

The Faith That Lets

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the critical role of faith in experiencing God's action in our lives and the distinction between faith and the object of faith.

Duration: 1:00:54

Scripture: Matthew 13:53, John 5:30, John 8:28, John 11:41, Hebrews 11:5-6, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by referencing Matthew 13:53 and the reaction of the people to Jesus' wisdom and mighty works. He explains that the people in Jesus' own village couldn't understand his extraordinary abilities because they didn't realize his relationship as a man to his Father as God. The speaker emphasizes that God adds the extra to the ordinary, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, making life miraculous. He emphasizes that the Christian life can only be explained in terms of Jesus Christ, not by one's own abilities or efforts. The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of faith in accessing the limitless resources of God and fulfilling the role for which God created humanity.

Transcript

Glad to add my word of welcome tonight. We're sort of hemmed in on all sides by choir singing in all kinds of languages. However, I thought I'd stick to English tonight, as it would probably simpler for you.

Just a word or two from the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew, and chapter thirteen, and the fifty-third verse. And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Whence hath this man this wisdom, and whence hath this man these mighty works? That was their reaction to the things that the Lord Jesus Christ was saying, and the things of which they had heard the Lord Jesus Christ had been doing. They said, Whence hath this man? Now what did they mean by that? Well you see, to them, the Lord Jesus was a familiar figure. He'd been born in Bethlehem and reared in Nazareth.

They'd known him as a helpless baby in his mother's arms, they'd seen him as a little child clinging to her skirt, they'd seen him romping in the village street with the other kids, they'd known him as an apprentice learning his trade, they'd known him as a carpenter, he was the man they'd called to fix their windows. And they said, Whence hath this man? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his

brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. You see, they resented, somehow, that somebody who to them was so ordinary, and who to them was such a familiar figure, that he should be competent and capable of doing the things he did and saying the things that he said.

They said, It can't be true, this is phony. It was perhaps a natural reaction because, you see, they had absolutely no idea of that moral relationship that links the life of God to the soul of man. The principles that we have begun to discuss together, both in the lunch hour meetings and to some extent last evening.

But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works. Now if I were to stop there, that wouldn't be true.

And he did not many mighty, he did many mighty works, and he said many mighty things. But what it actually says is this, he did not many mighty works there. In that context, under those circumstances, because of their unbelief.

If we paraphrase that and put it into simple English, he didn't get into action because they didn't get into faith. He didn't act because they didn't believe. You see, faith lets God be the God God is in action.

Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Faith doesn't let God be God. God is God whether you believe it or whether you don't.

Faith lets God be the God God is in action. Faith lets the Lord Jesus Christ be the redeemer he is in action. Faith doesn't let the Lord Jesus Christ be the redeemer because he is the redeemer whether you believe it or whether you don't.

He's the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He's the one who in the eternal ages of the past agreed with his father and the Holy Spirit in the tri-unity of the deity upon the measures that should be introduced to restore man to his true humanity. So, faith doesn't let God be God and faith doesn't let Jesus Christ be the redeemer.

But faith does let God be the God God is in action in terms of your personal experience. Faith does allow the Lord Jesus Christ to remove redemptively into your personal experience. In other words, faith, faith is the limiting factor in your personal experience of God.

God exists. But only through faith will you ever know experientially for yourself the God who exists. This is the nature of faith.

And we're going to focus our attention a little bit tonight upon the nature of faith. Remember last evening I said that one of the purposes of the meetings in which we shall be engaging this week will be simply to make the obvious obvious. Because the obvious is so often so obvious that it has ceased to be obvious.

We take things for granted without ever really taking the lid off, looking inside and discovering the real spiritual content of the concepts with which we have become familiar. Faith lets God get into action. That's the simplest definition I know of faith.

Faith lets. Faith invokes the activity of a second party. Faith brings somebody or something into action on your behalf.

Faith is the moral relationship that allows God to behave in terms of a man's humanity. That of course is what perplexed those who had known the Lord Jesus Christ as a fellow villager. We've got to remind ourselves constantly that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to this world he didn't come to behave as God, he came to behave as man.

We've reminded ourselves, some of us, in the lunch hour meetings of this fact. He assumed our flesh and blood. He was never less than God at any time.

But he insisted on behaving as never more than man. He set aside deliberately those prerogatives that make God God and deliberately submitted himself to those limitations that make man man. But you see, when he as God created man, he created man to enjoy a certain moral relationship toward God that lets God be the God God is in human experience.

And this is exactly what he was doing. But those in his own village couldn't understand it. They didn't realize that his relationship as a man to his father as God allowed his father as God to demonstrate the father's deity in terms of his sinless and perfect humanity.

In other words, you see, they'd never grasped the principle that God adds the extra to the ordinary. And when God adds the extra to the ordinary, it turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. In other words, it makes life miraculous.

And the Christian life is essentially miraculous. The Christian life, if it's genuine, if it's valid, if it's legitimate, can only be explained in terms of Jesus Christ. If your Christian life can be explicable in terms of you, your determination, your dedication, your enthusiasm, your inherent ability, your scholarship, your personality thrust.

If your Christianity can be explained in terms of you, it isn't Christianity. It's a shabby imitation of the real thing. You have absolutely nothing to offer the neighbors.

Your neighbor will simply say, your hobby is religion, my hobby is golf. I play golf to the best of my ability, you play Christianity to the best of your ability. So what? And of course, they would be right.

The true nature of our Christian faith is that God himself is an absolute imperative of the operation. And the Christian faith cannot possibly be explained apart from the presence of Jesus Christ released through faith in action in terms of your humanity. And they didn't realize that this faith relationship existed between the Lord Jesus and his Father that released the Father's activity in terms of the Son.

This, of course, was constantly the testimony of the Lord Jesus, as you will well remember. Do you remember how in John chapter 5 and verse 19, the Lord Jesus bore this testimony? John 5, 19. Then answered Jesus and said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son, the Son, the incarnate Word, the only begotten, the Son, can do nothing of himself, nothing.

But what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. Or in the 30th verse of John and chapter 5, I, I, and this is the Lord Jesus himself speaking, the creative deity, the Word who was in the beginning with God was God, and by whom all things were made. And without whom not one single thing was made that was ever created.

In whom alone is life, and in which life alone is the light of men. It's this Lord Jesus speaking, and he says, John 5, 30, I can of mine own self do nothing. As I hear, I judge.

And my judgment is just, because I seek not my will, but the will of him that sent me, my Father. If you were to turn to the 8th chapter of John, the Lord Jesus bore this testimony. Verse 28 of John chapter 8, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing, nothing of myself.

Isn't that amazing? He says, when you've lifted up the Son of Man, you'll know who I am. Because I was born to this end, to lay down my life, a ransom for many. And when you see me nailed to a Roman gallows, you'll know who I am.

The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. You'll know who I am.

But you'll know something else. That I do nothing of myself. Because in the sinlessness of my humanity, I am fulfilling the role for which I as God created man.

I am presenting my body in absolute availability to my Father, receiving his instructions and doing as I am told. Now, this is the nature of faith. Faith derives from our love toward God, independence on God, and total obedience to God.

And dependence on and obedience to are the twin ingredients of a living faith. A faith that works by love. Dependence on and obedience to.

Faith. That's why in the epistle to the Romans and in the 10th chapter, Paul talks about a righteousness which is our faith. Because faith invokes the activity of a second part.

And when my attitude toward the Lord Jesus is such that it allows him as God, occupying my redeemed humanity, cleansed in his blood, to get himself into action, clothing his activity with my humanity, you see it becomes his activity, not mine. His behavior, not mine. And he then clothes what he is in righteousness with what I do and say and am.

And you see, when you and I through faith let God behave, God behaving in terms of our personal experience is what the Bible calls righteousness. Righteousness is not your capacity to imitate God. Righteousness is God's ability to reproduce himself in our humanity by virtue of a faith relationship that lets him get into action.

Through his Holy Spirit governing our minds, our emotions, and our wills, and therefore our behavior. So righteousness is God behaving. But he's given to you and to me a physical, visible human body so that he may behave tangibly, audibly, and visibly in a world in which he's placed us.

But the moral relationship that brings God into action in terms of your experience and mine is called faith. You see, faith is rather like the clutch on a car. You could rev an engine until every window in the whole district was vibrating.

But if you didn't let the clutch in, when the dust had settled, you'd find that you were still precisely where you started. Isn't that right? You see, the clutch simply engages the power under the bonnet to the wheels on the road and gives you traction. But if you don't engage the clutch, you can have all the power in the world under the bonnet, but you won't travel.

And all the limitable resources of deity are available to you and to me for all that God is is available to the man who is available to all that God is. But it's faith. It's faith that brings the limitable resources of deity into action in terms of your personal experience of God.

That's the nature of faith. That's why, of course, faith is the operative word in the Bible. Some 322 times in the Old Testament and some 722 times, well over a thousand times, in the whole of the Bible from Genesis to the Revelation, the word faith in one form or another is used as being the operative word that brings God into action in terms of a man's humanity.

That's why, of course, faith isn't optional. Faith isn't optional, it's imperative. You'll remember that in the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, that catalog of men of faith, Hebrews chapter 11, by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.

And was not found because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony. He pleased God. But without faith, without faith, verse 6, it is impossible to please God.

It doesn't mean that you may please God or you may not please God. It isn't simply that you will only partially please God. No, no, without faith, without this moral relationship that releases the life of God in a man's humanity, without faith, it's impossible to please God.

So faith isn't optional, faith is imperative. And because faith is imperative, because you and I were created, Revelation 4.11, to please God for his pleasure. There's only one alternative to faith that enables a man to please God, and that's sin.

That's why in the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, sin is thus defined. Romans 14 and verse 23, the last sentence, here the apostle enunciates a principle in general that he has been applying in the earlier part of the chapter to a situation in particular. And the principle in general is this.

Last sentence, 23rd verse, last verse of the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Is sin.

Because God created you and me to be inhabited by God so that he, through faith, might be released in action as the one by our moral consent, who through his Holy Spirit is to teach our minds, control our emotions and direct our wills, and therefore govern our behavior. And if I'm not prepared to yield toward God, my maker, that attitude that releases him in action in terms of my humanity, then I'm robbing him of my humanity, I'm allowing it to be prostituted, misused and abused. And that's the nature of sin.

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Any activity in which I engage, any ambition that I nurture, any decision that I make, any step that I take, any thing that I do, any word that I speak that doesn't derive from an attitude that I voluntarily adopt toward Jesus Christ, that gives him as the right of God to clothe his activity with my humanity, that act, no matter what its character, I can get up and preach in that attitude, it's still sin. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Because faith is the clutch that relates the life of God to the soul of man, and interprets God's character in terms of human behavior. That's the nature of faith. So faith is imperative.

But having underlined the importance of faith as the operative word that links the life of God to the soul of man, and interprets God's character in terms of human behavior, we mustn't fall into another mistake. And that is by recognition of its imperative nature to deify faith instead of God. And it's very easy to fall into that

trap.

In other words, because faith is so absolutely essential, we tend to be preoccupied with faith instead of the object of our faith. You've heard of folk talking about mighty men of faith. You say, what a man of faith.

Well, that's nonsense. It isn't faith that makes a man mighty, it's God. All that faith does is let God be as big as God is in that man's experience.

If this man is a mighty man of God, it's not because he's a mighty man of faith. It's simply that that man has discovered the moral link between what God is and what he is. And he has opted to exercise that faith that lets God get into action in terms of his personal experience.

So don't congratulate him on his faith, congratulate him on his God. You might say to me, are you married? Well, I say yes. Is your wife with you? As a matter of fact, she isn't.

Well, where is she? Well, she's in England. You mean the other side of the world? How long have you been away? Well, since January. When are you going to get back? May.

You mean your wife is in England, and you're going to be away four or five months? Yeah. And then after a moment's pause you say, can you trust her that long? Is that a bigger problem? You say, can you trust her that long? Do you think I'd feel flattered? Especially if you were to go on to say, well, if you left in January, not getting back till May, and you can trust your wife that long, I'd like to congratulate you on your faith in your wife. Do you think my wife would feel flattered? And if you were to go on to say, I wish I could trust my wife the way you trust your wife, you'd be saying a whole mouthful about what you think about your wife.

I'd say to you, pardon me, please don't congratulate me on my faith. The trouble with you is you don't know my wife. If you knew my wife, you wouldn't congratulate me on my faith, you'd congratulate me on my wife.

Never congratulate a person on his faith. If you want to tell me that a man is mighty because he believes God, I'd say, how small is his God? How small is his God that he has to have such faith to believe in him? You see, if you were to tell me that you were going to drive to Perth, I might say, well, what are you going to go in? And you show me the car. I take one glance at the car and I say, well, I congratulate you on your faith.

What would I be saying about your car? You see, we're so stupid. If you were to congratulate my faith in God, you're saying about my God what I would be saying to you about your car, that's all. Mind you, if it was a brand new Jaguar or Bentley or Cadillac or Rolls Royce, straight out of the factory, with 50 guarantees, then I'd say, well, I wish you a very, very successful and wonderful journey.

But I wouldn't congratulate you on your faith. I saw some of you come into this building, but I didn't see one of you get down on your hands and knees and examine the chair you're sitting on. Did you? Well, why didn't you? Aren't you exercising faith in it? Of course you are.

It's the only thing that suspends you at the moment about 14 inches above the surface of the floor. You're all exercising. I'm not exercising faith in any chair.

I'm believing in chairs, but I'm not exercising faith in any chair, because faith invokes the activity of a second party. And I can't invoke the activity of a chair without sitting on it. I can believe that's a chair, but I can't exercise faith in a chair standing up.

I can only exercise faith in a chair sitting down. You're all exercising faith in chairs at the moment. Some of you are exercising more faith than others.

But don't misunderstand the situation. It isn't your faith that's keeping you off the floor. It's the chair that's keeping you off the floor.

Have you ever tried to sit down on faith? All that your faith is doing is invoking the activity of a chair. Now, this is the nature of faith. This is the obvious being made obvious.

Faith never supported anybody's weight. A chair does. All that faith does is let a chair be a chair in your personal experience.

Now, that's a chair. And I give mental consent to the fact, but that isn't a chair in my personal experience, because I'm not exercising the faith that allows that chair to move operatively into action on my behalf. But the moment I rest my weight on it, the moment I sit down, and I'm exercising faith, and I'm invoking the activity of the chair, and it's supporting my weight.

When I lift my feet off the ground, I'm exercising total faith. Now, I've exercised faith in a chair that wasn't worthy of the faith I exercise. Because, you see, the strength of your faith is simply the strength of the chair.

The strength of your faith is the strength of the object of your faith. Now, why didn't you get down and examine that chair to make absolutely certain it was strong enough? Well, you say, I assume that it was. It never gave me a thought.

I've been sitting on chairs so often in my life that I've become totally acquainted with the object for which a chair has been made. And I assume that the person who invented and designed and manufactured that particular chair was adequate for the task on hand. So, what's the principle that you learned from that? It's a very simple principle.

That the more confident you are in the object of your faith, the less conscious you are of the faith you're exercising in that object. The more confident you are in the object of your faith, the less conscious you are of the faith you're exercising in that object. You were totally unconscious of the faith you've been exercising in the chair you've been sitting on simply because you had an inherent confidence in the chair, the object of your faith.

I'm not conscious of the faith I'm exercising in my wife in leaving her alone in England while I'm away here in Australia or New Zealand or Papua or New Guinea or the United States because I'm utterly confident in her as the object of my faith. So, if you're preoccupied with your faith in God, if you're preoccupied with your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it means you need to get acquainted. That's all.

You need to get acquainted. If you're worrying about whether you've got enough faith, you just don't know God. You just don't know Jesus Christ.

I have to travel tens of thousands of miles, constantly, by air, week after week, month after month, year after year, so that when I climb into one of these big jet liners with their four big jets, it's almost like getting home. And, quite frankly, now I'm quite unaware of the faith that I'm exercising. It isn't that I'm not exercising faith.

Of course I am. I'm exercising faith in the pilot. I'm assuming that he's fully qualified, that he's competent, that he's not going to die of a heart attack.

I'm exercising faith in the equipment. I'm assuming that the wings won't drop off, the engine won't catch fire. I'm exercising faith in the ground crews.

I'm exercising faith in all the navigational aids and the radar set up. Of course I'm exercising faith. But I'm not conscious of the faith I'm exercising, because of the confidence that I have in the object in which I'm exercising my faith.

Now when I first began to fly, I'm not sure that I was all that confident. And when I would sort of half crawl up the gangplank, I'd look at every rivet and wonder which one was going to drop out first, or which engine was going to drop off. But you know, about 18 months ago I had to fly from Toronto in Ontario, Canada, to Boston in Massachusetts.

I was on my way to a little place called Nashua in New Hampshire, where I had a series of meetings in a Baptist church. And I booked on an American Airlines four-engine jet, to take me from Toronto to Boston. And that didn't give me any qualms whatever.

And I knew that when I got on board that plane, I wouldn't give a thought to the faith that I was exercising. But you know, just a few days before I embarked upon that journey, I got a letter that filled me with absolute horror. It was from the pastor of the church.

Do you know what he wrote? He said he'd just got his pilot's license. Now wouldn't that fill you with horror? Do you know, I hardly dare read the rest of the letter. I knew exactly what he was going to say.

He wanted to know when I was going to arrive in Boston. And he was going to fly from Nashua to Boston to pick me up. A man who'd only just got his pilot's license.

Probably be in one of those potty little planes, you know, with one little tiny engine that goes pop, pop, pop, pop, and likely to stop popping any moment. Wouldn't that fill you with horror? I knew perfectly well if I was going to step into that American Airlines jet without a moment's thought to the faith I was going to exercise, if he came and met me in Boston, I'd be very, very conscious of the faith that I was exercising. I changed my travel program.

I arrived after dark, I made sure of that. That kept him on the ground. He came by car, four wheels, terra firma.

And the firmer the less terror. Now, I was quite wrong, he was a very qualified pilot. I've learned since he can fly, take off, and land.

Hasn't crashed yet. I maligned him completely, but you see, I didn't know him. I wasn't sufficiently acquainted.

Now, this is the matter of faith. You see, faith simply comes from getting acquainted with the object of your faith. Now, of course, the people here in Nazareth, they had absolutely no idea of the relationship that existed between the Lord Jesus as perfect man and his Father in the timelessness of deity.

They didn't realize that a man's attitude toward God releases all the limitable resources of God in the man. So they said, how can this man exercise this wisdom? How can this man do these things? Well, he didn't. He didn't.

He could have done, of course, because the Lord Jesus was never less than God. He could have at any time. But if the Lord Jesus had chosen at any time to behave as God, as I pointed out to you already some of you, nobody would have seen him, because nobody has ever seen God at any time.

Not being God and behaving as God. That's why God created man, so that an invisible God could be made visible in terms of our physical visible humanity. And the Lord Jesus, though God, deliberately assumed the role of the man he as God created to make an invisible God visible.

But a man in the physical visible body that God has given him makes an invisible God visible only by virtue of a moral relationship that allows that invisible God, intimately and indivisibly identified with the man's invisible self, to come into action, clothing his divine activity with that man's flesh and blood. And the Lord Jesus, for 33 years, deliberately submitted himself to his father in such a way that the father, as God, at any time, to accomplish his own timeless ends in terms of the humanity of his dear son. That's why, of course, in the 14th chapter of John's Gospel, in the 10th verse, the Lord Jesus said, The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself.

They don't have their origin in me. He said, Believest thou not that I am in my father, and my father in me? Don't you really believe that this amazing, unique relationship exists between me and my father as God, and my father as God, and me as a man, that I always determined should exist between you as men, and myself as your creator? Don't you believe that? Believest thou not that I am in my father, and my father is in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself. The father that dwelleth in me, he does the work.

Have you really grasped that? Have you got that underlined in your Bible? John 14, 10. The father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work. In other words, everything I do, my father does.

Everything I say, my father says. Everything I am, my father is. By virtue of the fact that I am prepared in the sinlessness of my humanity to adopt toward my father the faith that lets my father as God get into action.

If I were to quote this statement from the Lord Jesus and say, please take out a piece of paper and complete the sentence, what would you add? The Lord Jesus said, He that believeth on me. What would you add? He that believeth on me. Well, I'm sure you could suggest several things that would be perfectly valid.

You might say, he that believeth on me shall never perish. It would be true. But in this particular context, that isn't what Jesus Christ said.

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. That would be valid. But it isn't what the Lord Jesus in this context said.

I wonder if you've got this underlined in your Bible. You'd find it in the 12th chapter of John and the 44th verse. Said the Lord Jesus, he that believeth on me, believe not on me.

Got that underlined in your Bible? Or didn't you know it was there? John 12, 44. He that believeth on me, believeth not on me. Whatever does the Lord Jesus mean? Surely haven't you been encouraged again and again to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? And then the Lord Jesus immediately comes back and says, if you believe on me, you don't believe on me.

But if you don't believe on Jesus Christ, who do you believe on? Well, he tells you. Doesn't leave you in any ambiguity about it. He says, he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

In other words, in the discharge of my office as man, my sole responsibility is to echo my father's mind. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself. They don't have their origin in me.

Of course, it's the same sense in which, in the 7th chapter of the same John's Gospel and the 16th verse, the Lord Jesus said, my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. He said, please don't think of me as some original theological professor, who is founding a new religion. He says, that's wrong.

My doctrine isn't mine, but his that sent me. I don't originate any theological concepts. I don't throw out my philosophical views.

My opinions aren't on the market. He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. Because every time I speak, I echo the timelessness of my father's mind and purpose.

And he goes on, of course, in the next verse in that John's Gospel, chapter 12 and verse 45, he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. In other words, the Lord Jesus was discharging completely his office as man. If any man, verse 47 of John 12, if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not.

I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. Verse 48, he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. I don't have to judge him.

The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him. When? In the last day. Because, says the Lord Jesus, what I say now will still be truth.

Then, why? Well, because it's my father speaking in the timelessness of deity. And having yielded my body, the father prepared for me, fashioned in the borrowed womb of Mary, having yielded my body to my father through the indwelling Holy Spirit, everything my father says is echoed and made articulate in terms of my humanity. So, I don't have to judge him.

The word that I speak will judge him. Because I'm echoing the eternal truth of an unchanging God. And what I say now will be truth still then, and will judge him.

I have not spoken of myself, verse 49, but the father which sent me. He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting, whatsoever I speak.

Therefore, even as the father sent unto me, so I speak. So, you see, the Lord Jesus claimed this. Please don't compare me with any other preacher.

I'm not one preacher among many. I'm not one philosopher among many. I'm not one theologian among many.

You do not have the right to compare what I say with what he says. Because what I say is an exact, absolute echo of my father's mind and purpose. Everything I say has its origin in him to whom I have yielded myself.

By that moral relationship that allows my father unsullied, unblemished expression. In all that I do and say and am. So, he that has seen me, has seen him that sent me.

And when you have listened to what I have to say, you've listened to what he has to say. Now, this is a marvelous relationship. And it's relevant to you and to me because the Lord Jesus said this.

As my father hath sent me, so send I you. So, what validifies your Christian experience? Not your church affiliation. Not even the doctrines that you've mastered.

That doesn't validify your Christian experience. The only thing that validifies and legitimizes your Christian experience is your personal relationship to Jesus Christ that allows him to be in you today what he allowed his father to be in him then. That's all.

Because he is prepared to be to you as God today what the father was prepared to be to him as God then. So long as you and I are prepared to be to him as men today, what he was prepared to be to his father then as man. That's all.

Would you like to come on a treasure hunt? Let me lead you on a treasure hunt. You have to keep your finger licked if you're going to follow me. Because I'm going to go pretty fast.

I'll give you chapter and verse. And I'll read consecutively. And as we go through and follow the clues, see if you can follow the scent.

Will you? Like a pack of bloodhounds. See if you can follow the scent. Let's start in John's Gospel, chapter 3. John's Gospel, chapter 3. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Verse 34 of chapter 3. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him. Look at chapter 4, verse 34. Jesus said, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.

And to finish his word. In the fifth chapter and verse 23. He that honoureth not the son honoureth not the father which hath sent him.

Next verse. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life. And shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

30. I can of mine own self do nothing, as I here I judge. And my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the father which hath sent me.

36. I have a greater witness than that of John. For the works which the father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the father hath sent me.

Next verse. The father himself which hath sent me hath borne witness of me. Verse 38.

You have not his word abiding in you. For whom he hath sent him you believe. In the sixth chapter.

Verse 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent. Verse 38.

I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. Verse 40.

This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son and believeth on him may have everlasting life. And I will raise him up at the last day. 44.

No man can come to me except the father which hath sent me draw him. And I will raise him up at the last day. Verse 57.

As the living father hath sent me, and I live by the father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me. Chapter 7. Verse 16. Jesus answered and said, my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

Verse 18. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true. And no unrighteousness is in him.

Verse 28. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, you both know me, and ye know whence I am, and I am not come of myself. But he that sent me is true whom ye know not.

But I know him, for I am from him. Verse 29. And he hath sent me.

Verse 33. Then said Jesus unto them, yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Chapter 8. And verse 18.

I am one that beareth witness of myself, and the father that sent me beareth witness of me. The 16th verse. Yet if I judge, my judgment is true.

For I am not alone, but I am the father that sent me. Verse 26. I have many things to say and to judge of you, but he that sent me is true.

Verse 29. And he that sent me is with me. The father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.

Verse 42. Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me. For I proceeded forth and came from God.

Neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Chapter 9. Verse 4. I must work the works of him that sent me. Chapter 10.

Verse 36. Say of him whom the father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the son of God. 41st verse of the 11th chapter.

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the

people which stand by said it, that they may believe that thou hast.

It's your guess. I said, did you follow the sin? I haven't by any means exhausted the trail. Not by any means.

It just goes on and on and on. 12th chapter. We've already cited 44th and the 45th verse and the 49th verse.

13th chapter. The 20th verse. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

24th verse. The 14th chapter. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings, and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's, which sent me.

15th chapter. 21st verse. All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

16th chapter. 5th verse. Now I go my way to him that sent me.

And of course, the 17th chapter. This is life eternal. Verse 3. That they might know thee the only true God, Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

8th verse. I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me. They have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

18th verse. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 21st verse.

That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee. That they also may be one in us. That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

23. I in them, thou in me. Same unique relationship.

That they may be made perfect in one. That the world may know that thou hast sent me. And hast loved them as thou hast loved me.

All righteous, Father. Verse 25. The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

I said, what would you say was the one characteristic that the Lord Jesus claimed concerning his own ministry? Sent. Supposing somebody came banging on the door of your house, and there was a small ball. It's like, sir, I've been sent! What would be your first question? Who sent you? Who sent you? In other words, the moment he says, I have been sent, he takes the attention off himself, and focuses your attention upon the sent.

Only one justification did the Lord Jesus ever give for anything he did or said or was. Sent. Why did you say that? Sent.

Where? What are you doing there? Sent. What are you hanging on that cross for? Sent. The valid question to ask is, who sent you? His Father.

And the Lord Jesus, though never less than God, for 33 years insisted on being the sent one. Who adopted toward his Father an attitude that allowed the Father at all times to exercise the initiative. And said, the Lord Jesus, as my Father sent me, so send I you.

So that by virtue of your relationship to me, that allows me at all times to be the God, who having redeemed you by the blood that I shed upon the cross, and now inhabits you in the person and power of my other self, the Holy Spirit, you give to me the right at all times to be the one who controls everything you do and say and are, so that any time there's only one valid reason that you will ever be prepared to give to your fellow man for what you are doing or saying or being. Sent. And of course from that relationship derives your authority.

For from his relationship to his Father, the Lord Jesus derived his authority. The authority of obedience. That obedience that links the life of God to the soul of man and allows God himself to be the dynamic of his being.

It's the only authority the Lord Jesus ever exercised. Human authority. Human authority derives normally from who you are and how much you know.

Who you are and how much you know. That's where we derive our human authority. I always find it quite fascinating because I constantly move around into different countries, I visit new territory, I meet new people constantly and it's always fascinating to discern what they're really at in the earliest part of their courteous conversation.

Because nearly always by the questions they ask and they try to disguise it as much as they can, they're really trying to find out who are you. Or actually what they're really trying to find out is who do you think you are. And then the second thing they find out is how much do you know.

In other words, where did you get your formal training? What is your auspice? Who sponsors you? I'm sure some of you have to travel, found the same. Probably in the business world too. Who are you or who do you think you are and what do you know? And when they've assessed who they think you are and how much they think you know, then they decide how much attention they're going to give you.

In other words, whether you've got any authority. If ever there was a man who walked this earth who had the right to exercise authority on the basis of who he was, it was Jesus Christ. He created the universe.

If ever there was a man who walked this earth who had the right to exercise authority on the basis of what he knew, it was Jesus Christ. Because in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. There's nothing that anybody ever taught or learned in any university anywhere in the world that he didn't first think of.

And yet the amazing thing is this, the Lord Jesus never once exercised authority on the basis of who he was or what he knew. John 10 and verse 37. If I do not the works of my father.

If I do not the works of my father. If I'm not behaving as the sent one who is told what to do and does what he is told. Believe me not.

Believe me not. You do not have the right, said the Lord Jesus Christ, to believe one single word that I am saying unless it is patently obvious that I am being told what to do by the one who sent me and I am doing what I'm told. That's my authority.

That's pretty frightening, isn't it? But if I do, verse 38. Though you believe not me, though you may be inclined to say, Prince Ham, this man, this man, this wisdom, this man, these mighty words. Though you're inclined to discredit me.

If it is patently obvious that what I am doing and saying is of divine origin. Believe the works. That you may know and believe that the father is in me and I am in him.

That there is a unique relationship between myself and my father in such a way that by my attitude toward him I allow him as God in me to clothe his activity on earth with my humanity. That's my authority. And it is the only authority that you and I have the right to exercise.

You can exercise another quality of authority, of course you can, on the human level. As a father you can say to your son, you believe because I'm your dad, see? Well that's one kind of authority. And you can follow through, in various ways.

To administer your authority. But you're not exercising a spiritual authority. You're simply bullying.

I don't have the right as a father, and I've got four sons. They're wonderful boys. They all take after their mother.

I don't have the right as a father to say to my four boys, you've got to believe it, I'm your dad. That's no authority. Even though what I say is true.

They do not have the right to believe it, even though it is true because I said it because I'm their dad. They only have the right to believe it if they can see the truth that I make articulate, behaved in terms of my humanity. Then I've got authority.

But if they can't see in their home, at their breakfast table, the truth incarnate that I make articulate, I don't have the right to insist upon their believing even what I tell them, even though it's true. They've got to leave home to believe the truth that I've only told them but had no authority to impose upon them. I may be a preacher, I may be pastor of a church, but I don't have the right to get up into my pulpit and say I have been through my theological train.

I have five, six or seven years behind me. You have to believe it, you are a member of my congregation, I'm appointed, this is my office. You believe it because I tell you.

That's no authority. The preacher may get up and preach the truth but he has no authority that would cause men to believe the truth that he preaches unless what he says is being lived in terms of what he is. The only authority that you and I have at any time is our obedience that stems from dependence on, expressed in obedience to, which is the only valid expression of our love for, that threefold moral relationship that releases the life of God in human character.

What authority do you exercise? Does the authority that you exercise as Sunday school teacher, as a parent, as a preacher, as a pastor, or a businessman, does that authority stem from your relationship to Jesus Christ? The faith that lets God be the God God is in action? That allows him to clothe his character with human behavior? Faith lets God loose, releases his divine activity, links the soul of man to the life of God. Now maybe tomorrow night we shall be discussing how this actually functions in terms of human experience. What is the mechanism, if you like, what is the mechanism that is brought into action when I adopt an attitude toward God that allows the God who is my creator actually to clothe his character and his

righteousness and his purposes and his timeless ends with my flesh and blood? Because there is a mechanism.

God created us very intelligently and there is nothing, nothing quite so fascinatingly logical as the Christian faith. That's why, of course, Peter gave us this injunction. Set Christ apart in your hearts as Lord.

Always be ready to give a logical repentance to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that's in you. Do it courteously and respectfully. You can always afford to be courteous and respectful if you know what you're talking about.

And if you know what you're saying is true. That's why we need to understand the principles that govern man's relationship to God and God's relationships to man. And when we've mastered that through the revelation that he's given to us, we shall know those principles and they'll become so fascinatingly logical to us that at any time, under any circumstance, respectfully and courteously, we shall be able to give a valid reason for the living hope that sustains us and makes life the sheer adventure God always intended it to be.

The more confident you are in the object of your faith, the less conscious you will be of the faith you're exercising in that object. And confidence in the object of your faith comes from getting acquainted. That's why faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Because the Bible has been given to us, God-breathed, to introduce us to Jesus Christ. If I want to create the kind of faith that makes Jesus Christ dominant in your personal experience, then I'll expose you to the Word of God. And that's what we shall be doing in these days.

Turn to this book as we have this evening. Let's have a word of prayer. We're thankful, dear Lord, that you didn't leave us down here on earth to sweat it out as best we might, to struggle along and get by somehow.

We thank you so much that you created us with a moral capacity to adopt an attitude towards you that allows you to fill and flood our personalities with yourself. Introduce us, we pray, the loving Lord, ever more fully into this unique relationship so that we may step out into every new day that dawns unshatterably confident that you living in us will be overwhelmingly adequate for every situation that arises as we, through faith, release your divine activity and allow you to vindicate your deity in our humanity. Thank you so much that you're prepared to share your life with us on earth.

That by virtue of our relationship to you, we may exercise the same authority that by virtue of the relationship that you exercise towards your Father gave you the unchallengeable authority that you had the right at all times to exercise over sin and death and hell and the devil himself. Thank you so much, dear Lord, that you've lifted us up out of the colorless mass of those who are spiritually destitute. You've lifted us up out from among the dead, even while still in our bodies, without two feet on the ground, and you've given to us the fantastic privilege of sharing the life of God our maker on earth on the way to heaven.

Grant that others, dear Lord, by virtue of our relationship towards you may become compellingly aware in our presence of the wonderful fact that you're alive and alive in us, that you may find it increasingly easy to fulfill your timeless ends through us as healthy, living, virile, robust, full-blooded members of your body on earth of which you're the head. And we ask it to your eternal praise, to the unspeakable blessing of our

fellow men and the inevitable comfort of our own souls. Amen.

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