

The Rod of God

by Major Ian Thomas

The Christian life is not just about knowing the right answers, but about living the life of Christ, which involves being a new creation in Him.

Duration: 1:06:15

Scripture: Exodus 3:2, Exodus 4:1, James 1:17

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of practicing the principles of the Bible rather than just mastering its doctrines. He warns against the danger of understanding the message but failing to apply it in one's life. The speaker uses the story of Moses as an example, highlighting how Moses initially doubted his ability to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. However, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and commanded him to emancipate his people. The sermon concludes with a cautionary tale of a man who played with a small snake, thinking he had tamed it, but ultimately the snake killed him, symbolizing the destructive nature of sin.

Transcript

Certainly delighted to have this opportunity of sharing in this This Is Life rally this Saturday evening. Certainly too like to echo the words that we have heard from Mr Horn concerning the work in Papua New Guinea. It was my privilege to spend just a couple of weeks in that country just two weeks ago.

In fact, two weeks ago today it was my privilege to speak at the This Is Life rally in the Everyman's Hut in Port Moresby, Papua. And certainly there is a land that is wide open and with marvelous prospects. And it was a sheer joy to meet so many of these men and women and boys and girls of that country who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ and who will be the leaders of the future.

In particular, in the work of campaigners at Port Moresby, I was deeply impressed with the large number of university students and high school students that are being reached in their program. So I commend this work to your prayers and for your faithful giving. It's been a great joy to be here for these few days and a special word of welcome to some who may be joining us tonight in this rally who as yet have not been able to participate in the other sessions.

We have been discussing some of the basic principles of the Christian life, as I have put it on each evening, making the obvious obvious. Discovering the sublime simplicity, the profound simplicity of the

Christian life that originates from and is sustained by and finds its final consummation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We've seen that you cannot possibly detach Christianity from the Lord Jesus without killing it, reducing it to a dead religion.

No matter how fundamental, no matter how biblical, no matter how conservatively evangelical it may be, the moment you detach Christianity from Christ, you've killed it. Because the Lord Jesus himself is the Christian life. It isn't Christianity and Christ, there's no such thing.

It's Christianity is Christ and you and I enter into the good of all that God has provided only in the measure of our identification with him. This is something that so many true believers, converted men and women and boys and girls who've claimed redemption, who know they're born again, who can name the date when they made their decision, have failed to grasp. Not willfully, but very often through a failure to grasp the real spiritual content of that which has become theirs by virtue of their new relationship to God through his dear son Jesus Christ.

There may of course be some tonight who've never entered into that relationship. Did you ever hear of the man who thought he was dead? It was an unusual situation. His family pleaded with him, argued with him, but all to no avail.

He was dead. And that's all there was to it. He was consulted, he interviewed by psychiatrists and by doctors and by pastors and by welfare counselors.

Everybody had their crack at him, but nobody could persuade him otherwise. He was dead. So finally one day a doctor was interviewing him and he said, do you believe that a dead man can bleed? So he thought about that for a little while and then he said, oh no, no, he said no, a dead man can't bleed.

So the doctor grabbed him unexpectedly by the hand and with a sharp instrument he punctured the tip of one of his fingers and there was a tiny red ruby bead of blood. And the man looked at it in utter astonishment as though he was hypnotized. And after a bit when he got over his amazement he said, isn't that astonishing? He said, would you believe, amazing, dead men can bleed.

Well you'd say, a man in that condition is in a pretty bad way. That a man who is physically alive should imagine that he was physically dead, that's pathetic. But I'll tell you something even more tragic than that and that is that a man who is spiritually dead should imagine that he's spiritually alive.

And of course there are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of such earnest, sincere, often God-fearing men and women and boys and girls, church attendants who've confused religion with life, who've been Christianized but have never been regenerated, who are spiritually dead because there has never taken place in their personal experience that spiritual resurrection, which is called in the Bible new birth, whereby we may become partakers again on God's terms of reference of the divine nature, the life of Christ himself. Spiritually dead and yet imagine that they are spiritually alive. That's tragic and almost certainly there are some men and women and some boys and girls in this congregation here tonight in that condition.

Very often a boy or a girl brought up in an evangelical home where the parents are true believers is in that condition. They've learned all the language, they know the right answers, they've memorized John 3 16 and all the rest, but they've never been converted, never personally entered into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. And although mother and father are born again and big brother and little sister perhaps, there's some member of that family who simply goes along, colored by the family context, but spiritually

destitute.

That's tragic. And only resurrection of course can remedy the situation. But you know if it's sad that a man who is physically dead, physically alive should imagine that he's physically dead, and if it's sadder that a man who is spiritually dead should imagine that he's spiritually alive, there is one thing even worse than both those situations, and that is the man or the woman or the boy or the girl who is actually spiritually alive, but goes on behaving as though they were spiritually dead.

And there are countless men and women and boys and girls within the evangelical context in that pathetic condition. Converted yes, redeemed yes, forgiven sinners indeed they are, their names recorded in the Lamb's book of life, numbered amongst those who have been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb and reconciled to God, in whom this redemptive transaction has been sealed by the regenerative process that restores the life of God to the soul of man, but they've never come to understand how wealthy God has made them. They only have a historical Jesus who died for them in the past, and an eschatological Jesus, to get my mouth around a real good theological term, who's coming back again.

The Jesus that was and the Jesus that will be, but they live in the meantime on earth in a spiritual vacuum, because they've never discovered that the purpose of the death of the Lord Jesus for us was to put the life of the Lord Jesus in us. And if you haven't ever yet discovered that the Lord Jesus died for you to put his life in you, then although you may be spiritually alive, you cannot help with all the sincerity in the world and with the best will in the world, but live a life as though you were still spiritually dead. We've talked about faith, faith that invokes the activity of a second party, not only invoking the redemptive activity of Christ so that he may present us to the Father as one who may be acquitted for his dear sake because of what he did upon the cross, but the faith that invokes the activity of a risen indwelling Lord who comes by his Holy Spirit to share his life with us and communicate that life through us.

The faith that steps out of every situation, bowing ourselves out and bowing him in and saying, Lord, I don't have what it takes, but you do. Thanks, you're in business. That faith that enters into the good of his resurrection as once by conversion we entered into the good of his redemptive and vicarious sufferings.

We've talked about this quality of faith. We, last evening, focused our attention upon the mechanism that makes it possible for God actually to behave in a man as he, by his Holy Spirit within the human spirit, gains access to the human soul, teaches our minds, controls our emotions, and therefore directs our will and becomes within us himself the origin of our activity. So that you can say actually, not just as a sort of theological bit of jargon or evangelical titbit, to me to live is Christ, actually Christ.

I am crucified with Christ. To all that I am, apart from what he is, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, don't get me wrong, as you see me behave, listen to me speak, recognize my decisions, not I, Christ lives in me.

And the life that I'm now living, I'm living by faith. The faith that lets him be who he is and as big as he is, God himself, in action, in me. This is the quality of life that God has placed on offer to you and to me, to share the very life of Jesus Christ on earth, on the way to heaven.

The real Christian life. For the Christian life is the life that the Lord Jesus lived then, in his own body, lived now, in your body. The only difference is the body he lives in.

So long as you and I are prepared to present our bodies to him as his body then was made available by the Father. This is what Paul means when he said, I beseech you therefore, brethren, therefore. Why

therefore? Whenever there's a therefore in the Bible, always say, wherefore the therefore? What's the therefore therefore? You see, verse 36 of Romans chapter 11, of him, Jesus Christ, through him, Jesus Christ, to him, Jesus Christ, of, through, and to, from Alpha to Omega, from the beginning to the end.

All things. I beseech you therefore, brethren, because all things are of him, all things are through him, and all things are to him, I beseech you therefore, brethren, do the only rational, intelligent thing possible to you, present your bodies. Present your bodies to him as he presented his body to the Father.

It's your reasonable service. Don't be conformed to this world, don't ape its patterns, this godless, Christless society. Be transformed, revolutionized, by the renewing of your mind, by adopting an entirely different attitude.

That mind which was in Christ Jesus, that constantly looked to his Father and allowed his Father to get into action in terms of his humanity now, adopt that same attitude to the Lord Jesus that lets him get into activity in your humanity today. And then you'll prove experientially for yourself what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. With somebody in you who's got all that it takes to finalize and bring to their glorious, triumphant consummation his timeless ends, incarnate, fleshed out in your humanity.

Well, this is the quality of life for which you and I were redeemed. The Lord Jesus describes it as life more abundant. He said, I'm come that you might have life in the first instance, that you might be resurrected out of a state of death, that you might have life, but that you might have that life in a superlative quality that overflows in blessing to others.

That's why, of course, the Christian life in the New Testament is always described in the superlative. It's joy unspeakable. In other words, there are no words in any known vocabulary adequate to describe the real joy that should be the constant experience of every redeemed sinner.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory. It's peace that passeth understanding. In other words, staggers the neighbors.

Nobody can give any possible explanation for the peace, the genuine, deep-seated tranquility that should be the birthright of every redeemed sinner. It passes understanding. It's love that passes knowledge.

It's beyond human ken. It's not just to be victorious, it's to be more than conqueror, superlatively victorious. We are to reign in life by one Christ Jesus.

Now, this isn't the superman. This isn't the perks reserved for the elite. This is normality.

This is standing. This is simply being man as God intended man to be, because remember, the gospel is designed simply to restore us to our true humanity. To bring us back into that relationship to God that lets God be as big as God is, clothed with you and me.

Now, the problem that always arises, even though folks sort of get the message, get the doctrine, get the teaching, the question that always arises, but how? I get what you're saying. I was redeemed through the blood of Christ, reconciled to God, a guilty sinner, I have been cleansed, and because God created me different than the animals, he gave me a body, a soul, and a spirit, God by his Holy Spirit has come to re-inhabit my human spirit, so that he as God may clothe his divine activity with me on earth, with my two feet on the ground. Controlling my mind, my emotions, and my will, he's to be the author of everything I do and say and am.

I get the message, but how? Even though I give my mental consent to the doctrine, I find it so difficult when I get up on Monday morning and when I go to the office, or school, or college, or face the screaming brats, how? Well, that's it, isn't it? It's no good you knowing that Christ died for your sins, that you might not go to hell, but go to heaven, if you don't know how to receive Christ as your Redeemer. And it's no good you knowing that the Lord Jesus, having died to redeem you, rose again from the dead, ascended to be with the Father, and then came in the person of his other self, the Holy Spirit, to fill and flood you with his divinity, if you don't know how, day by day, in the stern business of being on earth, with your two feet on the ground, you are to appropriate who he is and what he is. So I thought that tonight it would be very valuable if we focused our attention just at that point, on the how of it all.

How do I appropriate? How do I make real in my experience all that the Lord Jesus is in me because of what he did for me? And to that end, I'm going to turn with you tonight to one of my favorite Old Testament stories. It's in the 17th chapter of the book of Exodus. Exodus chapter 17.

I need only remind you very briefly of the context. God, by the hand of Moses, has brought his people out of Egypt. Egypt, which is well you know in the Bible, is a very fascinating picture of the unregenerate, the unconverted, the unsaved.

If you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ yet as your Redeemer, in the picture language of this historical record of God's dealings with his people Israel, you are still in Egypt. You're still under the lash of the taskmaster, that sin principle of satanic origin that whips you and thrashes you and pushes you around as it pleases because although you claim liberty from God, you are a slave to this old Adam nature. Sin that is hostile to God, that is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

You are sold under sin in Egypt. Just like the children of Israel in slavery. That was Egypt.

But God in his mercy sent a delivery by whose hand, Moses, they were to be brought out of Egypt and on and in to the land of Canaan. Now we're not going to focus our attention upon this. We don't have time, but you know perfectly well, I hope you do, that Canaan in the Bible never, never, never, never, and in case I didn't mention it, never talks about heaven.

Canaan is not heaven. Canaan is only heaven in your hymn books. But never take your theology from the hymn books.

Because 95% of them are pathetic. Ought to have been thrown out of the window a long sit. So, Canaan is not heaven.

Canaan is the normal Christian life. Jordan is not that last dying gasp, you know, just before you say bye-bye to the family and they start putting flowers on your grave. That isn't Jordan.

Jordan is simply the place in the historical record in the picture language of the Old Testament where for the first time you begin to enjoy what the Christian life is all about. In other words, Jesus Christ. Egypt, the unregenerate.

Canaan. A land, Deuteronomy 12, that we are to enjoy all the days of our life on earth. The plenitude of God's provision because of an indwelling, risen, triumphant Lord who by His gracious Holy Spirit indwelling your human spirit can fill and flood your humanity with Himself with all the good things of the promised land.

Milk and honey. Pomegranates. And grapes.

Marvellous to live in Canaan. You know, just chew grapes all day and spit pips at each other. Tremendous.

That's Canaan. But, you know, that instead of getting through from Egypt to Canaan in the 11 days that it need only have taken them it took them 40 years. Somewhat of a delay.

Reminds me of British railways. They got stuck. They got dumped in the desert.

And of this experience in the desert you will remember the psalmist tells us, echoed in the third chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews they grieved God for 40 days. 40 years. Grieved God for 40 years in the wilderness.

So, you see, if Canaan is heaven, then to grieve God for all your life down here on earth is normal. And incidentally, if Canaan is heaven, Moses went to hell. He never got to Canaan.

He died in the wilderness. However, that's the context. Exodus 17.

They've just come out of Egypt. They are a redeemed people with their eyes set toward the land of promise. Going on and in.

They're at the threshold of their journey. But it was right at that point in verse 8 of Exodus chapter 17 then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim. Now, Amalek, and we don't have time to examine his pedigree, but no matter where you find him, Amalek derived from the grandson of that profane individual Esau who despised the birthright who didn't need God's divine intervention who got all that it takes who was the very epitome of that Adamic creed of self-sufficiency called the flesh in the New Testament.

Amalek, no matter where you meet him, anywhere in scripture represents that old Adam nature, that ego that inflates itself and takes the place of God. That's Amalek. Haman was an Amalekite who wanted to hang Mordecai and got hung on his own gallows.

Do you remember? King Herod who destroyed all the little children under the age of two. The last king of the Iconians, he was an Amalekite. No matter where you find Amalek, he's always God's enemy.

It's the flesh. That which stands astride your pathway as a redeemed sinner on and in to all the plenitude of Christ's resurrection life. Said Amalek to the children of Israel, you may have got out of Egypt, you may be redeemed, but thus far and no farther, except over my dead body.

Now, that's what the flesh says to you as a converted boy, girl, man or woman. You may have had your sins forgiven, you may be converted, you may be on your way to heaven, you may have escaped hell, your name may be in the Lamb's book of life, but I'm going to make absolutely certain that though you have your inheritance in Christ, heaven one day, Jesus Christ will never have his inheritance in you, your humanity on earth. Except over my dead body.

That's the flesh. The flesh always robs Jesus Christ, your redeemer of your humanity. He robs Jesus Christ of your time, your money, your talent, your gift, your love, your ambitions.

That's his business. He's not particularly interested in you. You're simply the battlefield.

He's simply the protagonist and the arch enemy of Jesus Christ. And whatever the flesh as the agency of Satan himself can do to rob Jesus Christ of his rightful place in your life, you can count upon the flesh to do it. Now that's the flesh, Amalek.

And the flesh, Amalek, stood right across the path. And Moses said to Joshua, Choose us out, men. Go out, fight with Amalek.

Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him and fought with Amalek and Moses, Aaron and Her went up to the top of the hill and it came to pass when Moses held up his hand with the rod of God in it, Israel prevailed. And when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Now there's the picture. You couldn't have a more lucid picture than that of the principle of appropriation. Where was the fight going on? Down in the valley.

Who were the opponents? Israel, led by Joshua and Amalek, the enemy. That's where the fight was going on. But where was the issue to be decided? Up in the mountain.

Where Moses, with the rod of God in his hand, either held it up or let it down. And when Moses let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But when Moses held his hand high, Israel prevailed.

A simple picture of appropriation. What did the hand held high indicate? Simply, God, we're looking to you. There's the battle.

That's where the protagonists are pitted, the one against the other. But God, we're not looking to our prowess. We're not looking to our dedication.

We're not looking to our enthusiasm. We're not looking to our military skill. We're not looking to the master strategy of Captain Joshua.

God, our eyes are upon you. This is your situation. We have no expectation whatever apart from you, God.

Okay, you're in business. Now, that's the hand held high. That's appropriation.

Now, where Moses ceased to appropriate and ceased to reckon with God, that's when things went wrong. The moment his hand was down, no matter how bravely Joshua led his men into the battle, no matter in what mighty array they swept forward to confront the foe, no matter how completely adequate they may have felt themselves, no matter how skilled in combat, when Moses' hand was down, they were thrashed, beaten, chased off the field of battle. But the amazing thing is this.

When Moses' hand was held high in the appropriation of faith that looked alone to God, no matter how weary Joshua was, no matter how discouraged, no matter how many the defeats of the past, no matter how bruised and bleeding his men, no matter in what disarray they advanced, no matter how weary, though they could hardly drag one foot behind the other, the amazing thing was this, when Moses' hand was held high, Amalek was thrashed, and Joshua and Israel chased them off the field of battle. Well, could you have a clearer picture than that? Where was the issue being settled? On the base of human ingenuity, human dedication, funds available, personnel flocking to the volunteer booths? No. Appropriation.

The look of faith. You see, when Moses' hand was down, they were fighting a battle already lost. When Moses' hand was held high, they were celebrating a victory already won.

Simple, isn't it? Reckon with your dedication, reckon with your enthusiasm, reckon with your personality thrust, reckon with your dollars in the bank, reckon with your inherent ability, reckon with the numbers that will muster behind your lead, and you'll be thrashed. Battle already lost. Overwhelmingly conscious maybe of your own weakness, inadequacy, poverty, but reckon with Christ.

And you will enter through faith into that victory which he has already won. And you can enjoy the spoils of battle while you chase the fur. The rod held high.

That's the picture. Handy little rod, don't you think, to have around the place? Wouldn't you like a little rod like that? So that, you know, when you're suddenly confronted with some perplexity, some temptation, some heavy responsibility, some appalling perplexity, you know, you just take out a little rod. Wouldn't that be nice? To have a little rod in your vest pocket or your purse.

Where do you get a rod like that? Well, where did Moses get his? That's what we need to discover. Where did Moses get his rod? The rod of God. In order to find that out, we have to turn way back to the beginning of Exodus.

And again, I need hardly remind you how in chapter 2 we're introduced to Moses. Literally a little pipsqueak in a basket. And Pharaoh's daughter heard the squeak of the pip.

Because you see, Pharaoh was destroying all the male born so that he might destroy the nation. And Moses' mother had tucked him away in the bulrushes. But Pharaoh's daughter, going for a little country stroll, heard the pip squeak and rescued the little baby.

That's how we're introduced to Moses. And Moses had a pretty smart little assistant. And when she saw that Pharaoh's daughter had discovered her little brother, with a very innocent look on her face, she said, would you like a nurse? That was pretty smart for that little young rascal, wasn't it? And Pharaoh's daughter says, yes, I really do need a nurse.

Not quite sure which way out to hold this thing. Maybe she'd never nursed a baby before. And so Miriam went off and got her mother.

Moses' mother. And introduced, don't suppose she said so, she kept her mouth shut. But she introduced Moses' mother to Pharaoh's daughter and said, I've got a nurse for you.

It's the first recorded incidence of social welfare. Where the government pays a mother to take care of her own child. Marvellous arrangement for Moses' mother.

And so, you see, Moses was brought up, brought up in a royal household, with everything that money could buy. Everything. Sent to university, he did remarkably well.

Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Mighty in word and deed, we're told in the Acts of the Apostles. The age of 40 he came back, in the prime of life, carried all honours before him.

Gold medal for this and gold medal for that. And the world at his feet. But Moses was a humble man.

We're told of Moses that there was none humbler than he. He wasn't arrogant, he wasn't proud. There was nothing ostentatious about him.

And he was a man capable of deep conviction. And able to be moved with a sense of real compassion. And when he saw one of his own kith and kin being lashed and whipped by an Egyptian taskmaster, he felt deep, strong emotions surging within his heart.

And a deep, legitimate desire to release his people and emancipate them. And he couldn't help but feel if ever there was a man raised up by providence, for just such an hour as this, I'm that man. And it was not insincerely that Moses threw himself into that situation.

But as well you know, failed miserably. Ended only up by murdering the Egyptian taskmaster, and then he fled for his life. And for 40 miserable, weary years, until he was 80 years of age, he was useless to God or man.

Just shoveling a handful of sheep around in the back side of the desert. Employed by his wife's father. Fancy being your wife's husband for 40 years.

That's what he was. A complete colourless, non-entity. In spite of his royal breeding.

In spite of his scholarship. A total, pathetic, impotent write-off. Is that what you're like? As a Christian? No challenge to your scholastic ability.

No challenge maybe to the sporting honours that you may have carried. Or your sincerity, or deep convictions. The genuine emotions of which you were capable.

A presentable person, a nice presence, but quite frankly, spiritually, you're a total write-off. As colourless, and impotent, and barren, and useless, and ineffective as they come. Nice, nice to meet, everybody likes you.

But you cut absolutely no ice. Spiritually, with anybody or anything. Well, that was Moses.

Until, of course, that moment of encounter with the living God. Who, on that occasion, taught him the principles that we have been discussing this week. Because they've never changed.

Because God never changes. The Father of lights in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Always the same.

Yesterday, today, and forever. God's theology never changes. He leaves that to the theologians.

Theirs changes every ten minutes. God's never changed. It's eternally and timelessly immutable.

And revealed to us immutably in the word of God, from Genesis to the Revelation. You're on solid rock. When you've entered into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ.

And it was at the burning bush. You remember how it happened? After 40 years, the angel of the Lord, Exodus 3, verse 2, appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. It burned, and burned.

And he went for a little walk, and he came back, and he had another look, and it burned, and burned, and burned, and burned. Then he scratched his head, and said, can't understand it. Twiddled around five times, and looked again, burned, and burned, and burned.

Do you remember the story? And it burned, and burned, and burned, and burned, and burned. And he said, most remarkable, never seen a bush that burned, and burned, and burned, and burned, and burned, and burned. He said, there must be something very, very remarkable about the bush.

And so, you will remember, out of holy curiosity, he made intelligent inquiry, and he made a very wonderful discovery. Because when he came to discover why, God called him by name. And it's only when a holy enough curiosity has ever been aroused within your heart to discover what it is that makes that man or woman really tick, who exercises a spiritual authority out of all proportion to their natural, inherent gift, or social position, or financial status, that individual who's always staggered you, somehow they're always on their feet, when everybody else is on their face.

It's only when your soul has been adequately awakened to want to know the reason why, that God ever calls you by name. Moses. He said, yes, here I am.

Said, God, you imagine that this is a very, very remarkable bush, but you're wrong. It's a very ordinary bush. You know the story.

He says, you see that bush over there, that half goat-eaten thing? That bush would have done. That one there with its beautiful foliage, looks as though it's just come out of the hairdressers, and had a perm. That one would have done.

Any old bush will do. You know the story. Any old bush, Moses, will do, so long as there is God in it.

God in it. You see, the trouble with you, Moses, is this, that 40 years ago, when you were a strapping young fellow, coming back from university with all the honors in the world, you looked in the mirror and you thought you were some bush. And within 24 hours of noble endeavor, you had burned yourself out, and you've been a heap of ashes in the wilderness for 40 years since.

And I'll tell you something, God said to Moses, if this bush were trying to sustain the flame with its own substance, it too would have burnt itself out with a matter of hours and joined you on the ash heap. But it is not the bush that sustains this flame, Moses, with its own substance. It is God.

God himself in the bush. Draw not thy hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. You're not in the presence of an amazing bush, you're in the presence of an amazing God.

So stop admiring the bush, and get to know God for yourself. I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face.

He hadn't been afraid to look at the bush, but now he was afraid to look upon God. And Moses learned the doctrine. He learned the doctrine.

The indwelling life of Christ. The doctrine that the Lord Jesus constantly enunciated and demonstrated. Believest thou not that I am in my father, and my father in me? The words that I speak make articulate.

I speak not of myself. They don't have their origin in me. The father that dwelleth in me.

His bush. He does the work. He, my father, in me sustains the flame.

Everything I do, my father does. Everything I say, my father says. Everything I am, my father is.

He that has seen me, has seen my father. He that has heard me, has heard my father. That's the doctrine.

It runs all the way through the word of God. We neglect it and ignore it to the inevitable impoverishment of our lives. And this by and large is what is rendering the evangelical church today so pathetically impotent.

We've organized God out of business. We no longer need God in the bush. We'll sustain the flame with our own ingenuity.

Our own financial resources. Our own manpower. Our own promotional gimmicks.

And we wonder why. We grab around in a heap of ashes looking for some tiny little evidence of glow in vain. Moses got the message.

It takes God to be a man. That's how we have been putting it this week. That's why it takes Christ himself to be a Christian because Christ in the Christian puts God back into the man.

Cleansed in his blood, the Lord Jesus in the power of his resurrection comes to re-inhabit your human spirit that he might have free access to your human soul. And clothe himself with your humanity. God in the bush.

But the trouble with this was this. That Moses although he gave mental consent now to the doctrine failed to practice the principle. And this is the danger this week.

That you'll come and say marvelous I really enjoyed that. Yes I really understood what he said. But although you master the message you don't practice the principle.

And you can master all the doctrines of the Bible until you've got them at your fingertips and be able to repeat them backwards. But if you don't practice the principle that is inherent in the doctrine, if you don't do the truth the truth as we saw last evening will leave you exactly where it finds you. God said I'm going to send you to do now what you failed to do when you tried 40 years ago.

Emancipate your people. My people. Chapter 4 verse 1. But Moses answered and said but behold they will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice for they will say the Lord hath not appeared unto thee.

I said what's he grumbling about? God has just shown him the principle that it is not the bush that sustains the flame but God in the bush. God says now you're going to be my bush and I'm going to be your God. And Moses comes back with this.

They won't believe me. They won't hearken to my voice. They'll say God didn't speak to you.

Who's he preoccupied with still? Who's he preoccupied with still? Himself. Extraordinary isn't it? And the amazing thing is this that you can come day after day, lunch hour and night and hear the principle enunciated again and again and again that it's only Jesus Christ himself in the power of his resurrection who's got what it takes. You have nothing, are nothing, can do nothing only Christ and though you give a nice smile and nod, you go out to be preoccupied with yourself in every new situation that arises and for all the difference that his presence within you by the Holy Spirit makes, Jesus Christ might just as well be

dead.

As a professing Christian, you behave like an atheist. Professing Christian, practicing atheist. This is characteristic of countless thousands evangelical believers.

Professing Christians, practicing atheists. Preoccupied always with themselves no matter what the problem no matter what the threat, no matter what the responsibility no matter what the task. Preoccupied with themselves.

What are people's reactions going to be to me? What am I going to do in this situation? Who cares? If God is in the bush. The Lord said to him What is that in your hand? Moses, what do you got in your hand? And that question took Moses by surprise. May take you by surprise tonight.

Hope it does. Because it is this question that we normally begin to argue. God said, what you got in your hand? And Moses looked.

He'd almost forgotten what he'd got. Bit of stick. Why? It was just a rod.

Where did he get it from? He picked it up in the wilderness. He'd picked it up maybe years previously when he was shoveling that handful of sheep around the backside of the desert. Just as you have been on vacation on occasions picked up a stick when you were walking along the beach or through the woods and it fitted just snug didn't it? Right.

And you took it back with you. Next time you went out you picked it up. Next time you went out you picked it up and you brought it home.

And you've kept it ever since. Great sentimental value. It isn't worth two cents.

But it's kept for its sentimental value amidst all the other junk you've accumulated in your home. Isn't that right? You've almost forgotten that you've got it. You've learned to live with it.

That was true of Moses. Whenever he went out he picked it up and there it was in his hand. And he wouldn't even have remembered picking it up.

It had almost become part of him. A way of life. Bit of stick.

That's all just a rod. Picked it up in the desert. Why? God said, drop it.

Drop it? What's wrong with it? Never hurt me. I never hurt anybody with it. It's only an old bit of stick.

God said, drop it! So he dropped it. And when he dropped it it turned into a snake. And began to chase Moses.

And Moses fled for his life in front of that snake and over his shoulder he cried out, God he's a snake! God said, yes I know. That's why I told you to drop it. The trouble is, you see, Moses you didn't know there was a snake in it.

You'd had it so long. You'd learned to live with it. Now stop running away.

God said. Stop running away. Turn right round and look that snake straight in the eyes.

And God said to Moses, take it by the tail. Can you imagine the look on Moses' face? Did you say, tail? God said, yes, tail. What about the other end? God said, you take care of its tail, I'll take care of the other end.

That's my end of the business. What's God trying to teach Moses? God is trying to teach Moses the secret of appropriated victory. He's trying to teach Moses that it's not the bush but God in the bush that matters.

God with Moses as he with us has to say again and again and again and again and again. What we fail to act on. I don't like snakes.

I have to go to places where there are snakes. And there are not a few in Papua New Guinea. That's why they always thrust a torch in my hand at night.

I was in the Congo as I told some of you the other day. Just before I turned in my cabin there was a little white fluffy pussy cat and I played with it. In the morning it was cold and dead and stiff on my windowsill.

And in the tent just outside my cabin fortunately empty two yards away there was the deadly snake it had played with. I don't like snakes. Missionaries love them.

They sort of breed them. But I don't like them. If you were sitting in a cabin one evening just reading or writing a letter and suddenly you became aware of the fact that you were not alone.

Have you ever had that feeling? And you look half frozen over your shoulder and you see a boa constrictor slowly moving in your direction between you and the door and the window. With an obvious look of real interest in its eyes, in you, with saliva you know dribbling all down its mouth. And you realize that it was between you and the door and it was between you and the window and either it got you or you got it.

Where would you get it? If you had nothing but your bare hands. By the tail? And stick it out of the window? If I was in that unfortunate situation and I had to get it or it get me I think the one place I'd want to get it if I wanted to get it at all and I wouldn't would be behind the neck. Just behind the head.

And I'd hold on and I'd shout pretty loud. But God said to Moses, take it by the tail. You know why God said that.

In the third chapter of the book of Genesis where the record of man's fall into sin is given to us God turned round and spoke to that old serpent the devil who had persuaded man that he could be a man without God as he still persuades Christians today that they can be Christians without Christ. God said this I will put enmity between you and the woman. I will put enmity between your seed and her seed.

It, the seed of the woman, shall bruise your head. Though you will bruise his heel. Genesis 3.15 the first foreshadowing of the work of Christ upon the cross where he dealt with Satan, the mortal blow that gives to you and to me the right today to celebrate his victory.

As the one who through death and resurrection overcame sin and death and hell and Satan himself said God to the serpent Genesis 3.15 I'm going to put enmity between you, Satan that old serpent, and the seed of a woman. Who's the seed of the woman? Jesus, born of Mary. Enmity between your seed and hers.

Who was the seed of the Satan? The Lord Jesus John 8 turning to the Pharisees who crucified him said you are of your father the devil you are the seed of the serpent and the lust of your father you will do. He

was a murderer from the beginning that's why you will want to kill me. He was a liar from the beginning that's why you repudiate the truth and on the cross it happened the seed of the serpent put him there and bruised his heel but the seed of the woman Jesus through death destroyed him that had the power of death even the devil bruised his head the marvelous good news of the gospel is that you and I are confronted by a defeated enemy he can only deceive us but he can't overcome it because he's already thrashed.

Said God to Moses take it by the tail I've taken care of its head and Moses we're told exodus fore put it out his hand and took it and it became a rod in his hand harmless God had taken the snake out of him and gave it to him back.

He didn't have to but he chose to but it was no longer Moses rod he dropped it it was God's rod and snakeless the rod of God thou shalt take this rod in thine hand exodus 4 17 wherewith thou shalt do signs and Moses verse 20 took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass and he returned to the land of Egypt and Moses took the rod of God in his hand and with the rod of God he smoked the waters of the red sea and they parted asunder with the rod of God he filled the heavens with hail he turned the rivers into blood and filled the ditches with frogs with the rod of God he did exploits God's rod once the symbol of his defeat and failure picked up in the backside of the desert but now the symbol of a God given victory the rod of God say what have you got in your hand tonight what have you

got in your hand this is where you'll start arguing it's where Moses started arguing and some boy will look up into God's face and say football God says drop it you mean I can't play sports God said I didn't say that I said just drop it maybe I'll give it to you back maybe I won't could be a cricket bat could be a tennis racket could be a yacht or a surfboard but you'd better drop it maybe I'll give it to you back maybe I won't that's my business not yours depends whether you want to be a Christian or not mind you if I give it back I'll take the snake out of you but I cannot give you back anything that you have not dropped that's why unless you're prepared to drop it you'll never know that it's yours untrust it will be stolen what have you got in your hand violin trumpet guitar piano bit

heavy for one hand God says drop it you mean I can't be musical I'm gifted that way got it from my grandmother God said no I didn't say you couldn't be musical I thought of music very good idea but you'd better drop that musical instrument maybe I'll give it to you back maybe I won't but if you're not prepared to drop it that's the snake in it it means that your life is oriented around a musical instrument not God how many there are who imagine that it is incumbent upon God to use them in the area of their gift why why should he speaking one of the largest liberal arts colleges in the United States the man who was responsible for the music a brilliant musician out of 2000 came to me one day quite sincerely and said could you explain to me how best I can know the area in which God will

to the greatest advantage use my natural musical ability can you hear the hiss of the serpent I said why should you imagine that it is incumbent upon God your creator to use you in the area of your gift do you mean to tell me that just because you happen to be able to play the organ or the piano and a dozen other instruments that God doesn't have the right to send you on a canoe down the Amazon you say you're completely disqualified from that kind of responsibility because you happen to be musical why God wants to send you in a canoe down the Amazon beaten by cannibals six months later that's his business not yours but you'll find it a clumsy thing to have with you if you want a piano in your canoe until you're prepared to get down on your knees and say God I thank you for the gifts that

you have given me but I want you to recognize that these are not my God nor will they play God in my life you're my God and if as my God and creator you never want me to play a piano again or an organ or any other musical instrument that's your business not mine I want you to know that I'm available to you for what I am for what you are God my creator and unless you're prepared to get down on your knees and talk to God like that you'll never know God's will for your life never you'll never give him a chance to show you drop it what you got in your hand key key to what key to my father's office why I'm taking over the business you know dad's a bit dicky in the heart it's been in the family for three generations my I'm the next I see you better drop that key God do you mean I can't take

over my father's business no God I didn't say I didn't say that I just said you better drop the key because I just might need you in Papua I see all right keep the key and keep the snake but remember this with one little flick of my little finger I could send you bankrupt in three weeks if that's what you want what you got in your hand oh it could be anything couldn't it your bank balance your ambition for your daughter you better drop that too a letter oh how nice better drop it can't a boy have a girlfriend oh yes God said I thought of that too but you better drop that letter otherwise you might get the wrong girlfriend oh you don't want to drop it in case I don't give it to you back okay keep it and the snake but don't blame me when your marriage is wrecked after 15 months and that

girl has gone off with another man you kept your letter and you kept your snake get the message what you got in your hand books better drop those can't I study yes God says there's nothing you will ever learn that I didn't first invent but you might be studying the wrong set of books you better drop them and let me give them to you back if I want or another set do you know one of the hardest things for a dedicated gifted Christian man or woman to do do you know the hardest thing for them to drop their sincere earnest well planned ambitions for God's service their own preconceived notions of what they're going to do for God that's one of the hardest things for any boy girl man or woman to drop and trade them for God's plans that makes you totally expendable I've talked about things that

are legitimate that may become illegitimate if we're not prepared to drop them because we grasp them in self will with all the hiss of the hidden self there are things tonight that you may be gripping that are totally illegitimate Charles Trumbull who became one of the most noted Bible teachers in the United States when he was a young man went to London visited a service the last act and with a sort of buzz of expectancy the colored lights focused upon the central arena and then picked out the animal train as he walked towards the center and all the multiple imitation jewels glisten and with a crack of his whip there was a movement in the imitation grass and with another crack of his whip a boa constrictor raised its ugly head and began to coil itself slowly towards the trainer and then

coiled itself around his ankles, his calves, his knees, his thigh his waist, his chest, his shoulders until with a roar of applause and thunderous clapping he was totally lost to sight in the coils of that ugly reptile and as the people clapped and cheered and applauded suddenly there was the most blood curdling shriek and there was a silence that you could have cut and in it they heard the cracking and the snapping of his bones as his body was crushed apart he had caught it years before when it was just about nine inches long it was no thicker than his thumb he could have killed it between his fingers but he played with it he fed it he thought he had tamed it and it killed him that's sin it has never changed its nature and God says drop it but he'll never give you that back but he'll

give you something infinitely more wonderful but remember this God can only fill empty hands that can be yours only in the power of his resurrection that you of your own free will have put into the place of death

but then you've got the rod of God and your life will become miraculous in the appropriated victory of a risen Lord to whom you yield your humanity becoming utterly expendable for God you ready for that? that's what the gospel is all about nothing less than that now let's have a word of prayer we're thankful Lord Jesus for your infinite mercy and patience with each one of us we thank you for your Holy Spirit whose gracious kindly office it is to awaken our souls and create within us that holy curiosity that finally allows you as God to put the extra in the ordinary and make the

ordinary extraordinary God God in the bush what have you got in your hand tonight? something that you've learned to live with you've taken it for granted and never never knew there was a snake in it God says drop it I believe there are boys and girls and there are men and women in this building here tonight quite frankly deep down in your heart you want to be numbered amongst those who stand before God with empty hands filled with all the hilarious expectation of stepping out into a future that is God ordered God breathed God owned to know the miraculous to burn with a flame that never could be sustained by your substance but which is explicable only in terms of a risen Christ given total right of way in all that you are and have you ready for that? and why not tell him so right now empty

hands clean hands for your name's sake Lord Jesus Amen

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26488.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/major-ian-thomas/the-rod-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net