to you his Holy Spirit, and by his presence, credit you with his resurrection life, so that you're going to be saved, you're going to be being saved, and one day you will be saved. Saved from the penalty of sin, I am saved.

Being saved from the power of sin, and one day in his presence I'll be delivered from the very presence of sin, so that having been saved and being saved, one day I will be saved, and then that will be the final consummation of that salvation, that so great salvation that he came to provide to you and to me. Then he goes on to say this, verse 40, How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How are they going to invoke the activity of somebody about whom they have not become convinced? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How are they going to invoke the redemptive and regenerative activity of one of whom, not having heard, they cannot believe? And, how shall they heal without a preacher? Well, that's simple enough in the sheer logic of what he's trying to tell us. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And, how shall they heal without a preacher? And, the next question is very relevant, and how shall they preach except they be sent? Sent.

Sent. In the ark of the testament beneath the mercy seat, in the holiest of all, the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, that spiritual content of our faith presented to us by the Lord Jesus, that ark that had to be carried on two pieces of wood borne upon the shoulders of a man not less than thirty, and not yet fifty. Beautiful picture of our Lord Jesus outside a city wall, bearing two pieces of wood upon his shoulder, the cross upon which he died, that you and I might receive by the Holy Spirit, the one who seals us, the one who sanctifies us, and the one who sent us.

For whom he seals and sanctifies, he sent. How shall they preach except they be sent? Well, I'll tell you how they'll preach if they haven't been sent. It's going to be pretty awful.

You can nearly always detect a man who's preaching who hasn't been sent. You should never try to preach if you haven't been sent. And, of course, if you've been sent you won't have to try to preach.

How shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. Have you got beautiful feet? It says you can have beautiful feet. Some of us have long since despaired ever having of a beautiful face, but there's not one single one of us here tonight who can't have beautiful feet.

You've got beautiful feet? Wouldn't it be nice to have a beauty contest tonight to see who's got the most beautiful feet? This is what it says. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. Who've been sent, and when.

Sent, and when. Say, do you know what happens if you're numbered amongst those who were sent and when? I'll tell you, you're put. You turn with me to the first of Paul's epistles to Timothy.

The first epistle of Paul to Timothy, and he bears this testament as he reminds us again of those days when as Paul of Carthage, in his fanatical religious bigotry, he was the arch enemy of the early church. In the first chapter of his first epistle to Timothy, in the 13th verse, he says, I was before a black female. I was a persecutor.

I was in jury. People got hurt when I was around. I stood by consenting to the death of Stephen.

I saw his blood run in the gutter. I heard his bones snap as they stoned him to death, and I licked my lips, and I considered that I was championing God's cause. I was a black female.

I was a persecutor. I was in jury. As a woman saw Saul of Tarsus round the corner, the last drop of blood would drain from her soul.

She had raced home and warned her husband, and slammed the door. Little children would flee in terror the moment they saw Saul of Tarsus. But, he says in verse 13, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorant, in unbelief, in my abysmal ignorance.

Because I did it knowing God had mercy. And, we reminded ourselves of that moment when on the road to Damascus, with letters of authority from the high priest, there accost all who dared to name the name of Jesus into jail. And, how will the masseves be to their death if by any means there might be eradicated this heretical teaching of this fanatical free creature? And, on the road to Damascus, that light brighter than the sun at noonday that cast him blinded to the earth, and he had that life-transforming encounter with the Lord Jesus.

Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Why, he says in the preceding verse of that chapter, 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 12, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled thee. For when he counted me faithful, put it, put it in the midst. When blinded on the road to Damascus, I said, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? He said, go, go to Damascus, go to Damascus, and there it shall be taught thee what thou shouldst do.

Go, he said, and I went, and being sent, and because I went, he put me in it. Well, it's a wonderful thing to be put, because, you see, the moment you're sent, and you went, and you're put, nothing can frighten you, because you know he's put. What can frighten you then? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

Let me know at any given moment that I'm in the place where he's put, and nothing from that moment can discourage me, nothing from that moment can dismay me, nothing from that moment can deter me. Now, this of course is a secret, isn't it? This is what we've been talking about. As you step out into every new day, you relate every new situation to the fact that the Lord Jesus is alive, that he's come to take up by his Holy Spirit residence within your humanity.

You trust in the Lord with all your heart, your mind, your emotions, and your will, that you make gladly available to him. You don't now lean to your own understanding, but in all your ways you acknowledge him. You say, Lord Jesus, you have the right to call the shot.

I submit myself gladly to your jurisdiction. I'm at the receiving end of your instruction, and you have promised that you will direct my course. You say I'm caught, and I'm put in the place where he put.

This was the testimony of the Lord Jesus, as we have already reminded ourselves. Again and again, if you like to read John's gospel, and I suggest that you do this as a very healthy exercise, and every single time that the Lord Jesus claims to be sent to be one of the sent ones, that the Father sent into this world, ring it, ring it with a pen, and you will find that in 14 chapters, some 45 times, the Lord Jesus testified to the fact that he was dead, and the only possible explanation that he ever gave at any time for anything that he said, or did, or was, or for being where he could be found was this. He said, what are you doing there, Lord Jesus? Then, I do only always those things that please him.

You might gaze up upon a Roman gallows and see God's incarnate Son nailed to a cross, and you say, Lord Jesus, what are you doing there? Then, and the Lord Jesus said, if my Father sent me, so send I you. So, from now on, there will only be one legitimate explanation for any place in which you may be found, so that when challenged as to why you're doing any given thing, why you're saying any given thing, why you're going any given place, with unshatterable confidence you will say, I was sent, and went, and so I'm put, and nothing can frighten me. Are you put? Are you a businessman? Why are you in the business that you're in? This is valid as a question to a Christian.

It wouldn't be valid as a question to a non-Christian. It wouldn't be valid as a question to a carnal Christian. But, if I'm talking to you as a man or woman filled with the Holy Ghost, if I'm talking to you as a man or a woman who has become spiritually adult, if I'm talking to you as a man or a woman, or a boy or a girl for that matter, who has grown up in Christ, who recognizes that he gave himself not simply to get you out of hell and into heaven, but to get God out of heaven into you, so that your humanity on earth, 24 hours in every day, might clothe his divine activity, if I'm talking to you as that boy, to that girl, to that man, to that woman, who in utter abandon now to the Lord Jesus is prepared to give him the place of utter absolute and unquestioned supremacy, then it's a valid question.

Why are you in the business that you're in tomorrow? Did you just drift into it? Did it just happen to be your father and you were the next in line? Is it just a way of earning your bread and butter? Or was it just an ambition that you cherish from boyhood? Or could you honestly look me straight in the eyes and say, if you want to know, I'll tell you. Of course, because you see he sent and I went. That's why I'm living in Fort Smith, and not in Memphis, or New York, or Los Angeles.

It wasn't simply that I liked the climate, it wasn't simply that my relatives were around, or even just that the firm moved me from A to B. I'll tell you why I'm in Fort Smith. I was sent, and went, and I'm put. Now, that is the only legitimate explanation you and I have the right to give at any time for where we are.

When you go on vacation, are you put? Are you planning next year's vacation? Are you cherishing ambitions about where you're going and how you're going to spend your time? Did it ever dawn upon you that, as a living healthy member of the body of Jesus Christ, the only person who has the right to call the shots as to where you spend your next vacation is the head of that body? Has that ever dawned upon you? Or have you successfully dichotomized your Christian life from the business of living on earth? So, you say, it's all very well for this sort of sudden church, but please don't meddle with my plans for next vacation. This is how we dichotomize. We have a faith life, a spiritual life, all tidied up and put in a glass case, and that has absolutely nothing whatever to do with the way I spend my time or spend my money.

Why do you live in the street where you live the most? Did it ever dawn upon you that you were under a moral spiritual obligation as a Christian to consult the only one who has the right to determine where you're going to live? In what house, what street, what number? Did it ever dawn upon you, or have you successfully dichotomized, segregated your relationship to Jesus Christ with the nitty-gritty of living on earth? Because that, if that is the case, is why other people are likely to be very little impressed with whatever profession of faith that you may make. Because, to them, you see your profession of faith in Christ in that it is dichotomized separated from the process of being an ordinary human being on earth. To them, it will just be a hobby.

That's all. They'll say my hobby's God, your hobby's religion. You have certain times for your hobby, I have certain times for my hobby.

I realize that my hobby doesn't determine why I'm going to live, and your hobby doesn't determine where you're going. So, we dichotomize. I was sent, and went, and I'm put.

You're in college. Why are you in the college, to hear me come out? Did it ever dawn upon you as a Christian that only one person has the right to put you in that college, and there is only one college in which he is likely to put you, the one he's choosing, and no other? Or, did it never dawn on you? Did it never dawn on you that you can tell everybody and everything and every fact except Jesus Christ that it's probably very unlikely that you're in the college at this moment of his choice? And, you see, it's only in the place where he puts you can you have any legitimate expectation of his blessing, because, as living members of his body, we are to be integrated into the total whole so that he may unchallenged execute his divine end in terms of Adam and Eve. That's what I expect of my body.

Why shouldn't he expect that of his body? I anticipate of every single member of my physical body that it becomes totally available to me by maintaining a relationship that allows me as the head of that body to close the shop every moment of every day. Do you expect your hands to be on duty just, say, so many hours a day, often in the afternoons, and coming on again at seven? Have you got hands like that? Now, this is practical Christianity, but we've long since ceased, you see, to have this concept of what it means to be a Christian. We simply departmentalize our faith, and we use God, and we use Jesus Christ simply as a convenience, a means whereby we escape the punitive consequences of our guilt, the means whereby we make some sort of assurance for our ultimate destiny when we've finished with this earth and have done as we please in the meantime.

Now, that's nothing to do with the Christian life. The Lord Jesus is the head of the body of which every redeemed is a member of sin, and each individual member of that body in particular is to be subject to the head under the direction of the Holy Spirit so that 24 hours a day the Lord Jesus himself can be where he wants, doing what he wants, how he wants, where he wants, in you and me. Anything less than that is holiness.

Anything less than that is playing church. Anything less than that is simply a superficial veneer of religion that is calculated to make you feel comfortable inside and past much. But, so far as God is concerned, you're all right, and in the last day when the dust has settled, all that will be found will be a heap of ashes, the wood, the hair, and the scuttle of a wasted life, and you'll look dismayed into the face of your savior with awe.

Now, I expect with my hand that they're available to me 24 hours a day. I don't even anticipate that they'll have a committee meeting under the joint chairmanship of the two sons and decide what they will do in my interest, no matter how sincerely they might choose so to do. All I ask of them is that they may be restfully available to instantly obey me.

After all, I expect my feet to go exactly where I tell them to take me. I don't expect my feet to take me for a walk for the good of my health. I expect them to serve my interest at my command every moment of every day, and, strange to say, the Lord Jesus, as the head of the body, claims the right to exercise the same social jurisdiction over his body on earth which is his.

Thus, the fellowship of forgiven sins cleansed in his blood in twelve bloody sins. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry, and I'm happy to say that if I am found at this moment in this particular place, there's only one possible explanation. It just happens to be the place where my Lord Jesus, to whom I have presented my body as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, happens to want to be, at this particular moment, clothed with me.

Are you ready to settle for that quality of Christian life? If not, you'll get to heaven if your sins begin, because you've acclaimed them as your redeeming. But, you'll never be put. You'll never know that divine authority that releases God's divine activity.

You'll just be a flabby Christian for the rest of your days, and you'll wonder why the Christian life is so incredibly boring, so lustrous and callous and monotonous. That's why, quite frankly, there are lots of genuine, born-again, converted, saved, redeemed, on-the-way-to-heaven Christians whose life is anything but the adventure that God intended it to be. You see, the moment you and I are prepared to be numbered amongst those who were sent from where I am always put, the moment we're prepared for that, every day is the unfolding of this timeless purpose.

The littlest thing has a divine sickness of which we may be totally unaware, but as the unfolding of this riddle, that must last until one day, as we look back, we see the mosaic of God's perfect will laid out as a perfect mass. Now, this was the characteristic of the early church, because this handful of untutored men and women, unschooled, unaccredited, with none of the gimmicks with which you and I are today so lavishly provided, no jet planes, no satellites, no telephones, no television, no electronics, no tape recorders, just donkeys and their own two flat feet, and yet they evangelize the then world in one generation. They turn the world upside down, and they change the face of nation.

Why? Well, because they were real Christians. They were real Christians. They were those who, as forgiven sinners, actually presented their bodies to the Lord Jesus as though he actually had the right, as God, to see God in them as they were expendable.

In early morning days, 25 hours a day, and there was accomplished that which inevitably could be explained only in terms of God. They were sent, and they went. But, granted, in the book of the Acts, chapter 8, Acts chapter 8, verse 3, Saul, before he was sent and went, and put, verse 3, made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hating many women he committed under Christ.

That was Saul of Tarsus before he was convicted. Saul of Tarsus, in his unregenerate condition, pathetically religious, utterly unsaved. Therefore, they that were scattered went everywhere preaching the word, the living, aiding word of our Lord Jesus.

And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and he preached Christ unto them. Of course, the preaching of the word, and the preaching of Christ are synonymous terms, for he is the living word with the glorious fulfillment of the written word. You can't preach the word without preaching Christ, and you can't preach Christ without preaching the word.

Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and he preached Christ to them. And the people, with one accord, gave heed to those things which set at stake. Hearing and seeing the miracles which he did, unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with him.

Many taken with houses, and that were lame, were healed, and there was great joy in that city. The whole city was moved for God. Tremendous! And, in the power and energy and function of God the Holy Spirit, the ministry of this man, Philip, spread like a flame.

When they had testified, it says in verse 25, and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. From wherever they went, their names made news, and the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise, get a pencil? Bring the word. Arise and go.

Go towards the town, and to the way that goes down from Jerusalem, and to God who wishes this. What did God say? Go. Where to? To the desert.

And, you see, it's just at that point that you and I are calculating to start arguing. For, here was a man whose name made news. He was the great evangelist.

He was the great city missionist. He was the man to whom people flocked to hear the gospel in the power and function of God the Holy Spirit, and the spirit of God said, Go into the desert. Verse 27, and he arose and went.

He was sent and went. Any questions, Philip? No questions. Why do we have no questions? Well, because, you see, Philip was a man filled with the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Simply that body, soul, spirit, mind, emotion, and will, he was available to the Lord Jesus as a healthy member of his body, so that he, Christ, as head of that body could hold a shot, and be in Philip, close with Philip, where he, Christ, wanted to be at any given moment. Now, I can imagine that quite a lot of people were very dismayed when they heard that Philip was going to the desert. They said, Philip, your name makes news.

Philip, we need you for our ministry. We're going to have an evangelistic crusade. We need you.

We've got nobody so well known as you are. We need someone. Philip replied, sorry, I've been sent, and I must go, because I'm not committed to evangelism.

I'm not committed to the lost. I'm not committed to the world in which God has placed me. I'm not committed to the need.

That isn't my business. That never has been the business of any member of any body. I am a member of his body to whom alone I am committed.

I am not committed to evangelism. I'm not committed to the need. I'm not committed to sore winning.

I'm not committed to the world. I'm committed only and exclusively to Jesus Christ, to whom I belong, who involves my humanity. I'm committed to him, and for all that which he in me is committed.

And if to the desert I'm sent, to the desert I go, and God takes account. Sent and with, just as simple as that. Maybe you wonder perhaps as a Christian, I'm talking to somebody here, you wonder as a Christian, why is it so right as yet, though a child of God, and with a deep desire in your heart to be of value to him, has registered so little in the life of us.

As you look back over your Christian life, you say there's so little to show for all my activities. It isn't that I don't work hard at it. It isn't that I'm not sincere.

It isn't that I'm not prepared to sacrifice, but somehow nothing ever happens. So, maybe you were never sent and went. So, you've never known the sheer adventure of being put.

Did Philip know where he was going? No. Did he have to? No. Didn't he know what was going to happen? No.

Didn't he have to? No. What did he have to know? He was sent and went, simple, and put. Who takes the consequences when you're sent and went and put? You're the one who's sent and put, because you went.

That's all. Isn't that simple? How do we do balance to the sheer logic of God's work? If I'm utterly, unshatteredly convinced that God put me here because he sent and I went, how stupid it would be for me to wring my hands and say, God, God, you put me in this place. What have you done? Please bless me.

Please, please. God is willing to take a picture of this. Don't you credit with me any intelligence? I sent, you went, I put.

These are consequences of me. So, bring your hands and ask me to bless you. I would never have put you there if I weren't going to bless you.

So, you see, the moment you begin to grasp the glorious principle that Jesus is alive, lives in you, and you're available to him, your whole prayer life, the whole structure of your prayer, is radically changed. In everything you give thanks. You say, God, if you sent and I went, I'm put, and if I'm put, you take the consequence.

Now, that was the attitude. I'm absolutely certain that, and in fact, when he went to the desk, I'm sure he was sort of chucking himself. He said, of all the patients that God has sent, seven.

Who do you think I'm going to preach to? The cactus bushels? Who do you think I'm going to give an invitation to? But, I want to credit God with sufficient intelligence to know what he's asked. It's going to be exciting to discover what a man will find in the desk to preach at. He arose and went, and behold, a man of Ethiopia, and eunuch of great authority, and the candidate queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot and reading the prophecy of Isaiah.

And then the spirit of God said to Philip, go here and join myself to this chariot. As he went out into the desk, without a clue as to why he was going, or what God had in mind, there was a man, a eunuch, chancellor of the exchequer, and the queen candidate of Ethiopians, in a caravan, reading a Bible he couldn't understand. And the spirit said to Philip, go, join yourself in this chariot.

And he went, and when he had said he went, he put, and said, who is calling the shots? Who called him out of his city-wide evangelistic ministry? The Holy Spirit. Who particularized the instructions and told him to join himself to that particular chariot, and talk to that particular man? The Holy Spirit. That's the normal Christian life.

You see, the Bible tells us how many are going to become Christians, and the Bible tells us exactly how many are going to be the Christians they become. Do you know how many are going to become Christians? The Bible tells us exactly, exactly. John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 12, as many as receive him.

To them gives he the power to become the children of God. That's exactly how many. No more, no less.

As many as receive him. And if you're not numbered as yet amongst those who have received him, you have not, nor until you do, can you become the child of God. That's exactly how many.

No more, nor less, will become the children of God. As many as receive him. I say, how many are going to be the Christians they become? It tells you exactly in the Bible.

Romans, chapter 8, in verse 14, as many as. Not one single one more, not one single one less. As many as are led by the Spirit of God.

They are the only ones, of those who have become Christians, who have learned to be the Christians they become. As many as are led by the Spirit of God. Are you led by the Spirit of God? Are you sharing that adventure with the Lord Jesus, of seeing him fulfilled through you, by your obedience to his instructions, that plan for which, having created you, he's now redeemed you? If not, your life as a Christian must be incredibly boring, flat as a pancake.

But, if you know what it is to be led by the Spirit of God, your eyes will shine, you'll have a softening in your heart, you'll be impatient for every new day to dawn. The Spirit of God said, go and join yourself to that man, and that chariot, and then it ran, he ran, he ran to it, and he heard him read the prophet Isaiah. He says, understand this by what thou weest, because, fantastic as it might seem, when having run to that chariot, he listened to the man reading aloud, he was reading of all passages from the old testament scriptures to the gospel according to Isaiah, that marvelous fifty-first chapter.

That's why he had to run, because if he hadn't run, he'd miss his test. And, do you know what the man said? Do you know what the man said? It must have filled, it must have filled Philip's heart to bursting with joy, and gratitude, and thankfulness to God, that he wasn't pig-headed enough to be wedded to his

evangelistic ministry as a popular preacher, and denied God the right to appoint him where he wanted, because he was sent and went. Said the eunuch, how can I except some man should guide me? How can I? How can I? You say, do I understand what I read? How can I except some man should guide me? How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear of him except there be a preacher? And, how shall they preach except they be sent? How can I except some man should guide me? And, he desired, Philip, that he would come up and sit So, here we are, here's the famous preacher.

He's hiding in the desert, and the eunuch says, come, follow him. So, go on, and the place of the scripture which he read was this, verse 32, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb done before his shearer, so open he not his mouth. In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth, and the eunuch answers, Philip, and he said, I pray thee, for whom speakest the positive of himself, or of some other man? Then, Philip opens his mouth into the damned same scripture, and he preached unto him Jesus, told him the lovely story of God's amazing compassion in Christ, how this sinless son of God, the word incarnate, walked this earth uncurried, unblemished, like a lamb without cloth, and then was given to be our partner, that sheltered beneath the blast, crippled upon the mercy seat, painted upon the doorpost and the lintel, all the lovely Old Testament picture language, the truth of a crucified redeemer, man of sorrows, what a name for the son of God who came ruining sinners to restrain.

Hallelujah! What a savior! Told him the story, and as they went on their way, they came to a certain water. The eunuch said, see, there's water. What's this? Indemnity? That's high! For without a doubt, Philip explains, you see the marvelous thing is this, that this Jesus, about whom the prophet here speaks, not only died horrid, he rose again from the dead, so that we identified with him in death, pictured in baptism, might now walk in the newness of life, share in his resurrection, for you see God has not appointed us to walk, but to obtain judgment, but to obtain mercy.

Not appointed to judgment, but to obtain mercy, for he died horrid, that whether we wake or whether we sleep, whether in the body or out of it, we should live together with him, and that light, that quality of light which alone is eternal, begins the moment we are prepared, humbly admitting ourselves to be the sinners that we are, make our faith with him in death, so that we may walk with him in the power of his resurrection. And Philip, he got all excited about it, and he noticed with Walker around, he was talking about these things, when suddenly he looked and said, what about you again, that time, that time? I think it really took Philip a little bit by surprise, didn't it? He said, that time? Did he say that time? He said, yes, that time, me, you. Philip said, well, if I believe it with all my heart, that means 110.

I believe that this Jesus that you're talking about is the Christ, the son of God. That's what I was waiting for. All I was waiting for was for a man to tell me that premise.

Now, wasn't that simple? How difficult was it for Philip to leave that huge cross? He couldn't help it. He almost pushed Philip in the water that time. Tremendous.

You see the wretchedness of it. Why was it so wretched? Why didn't Philip have to pray all night and wring his hands and squeeze blood out of it? Why didn't he have to shake God and say, please wake up? There's a man here, and he's saying, come and see, please do something about it. God, I've got to carry this burden all myself.

Come on, God. That's the way we pray sometimes, don't we? Nothing like that. You see, Philip was bearing fruit.

He that abideth in me, and I abideth in him, bringeth forth such fruit. But, of course, without these, struggle as you like, shout and scream, preach or pray, you can do how much? Nothing. Nothing.

Have you ever seen a bind sweating to produce grace? It's been rising with the sheer agony of its own self-exertion. Oh, if only I could scream to break that. Oh, if only I could get a grace.

That's how Christians get their grace. But they don't get grace. The Lord sees.

I am the bar. I am the bar. You're simply the branch.

You're just the branch. This is what transformed the life of Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor, a dedicated, earnest man who loved Christ with a passion for Paul, went to China, and there he sorted it out for God.

He sorted it out for Jesus. Have I done my best for Jesus? Until, in sheer abject misery of despair, he came back utterly, utterly depressed, totally coughed up, completely useless. Fit to quit.

And then, from John 15 5, he suddenly saw the truth. I am the vine. You are the branch.

And it dawned. The vine includes the branch. The branches aren't stuck onto the vine.

The vine is everything. Branches and all. I'm simply that part of Jesus who is the vine called branch through whom he, the vine, bears fruit.

That's all. So, is that part of the vine Jesus called branch through which he, the vine, bears fruit? All I've got to do is be the vine. Take my finger.

And he, the vine, bears fruit through me, that part of him called branch. That's it. And a thousand missions went to China.

Who did it? The vine. Through whom? The branch. So, is that, Hudson Taylor, just a vine allowing the sap, the life of the vine, to flow through the branch and bear the fruit? Right.

It's so glorious, so restful. Takes all the stress and all the stress. It doesn't mean we're unconcerned, but we have an unshatterable confidence that he's the one who came, speaks, and says that which is right.

And he knows exactly where to ask. He knows exactly how to cross that path. He knows exactly how to introduce us to them.

But the tragedy is this. We've all suffered so long as Christians from St. Vitus down. We're busy as members of the body showing the head how busy we are.

Wouldn't it be terrible if I had St. Vitus down? Maybe sometimes you think I have, but you know, I really, my hands are saying to themselves, I really want the head to know that I'm on the job. I really want, I want the head to know I'm really enthusiastic about this business of preaching. Wouldn't that be awful? Now, that's the kind of body the Lord Jesus has to work with on earth.

And you know, when they have a heart attack every now and again, he sighs with relief. He does. So restful.

So restful. Why? Because he was so, what are you doing in the desert? You're the great creature. I went to Siberia where the whole city was asking, what are you doing in the desert? You know what Philip said? Put.

What do you mean, put? Put, I'm put. How do you know you're put? I've sent wind. And what do you expect to be doing in the desert? No, you're put.

I'm not put. Aren't you concerned? Oh yes. You see, my concern is to be committed to him, and to all that to which he is committed in me.

And you see, as he is God's creator, and I'm just man's creature, he doesn't have to tell me everything he's doing. See? I'm just put. But I'll tell you something, he never puts me without something very exciting to do, whether I know it, or whether I don't.

Afternoon. Isn't that great? You see, it doesn't matter to whom what other people think about you. What does it matter how they evaluate the usefulness of your ministry, so long as deep, deep, deep, deep, deep down in your heart, you know, recognizing your own frailty, and your own weakness, and your own stupidity, but deep, deep, deep, deep down in your heart, you know, God, as best I know my own heart, as best I know how, I've made myself available to you.

I believe I received your instructions to the best of my understanding. Somehow, deep down in my heart, I know that I have obeyed your voice. I couldn't give anybody any other explanation for being here at this moment, but that I was sent, and I went to you, and I'm prepared to let you take the consequences.

I'm allowed time to vindicate your wisdom, because I believe that time is always on your side. That's right, that's right. God said go, and he went.

Philip commanded the chariots to stand still. They went down, both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch. He baptized them, and when they would come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord called away Philip.

He came by donkey, went back by air, that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. What about the follow-up? God took care of the follow-up in this particular instance, and that eunuch went back as the first to blaze the trail for God to evangelize the nation. I can imagine some very excited members of the evangelism committee in the city of Samaria all up around the neck, blaming Philip for being so stupid as to go to a place like the city.

But, you and I never have to prejudge God's purpose. You see, God had in mind not the evangelization of one city, God had in mind the evangelization of an empire. So, it's best to trust God's judgment.

After the conversion of Saul of Tarsus from the road to Damascus, chapter 9, it says verse 10, there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. To him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias, he said, behold Lord, here I am, all ready for service. And the Lord said to him, arise, go into the street, verse 11 of chapter 9, which is called trace, inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus.

I beg your pardon? I said Saul of Tarsus. Did you get the name right? Did you say Saul of Tarsus? Didn't you mean Saul of Memphis, or New York, or Lafayette? No, not Saul of Tarsus. Just look it up in your book.

I think you've got the name wrong. Who was controlling Philip's activity? The Holy Spirit. Where did he send him? The wrong place.

The wrong place? He ought to have been in the book, in the biggest biggest church in town. He sent him to the desert. Who was controlling Ananias' activity? The Holy Spirit.

When did he send the wrong person? Saul of Tartin. Behold, he prayeth, he hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. And Ananias answered and said, Lord, I've heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done for thy saints at Jerusalem.

He he hath authority from the chief priest to bind all that call upon thy name. He's a fax-seamer, he's a persecutor, he's injurious, he's dangerous. When you go to him, wouldn't you like to send my sister? She's already volunteered to be a missionary.

The wrong place, the wrong man. Sure God must have made a mistake. Saul of Tartin? That's sticking my head right through the noose.

That's putting my neck on the block. Saul of Tartin? And God with a big big big big grin. Said, yes.

Saul of Tartin. Verse 15. Go, go, go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias, what does it say? Went. God said, he went.

He was sent and went. And when you're sent and you went, he entered into the house and putting his hands on him, he said to this blasphemer, this persecutor, this dangerous man with letters of authority from the high priest, brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way of Thou comest hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. He said, Saul of Tartin.

Right. To cleanse you from your sin, and indwell you, and fill you in the power of his divine spirit. For brother Saul, he died for you, whether in the body or out of his honor, or in heaven, in time or eternity, sealed and sanctified, you might live together with him.

Sent! Scaled, and he received sight forthwith, and he arose and was baptized, and when he had received meat, he was strengthened, then was sold certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus and straightway. He preached Christ in the synagogues, that he, he is the Son of God, and all that heard him were amazed, and they said, is not this he that destroyed them which called on his name in Jerusalem? And he came hither for that intent that he might bring them down to the chief priests, but Saul increased them all in strength, and he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. He had mercy on me, he had mercy, and accounting me faithful, because when he said, go I went, he enabled me, and he put an end.

How difficult was it for Anne and I to get the arch enemy, the early church, to say, how many city-wide prayer meetings did they convene for the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? I don't think any of them really believed that Saul of Tarsus could ever get converted. That's why I think all the personal work had to be done by the Lord Jesus himself. I think any believer in the city of Jerusalem should have alleged that

awakened, poor, bitter-hearted man to Christ, but there were none, none that the Lord Jesus met himself on the road to Damascus, because he said, if a man seeks, seeks, seeks, kicking against the priest, hating himself, seeing still, by day and by night, the face of Satan like the face of an angel, knowing in his heart he was right, I'm wrong, he was right, I'm wrong.

If a man seeks, does what? Does it finally God found one man, Anne and I, who was prepared to go and minister to him and call him Christ? Said it? Wrong place. And it was a wrong man. What? Don't get wired, there are only 26 chapters in the book of Acts.

We're nearly through. An unsaved, unregenerate, unconverted Gentile, the dirty Gentile God, but a good man, a good man, a devout man, chapter 10 verse 2, one that feared God with all his heart, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God and God sent his angel and said, go and send for a fellow called Peter, he'll tell you what you ought to do in order to get saved. And do you remember in the meantime, God marvelously appeared to Peter while he was snoozing up on the roof while the folk below were getting supper, and God lowered in the vision a sheet with unclean, dirty beasts that were forbidden for the Jews, and God said, all right Peter, slay any.

Supper time. And Peter was most indignant, he said, oh that's dirty, that's unclean, I'm a Jew, I'm half man, I'm segregated. And the boys said, what God has planned, that call not thou come.

While Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, verse 17, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiries for Simon Peter out, and he stood before the gate, and he called and he asked whether Simon which was sown in Peter were lost there, and while Peter thought on the vision, the spirit said to him, behold three men secretly arrived therefore, and get thee thou and, what's the word? Go, go, go with them. Shouting that, I sent them. Then Peter, what did he say, verse 21? Went.

What's the story of the acts of the party? God said go, and they went. They were sent and went. And everywhere they were sent and went, they found they were good.

And God said, come, come, come. Philip, wrong place. Ananath, wrong person.

Peter, wrong pedigree. A dirty Gentile dark man, a Jew. Contrary to all my racial prejudices and contrary to all my religious convictions, he's not one of our party.

But God said go, and he went, and caught and he hid it, and he found it marvelously safe, marvelously safe. Lastly, we'll skip chapter 15. That's a relief.

We're going to finish there too. Verse six. When they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, who told them to keep their mouth shut in Asia? The Holy Spirit.

He made the Holy Spirit so free to get their mouth shut. Yes, but our public, we don't hear them so often, and it's just a pity we don't. The Holy Spirit has as much right to tell you to keep your mouth shut as to tell you open.

Let's bear that in mind. He forbade the Holy Spirit, forbade to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mytia, they are paid to go into Mytia.

Well, if you want them to preach in Asia, we'll go into Mytia. But the Spirit prompted them not. He told them to keep their mouth shut in Asia, and when he said of Asia, they rushed off to Phrygia, the Holy Spirit said, say, who's causing the shock? The mission board at home? No.

No, it's extraordinary. Holy Spirit, maybe he has something to do with the Christian life. Yes, he has a whole lot to do with the Christian life, because he happens to be the one through whom we live together with him.

That's why you neglect the Holy Spirit at your peril. If you want an evangelical machine that grinds its way week after week, and would still be grinding its way if God were to die tonight, 50 years from now. Find a church, a good gospel, bible-believing, bible-preaching church that neglects the artist, person, work of the Holy Spirit.

Join it in their burial, in their own grave. There's no Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit, for he is the one through whom the Lord Jesus, our risen Savior, indwells our humanity, through whom we give ourselves to him as once he, through the same Holy Spirit, gave himself to Christ. As he gives himself to us by that Holy Spirit through whom the Father gave himself to him.

The Holy Spirit is the one called shock, not the church committee, not the finance committee, not the mission board. We've long since, of course, superseded the office of the Holy Spirit as the life of our Lord, and we've long since superseded Christ as head of the body. We've organized it until now.

It's all gotten to us, and God is on vacation. We're taking care of it then, sir. We'll keep it in business.

Now, isn't that nice, Hoss? But not in the act of it, Hoss. I want to tell you something. This isn't academic.

This isn't just a study in a few random scriptures. This presents you and presents me tonight with a moral obligation from which we cannot escape. We either settle for God's terms of reference, and see God let loose in the world, and all the marvelous things that inevitably are a consequence of God being in business, or we settle for the prophetic parody of the real thing that, alas, we've largely reduced our Christian institution.

After they were come to Myseiah, they are said to go into Bithynia, but the spirit suffered them not. And they, passing by Myseiah, came down to Troas, and a vision appeared to call in the night there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonian helpers. And after he had seen the vision immediately, we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel under their name.

And so, from Penn, verse 12, to Philippi, they went. The chief city of that part of Macedonia, Anacolon, we were in that city abiding certain days, and on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down and spake to the women which reported there. Well, that was a bit of an anticlimax, wouldn't you think? Here's the Great World Missionary Statement, planning an evangelistic crusade in the whole of Asia and in Bithynia, and the Holy Spirit says, uh-uh, Macedonia, Philippi, little women's prairie.

What has come down to the missionary statement? A handful of women praying by the riverside. God, I don't think you understand the urgency of the situation. For millions lost that mission, this is just a handful of women.

Philip, wrong place. Anania, wrong man. Peter, wrong place.

Paul, wrong plan. And a certain woman, verse 14, named Lydia, a seller of purples of the city of Tartarus, worshipped God, a God whom she didn't know, and she heard it. It was hot.

The Lord heard it. But she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, and when she was baptized and her household, she foresaw to say, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house. And the five there, as she constrained her, and in the house of Lydia, a stranger, not even a native resident, lived 430 miles away across the Adriatic.

In her home there was established a little church of redemption. How precious in the sight of God is one single speaking soul. So precious that he's prepared to take the great world missionary statement, cancel out his world mission program, and say, Paul, look at what he's claiming, that one speaking soul.

Any questions, Paul? No questions. Assuredly gathered that the Lord would have us go to Mecca. I'm committed to Christ exclusively.

I'm committed to Him for that to which He is committed in me, Asia, Bithynia, or Bithynia. That is not my corruption that exclusively. So, what's the story of the Acts of the Apostles? Men who were sent and went, and put, because they were prepared in their submission to the Lord Jesus in the power and fullness of His Holy Spirit, to be the right man in the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right people.

And there's only one person who can organize that, and that is God Himself. What did it cost? Philip, to be the right man at the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right person. What it cost him was this.

He had to die for his own reputation as he vanished, and settle for the dead. What did it cost? Adonai, to be the right man in the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right person. He had to die for his own personal sake.

Stick out his neck, go right into the lion's mouth, look full of heart, and testify the passing of any Jew. Threaten the outcast and say, brother, it's all right. I'll be sent.

What it cost for Peter to be the right man in the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right person? He had to die for his religious prejudices. He had to die for all his racial discrimination. A dirty Gentile's job.

For all not thou comest. That was harsh of them. What it cost Paul to be the right man at the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right person? A ruined friend.

He had to die for his own preconceived notions of missionary service. His own worldwide vision to evangelize the earth had to die. Feel and testify men who were sent.

That is the spiritual heritage that was formed on a man's shoulder, not less than 30, not more than 50, carried on two pieces of wood. On either side of the ark, in which there was the golden pot of manna divinely sealed, the tables of stones rewritten by the finger of God divinely sanctified, an errand swab that started when separated from the man the ministry flounce divinely set. On the side of that ark, two rings through which there were thrashed two pieces of wood which God said must never, ever be detached from

the ark.

For, if we are to walk in the power of his resurrection, we can never stray from that cross where we die with him so that he may live ever. I, a popular evangelist, bible teacher, missionary statesman, true blue Jew with the right credentials and pedigree, I am crucified in Christ. Nevertheless, I live, not I. Christ lives in me.

He's now the content of my being and the life that is clothed by this body that you see, I live through the faith that lets Jesus Christ be who he is in me in action. Not I. Christ lives in me. You and I will go out with the veil ripped from our faces, exposing ourselves to the backdrop that we are apart from all that he is, and we continue to live on, invoking all that he is.

I am meant to reflect by everything we do and say, ah his timeless aim, his matchless purpose, his never-ending compassion. Sleep, sleep, sleep. As the signal of distress soared into the sky, so the coastguards sounded the alarm, the lifeboat crew came tumbling out, Man handled the boat down to the water's edge as the wind howled in the darkness, and mountainous waves thrashed against the shore.

There was a man of about sixteen, he had just joined the crew, he had never ever been called to an emergency before. And when he heard the howl of the wind whistling around his ears and looked out into the darkness and those great mountainous waves, his heart failed, and he grabbed, he grabbed the arm of the old bottom with his wooden gnarled face, he said, Sir, Sir, we can't go out of this, we can't go out of this. The old man, not unkindly, a veteran of many such a call, flung his great big arm around the kid's shoulder, he said, Son, and as he pointed out into the night, men out there are perishing.

The call has come, we've been told to go, we must go out. Son, come down, that's not our business, our business is to answer the call, that's all. Then I went, I don't have to go down, God takes the consequence, all I want to know is that to his supreme satisfaction, at this moment, now, I'm where he is, that's all I need to know, he's big enough for the rest.

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