

Ephesians 3:17-20

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the necessity of experiencing the fullness of God through the love of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in living the Christian life.

Duration: 1:13:23

Scripture: Ephesians 3:17

Topics: "Surrender", "Appropriation of Christ's Life"

Description

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the profound truth found in Ephesians 3:17-20, urging believers to allow Christ to dwell in their hearts through faith, becoming rooted and grounded in love. He highlights the necessity of experiencing the love of Christ beyond mere knowledge, leading to a fullness of God in our lives. Thomas draws parallels with Moses' journey, illustrating how true Christian living involves surrendering our own plans and allowing God to work through us, thus appropriating His victory in our lives. He challenges the congregation to drop their personal ambitions and possessions, trusting God to give back what is truly His, free from the 'snakes' of self-sufficiency and idolatry. Ultimately, he calls for a life of dependence on Christ, where believers can experience the fullness of His resurrection life.

Transcript

In the third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, the 17th verse, may Christ through your faith settle down, abide and make his permanent home in your heart. May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love. That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of it.

That you may really come to know practically through experience for yourselves the love of Christ which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience. That you may be filled through all your being unto all the fullness of God. That is that you may have the richest measure of the divine presence and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God himself.

Well isn't that tremendous? This was Paul's concern for these new converts as of course it was always Paul's concern for himself. Let me cite you these two verses from the third chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. Philippians in chapter 3 in verse 10, incidentally I'm reading this from the Amplified New Testament.

My determined purpose is that I may know him, that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with him. Perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of his person more strongly and more clearly. And that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from his resurrection which it exerts over belief.

And that I may so share his suffering as to be continually transformed in spirit into his likeness even to his death. That if possible I may attain to the spiritual and moral resurrection that lifts me out from among the dead even while in the body. That's it.

He wanted to enter into that intimate acquaintanceship with the Lord Jesus. That spiritual identity with him that would enable him to enter into all the good of that which the Lord Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection. That he might experience a spiritual and moral resurrection that would lift him out from among the dead even while still in the body with his two feet on the ground.

Now that's the normal Christian life. We saw it yesterday morning in the opening session of this Easter convention. That by one man's sin came into the world.

And death by sin. And we described that as the occurrence of death. Death happening which presupposes the presence of pre-existent life.

And we went way back to that tragic moment when man repudiated his relationship to God and forfeited the life of God and became spiritually destitute. And we saw that that occurrence of death introduced a state of death. For death passed upon all men.

And you and I were born into this world in that state of alienation from the life of God. And the purpose of God in Christ by his vicarious sufferings whereby upon the cross for the second and last time in all human history death occurs because of sin. It was that through his vicarious death he might destroy death, abolish death and bring life and immortality to life.

In the first Adam death occurred on the basis of committed sin and disobedience. On that second occasion death occurred on the basis of imputed, imputed sin and obedience. Obedience unto death.

Even the death of the cross. But we have recognized that the death of the Lord Jesus whereby through his shed blood you and I cleansed from sin may be reconciled to a holy God and have boldness of access into his holy presence. That thus reconciled we might become the recipient through the restoration to our human spirit of his holy spirit through whose presence we are credited with the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

That we might on earth with our two feet on the ground still in the body be raised from the dead. For all who are in Christ experience this spiritual resurrection whereby our bodies become on earth the temples of the living God. And Paul's concern for himself and Paul's concern for those whom it was his privilege to lead to a saving relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ was that they might become bodies wholly filled and flooded with God himself.

That the Lord Jesus in the person of his holy spirit resident within the human spirit might have unchallenged access to the human soul. So that once more the Lord Jesus as king might be king in his kingdom exercising all his divine sovereignty. So that every area of their beings their total personality might be wholly monopolized by the Lord Jesus and so that he might find it wonderfully easy to clothe his divine ends with their yielded humanity as living members in particular of his new body corporate that the

father presented to him on the day of Pentecost.

Now this is normal Christianity. We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ had to come as he came miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit born of a virgin he had to come as he came to be what he was. For we have seen if the Lord Jesus had come as you and I came born by natural conception members of a fallen race of fallen men he too with us would have been numbered amongst the all who are dead in Athens.

He too would have been born uninhabited by God and inhabited only by sin as you and I were born. But he was born uninhabited by sin inhabited only by God. He had to come as he came to be what he was.

Sinless. Sinless because he was totally alive to God. In that he yielded the totality of his humanity without exception to God through the eternal spirit.

He had to come as he came to be what he was. Perfect. And he had to be what he was.

Perfect. The only other man who walked this earth both physically and spiritually alive since Adam fell and death occurred. He had to be what he was to do what he did.

Redeem. Lay down his life a ransom for many. Had to come as he came to be what he was to do what he did.

But he had to do what he did that we might have as forgiven sinners restored to us through the Holy Spirit what he is. Life. I am come that you have life.

But forever there can be restored to you what I am. Life. You've got to be redeemed by what I do.

Death. He had to come as he came to be what he was to do what he did that you might have what he is. His life restored to you in the person of the Holy Spirit.

To what end? You have to have what he is. Life. To be what he was.

Perfect. Because he's the only person capable of living the Christian life. Christianity is Christ.

So he had to come as he came to be what he was to do what he did that you might have what he is to be what he was. Is that right? That's salvation. Reconciled to God by his death.

Much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. In other words here we are again. The Lord Jesus died for you to put his life in you.

That was the object of the exercise. I am come that you might have life. And for this reason I lay down my life a ransom for many.

Now somebody says do you mean that the moment you claim Christ as your Redeemer you're going to be perfect? No. You have somebody dwelling within you who is perfect. Jesus Christ.

The one who is born of God by his Holy Spirit according to 1 John 3.8. Whose seed remains within him who does not and cannot sin. That's Jesus Christ. That's sinless perfection.

And sinless perfection is applied to Jesus Christ as a doctrine. Sinless perfection of course is applied to you and me as a delusion. And all of us have discovered it.

But there's not one single boy, girl, man or woman who has claimed redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus whose redemption has not been immediately simultaneously in time sealed by the restoration through the Holy Spirit of the divine nature in the person of Jesus Christ. So that our body becomes his home to live in on earth. So there's no boy, girl, man or woman inhabited by the Lord Jesus who does not possess in his person a sinless life.

But if I must have what he is, life, to be what he was I will only be what he was in the measure that I allow him by my free consent, moment by moment, step by step, day by day, to be in me what he is. That demands a relationship. That demands an attitude.

This isn't the act of faith whereby we appropriate him as redeemer. That's one act of faith forever, eternally redeemed. What a marvelous thing to know that you're eternally redeemed.

That God has said of you, I will remember your sin. Marvelous that he says that. I'm so glad he says that.

I will remember your sin. I'd hate to think that God, you know, had forgotten one and, you know, dragged it out the last minute and said, well, I forgot about that one. Of course, I'm afraid with that one.

Wouldn't that be awful? No skeletons in the cupboard. No, God says, I will remember your one of them. I will remember your sin, but I will remember them no more.

That's marvelous. That's redemption. This is the efficacy of the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus for sins forever.

He'll never have to die again. Never. There's not one single sin of mine, past, present or future for which the precious blood of the Lord Jesus has not been efficacious to cleanse the record and present me to God credited with his imputed righteousness.

But that's the act of faith. That's one act forever. But that act of faith, whereby I am reconciled to God and become the recipient of the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus precipitates an attitude of faith.

And God will never, never, never relieve me of the moral obligation of exercising my personal options. There is somebody who lives with within me who is perfect. Jesus Christ.

In the measure in which in any given situation, I opted to let him be who he is in me in action, there will be declared through me his righteousness, his perfection. Of course, in those areas of my life or those situations that arise in which I opt to handle it myself, the world alas, once more, will recognize all my imperfection. So we walk in the spirit.

It's a walk in faith. One step at a time. How many steps at a time you take when you walk? Just one.

And so in every step you take, into every new situation to which that step takes you, God calls upon you to exercise a moral option. As a redeemed sinner, you are the possessor of two natures, an old Adamic nature, incorrigibly bad, and a new divine nature, incorrigibly good. And you've got to exercise the option as to which of these two natures is going to be in business.

So he had to come as he came, to be what he was, to do what he did, that you might have what he is, to be what he was, that in the measure of your availability to him you may let him be now what he is. And in the measure in which you and I are prepared, moment by moment, and step by step, and situation by situation, to allow the Lord Jesus to be who he is, that is the measure of our sanctification. For

sanctification, it's sort of a rather sanctimonious word in its present connotation, but it's a very intelligent word.

It simply means that you and I are available to God for the intelligent purpose which he has an intelligent God intelligently created. That's all. That's sanctification.

When I wear this jacket, I'm sanctifying. If I clean the windows with it, that wouldn't be to sanctify. It might be fit only for that, but the purpose which it was made was to stick my arms through it, you see, and button it up in the front, if I want to be buttoned up.

I sanctify my jacket. I wear my shoes on my feet when I sanctify them. If I put them on my head, it would be a little quaint.

All that sanctification means is set apart, that's all, set apart for the intelligent purpose which intelligently made. And when you and I recognize that God made us for himself, that in Adam, Adam repudiated this relationship and decided to go it alone in believing the devil's lie that he could be an adequate man without God, with all the tragic consequences of that false step. But that God in his mercy sent his son living in perfection for 33 years as the kind of man which he as God created you and me as men to be, paid the price of our reconciliation.

That on the basis of that redemptive transaction there might be restored to us the life that was forfeited in Adam, spiritual resurrection. That once more the Holy Spirit being restored to us that was forfeited in Adam might discharge again his responsibilities in us in making our humanity available to the God who made us. For the Holy Spirit is that member of the triune deity through whom a man offers his humanity to God and the Holy Spirit is the member of the triune deity through whom God offers his deity to a man.

There's nothing more complicated about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than that. It's the person of the Holy Spirit through whom you as an individual can offer your humanity to God and it's through the Holy Spirit through whom God offers his deity to you. That's all.

On the basis of mutual inter-availability. Mutual inter-availability. There's no question about God's availability to you and me.

None whatever. He that cometh to God must first believe that God is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Absolutely no doubt whatever about God's availability to you and me.

But tragically enough there's a whole lot of doubt about our availability to him. But in the measure of our mutual inter-availability we share the very life of God on earth. Now isn't that fantastic? Now this is gospel.

This is gospel. I'm not preaching a sort of an option. This isn't a peculiar luxury for the elite.

This is what the gospel is all about. I am come said the Lord Jesus you might have life. If my blood is to be shed for you it's only that you as a forgiven sinner might be qualified again to have restored you the life that was forfeited in Adam.

That I might take up residence within you and clothe my divine activity with your humanity. Now that is gospel. Nothing less than that.

And to allow the Lord Jesus less than total monopoly of your humanity and mine is to cheat Jesus Christ of that for which his blood was shed. Or to persuade ourselves and to try to persuade him that as good born

again conservative evangelical Christians we can keep him in business and he can stay home in heaven and wait till we arrive. That is an equal travesty of the truth.

You and I just don't have what it takes. Absolutely without competence. Faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it.

There's absolutely nothing to which he calls to which he himself does not do. It's God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure you see. So all he wants of you and me is our availability.

That's why we are to present our body. Our body with vacant possessions. A living sacrifice.

Holy acceptable to God. Our reasonable servant. We're not to be conformed to this world that's always trying to advertise its own self-sufficiency.

We're not to be conformed to this world. We're to be transformed by adopting an entirely new attitude toward God. That mind which was in Christ Jesus.

We're to be transformed by the renewing of our attitude that every day may become the hilarious adventure of proving experientially for ourselves what is that good acceptable and perfect will of God. Knowing that we've been indivisibly identified with him that he knows closed with our humanity exactly where he's going. He knows how to get there and he's got all that it takes.

Now isn't that tremendous? And that's what it means to be a Christian. Christianity is Christ in you. Now the question that always arises and it's a good question and I always wait for it is how? How actually do I enter into the good of this? How? Now the great difficulty is its profound simplicity.

What's the difficulty about redemption through the precious blood of Christ? It's profound simplicity. How difficult it is to persuade good people, religious people, people who practice religion, how difficult it is to persuade them to come and take a free gift and wean their minds of any idea of earning God's merit, God's forgiveness or meriting God's God's favor. Isn't that difficult? The difficulty is to bring a person to the sheer sublime simplicity whereby as a little child they're prepared to take what God prepared to give.

Accept a man, be converted, said the Lord Jesus, and become as a little child. He cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. There's no other way.

He's got to be converted and become just like a little child in the simplicity of a child. First thing that a child can do when it's born is to take. And that's what it does.

It takes everything it can lay hands on. A baby grabs this, grabs that. That's why you keep it away from the tablecloth.

Otherwise you'd have all your best china on the floor. And the second thing you teach a baby is to say thank you for what it's taken. Isn't that right? Almost instinctively it takes and you teach it to say thank you for what it's taken.

So when Aunt Agatha comes and says, would you like some chocolate? Yes. It's disintegrated almost before anything's happened. And mother, very, very shocked, says, Horace, what do you say to your Aunt Agatha? And very grudgingly the child says, thanks, or ta, or something like that.

So these are the first two steps of a little child. Take and say thank you. And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus meant when he said, unless you're prepared to become just like a little child and take and say thank you, you won't enter the kingdom of heaven.

Because you can't earn salvation because you're already dead. The consequence of sin has already taken place. You were born dead in trespasses and sins.

All that you can receive is God's gift. The wages of sin is, present tense, death. It's a present state that you inherited from Adam in whom it occurred.

But God's gift, God's gift is eternal life. Eternal life. How? Through Jesus Christ.

By virtue of what he did and because of who he is, you can receive a gift. All right, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. On exactly the same basis of faith, you appropriate the life of the Lord Jesus in you as you once appropriated for your redemption the death of the Lord Jesus for you.

Now that's what makes it so difficult. It's so easy. Because we're so stupid.

And because the heart of man is intrinsically proud. We always want somehow to have some finger in the pie for which we congratulate ourselves or get somebody else to congratulate us. So it's always at the point of appropriation that we fall down.

We know it. We can sit in meetings like this and memorize the message and master the doctrine, but somehow, when it comes to the point, when the situation arises, back at home, in the office, or at school, where the decision is to be made, where the temptation is to be faced, where the responsibility is to shoulder, somehow, no matter how we've mastered it in our minds, at that point we fail to appropriate. For some strange reason, it's precisely at that moment we preclude the Lord Jesus from taking any part in our activity.

So we've got to learn appropriation. And you have to learn it. And initially, in the appropriation of the life of the Lord Jesus, it is a conscious effort.

Not a conscious effort to get victory, or a conscious effort to achieve success or to be fruitful or be a sore one. I don't mean that. It's a conscious effort to appropriate the life of Christ.

It's the fight of faith. Learning to let go. Because all of us, almost from our cradle, are nurtured and tutored to be self-sufficient.

That's why you go to school, and then you go to the university, to become self-sufficient. Your parents are just longing to get you off their hands. They can't get you through college quick enough so that you're independent and earn your own money, you see.

And the whole task of our educational system is to make you self-confident so that you go into the manager's office where you want to get a job and you say, I am the man your firm has been waiting for. Isn't that right? Carnegie and all the rest. But the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus demonstrating perfect humanity, the Son can of himself do nothing.

Nothing. And so he says to you and to me, without me you can do nothing. Because as my Father sent me, so send I you.

And you without me can do precisely as much as I could do without my Father. How much is that? Nothing. And it takes us a long time to learn it.

A long time to learn it. That's why we all qualify for Christ's service, but we won't claim our qualifications. He says the base, the nothing, the things that are not.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, don't tell me you don't qualify. You're nothing. And you qualify.

And so do I. So I thought that we'd turn tonight to one of my favorite Old Testament stories, which will illustrate for us the principle of appropriation. And this is the fuss for tonight. And we're going to do some stern business.

Because this is critical. If you haven't learned to appropriate the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus, then you could sit here day after day, even if this convention lasted three months, but it wouldn't change your character. Wouldn't make the slightest difference to you.

You'd just have a whole head full of theological doctrines, but it wouldn't change your life. It wouldn't change your destiny. So this is important.

We're going to turn to the 17th chapter of the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 17. The context of the story will be familiar to you. God, in his mercy, by the hand of Moses has led his people through the Red Sea, marvelous picture in the Old Testament of our redemption, into the wilderness.

And they are at this very moment in the 17th of Exodus, on the threshold of that journey that should have led them straight on and straight into the land of Canaan. Should have taken them 11 days, took them 40 years, which was somewhat of a delay. When I read that in the Bible, it always makes me think of British railways.

Now, never allow anybody to brainwash you into imagining that Canaan is heaven, because it isn't. Never was, never will be. Canaan is the quality of life that we've been talking about.

You and I utterly available to the Lord Jesus. The apostle in the third chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews says that we ought to partake of Christ now as they should have partaken of Canaan then. But they didn't.

They grieved God for 40 years. Grieved him. Grieved him post poverty.

So when you read hymns about, you know, wading through Jordan and all the rest of it, don't think of death, because it never means that in the Bible. Canaan is heaven. Canaan was the lavish provision that God had provided for a redeemed people.

That's why he wouldn't feed them in the wilderness, except on a maintenance diet. That's all. That's patently obvious.

You can read it for yourself in the eighth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. It says that God fed them and suffered them to hunger. He wasn't going to give them full tummies, not in the wilderness.

He says, I've laid the table in Canaan. I'll just keep you alive. That's all.

And you know, there are some of you folk, dear folk, lovely folk, thoroughly converted folk. I'm getting you ready for what I'm going to say. In case you throw something at me.

But quite frankly, ever since your conversion, you've just lived, you've just existed on a minimal maintenance diet. That's all. You've never tasted the good things of Canaan, where there's milk and honey and new corn and grapes.

You and I ought to be sitting, eating grapes, spitting pips at each other all day long. This is Canaan. You see, there they were going round and round in circles in the wilderness, complaining because they had manna four times a day, seven days a week.

Here they are, poised upon the threshold of that onward march that should have taken them on and in. But then, verse 8, then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim. Now we're not going to take time to discuss Amalek's pedigree.

Many of you, if you've read the saving life of Christ, at least will know something of his pedigree. Always a picture of the flesh, always a picture of that old Adam nature, in its self-sufficiency, in its arrogant hostility to God. That's Amalek.

And here at the threshold of their new life, a redeemed people, who've been baptized, 1 Corinthians 10, baptized into Moses, who took them into the place of death and through the place of death into resurrection life, as you and I are baptized into Christ. A redeemed people, heading for all the plenitude of the promised land, but here, across the pathway, arms akimba, Amalek, who's saying in so many words, thus far but no further, you may be redeemed, you may be redeemed, but not one step farther save over my dead body. And of course, this is what many of us have discovered since our redemption, that there is a principle within that insists upon robbing the Lord Jesus of his inheritance in us, though we may have claimed our inheritance in him.

He can't avoid that. Once you've repented toward God and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and claimed reconciliation, God, you're sealed forever by the Holy Spirit, and the devil can do nothing about it, you've got your inheritance in Christ. But what he can do is rob Christ of his inheritance in you.

That's Amalek, across the path of God's redeemed people. Moses said to Joshua 9, choose us out, men, and 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 Hur went up to the top of the hill, and it came to pass, when Moses held out his hand, and in it the rod of God, Israel prevailed. When he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Well now, what more vivid, what more lucid picture could you have than that which is given to us here of appropriation. Where was the battle going on? Down in the valley. But where was the issue being settled? Up in the mountains.

Now, don't just think of this vaguely in general terms as a sort of prayer meeting. That wasn't it. This was that attitude of faith that invokes divine action.

That attitude of faith that brought God onto the battlefield. That's what it means, appropriation. Rod held high, Israel prevailed.

When Moses lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. You see, no matter how bravely Joshua led his men, no matter with what brilliant strategies, no matter how firmly in rank they remained, no matter with what verve his men threw themselves into the fight, no matter how adequate may have seemed their forces related to

those of the foe, when Moses' hand was down, Israel was thrashed, chased off the field of battle, and Amalek prevailed. It had nothing to do with their dedication, nothing to do with their enthusiasm, nothing to do with their inherent skills.

Would you get a grip of this? The Christian life does not derive from your ability, your inherent skills, your scholarship, your personality practice, your five and a half inch chin. Now God will use all these things. God will use your personality, of course he will.

He'll use your inherent gifts and your skills, of course he will. He'll use anything if he wants to. He doesn't have to, but he will if he so chooses.

But your Christian life doesn't derive from these things. They derive exclusively from the Lord Jesus, using of you what he pleases, and not using what he pleases. So it was nothing to do with Joshua, nothing to do with his men as to who won on the field of battle.

It had only to do with their attitude toward God. When Moses' hand was down it was just as though God said, okay, okay, put it on, what? You want to run the show, that's fine. Have a crack at them.

But you're going to get hurt, you see. And quite frankly that's all that the Lord Jesus Christ can do if you fail to adopt toward him an attitude of dependence that allows him to move into that situation. All he can do is stand back, fold his arms, and say, all right, get hurt.

That's the only way you'll learn, get hurt. Because you see, he never relieves you of the moral obligation of exercising that choice. But the rod of God held high.

How different? Joshua may have been discouraged, his men wounded and weary. The enemy may have seemed overwhelming in their superiority of numbers. The line of battle in disarray, so discouraged may be that they hardly could drag one foot behind the other.

But the amazing thing was this. When Moses held his rod high, Amalek was thrashed, and Israel was chastened, and Israel triumphed. Appropriation.

Appropriation. Our faith invokes God's activity. And it's not our faith that does it, it's God that does it.

I was explaining to the young folk at breakfast this morning, when you sit on a chair you exercise faith. But it isn't your faith that sustains the weight of your body, it's the chair. You try it, you try sitting down on faith and see what happens.

When you sit down in a chair, you see, it's the chair, it's the chair that sustains your weight, it's the chair that's demonstrating its strength. The only contribution your faith is making to the exercise is allowing the chair to demonstrate its strength. That's all.

And this is all that was happening when Moses held his hand high with the rod of God in it, it wasn't his great faith. Never congratulate a patient on their great faith, only congratulate them on their great God. That's all.

The only contribution that Moses' faith made to the situation was to let God be as big as God is. And if only we would grasp this, that God is never, never under any circumstances less than big enough to any situation that can ever arise at any time, if only we would let him be as big as he is. Rod held high, and Israel prevailed.

The faith that let God be the God God is, in action. Well that was a sort of handy little rod to have, wouldn't you say? Wouldn't you like a little rod like that tucked away in your vest pocket or your purse? You know, so that when things were going wrong, out comes your little rod? Wouldn't that be tremendous? Well where do you get a rod like that? That's the important thing. Where do you get that rod? Well let's discover where Moses got his rod.

And to discover this we've got to turn back a few pages to the second chapter of the book of Exodus where we're first introduced to Moses, or perhaps not so much to Moses as to his squeak. Because in Exodus chapter 2 you see he was just a little baby hidden in the bulrushes and he squeaked and drew the attention of Pharaoh's daughter to the fact that he was there, all according to God's marvelous plan. And Pharaoh's daughter, taking pity upon this tiny little child tucked away in the bulrushes, decided to adopt him.

And as you will remember, Moses had a cute little sister. She was smart. Just so soon as she saw Pharaoh's daughter picking Moses out of the bulrushes, she slipped up with a sweet little overwhelming smile and said, would you like a nurse? That was pretty smart of the kid, don't you think so? And Pharaoh's daughter said yes, I would, yes.

She didn't know quite what to do with the baby. And so Miriam said, I'll get you one, and went and got his mother. It's the first recorded occasion of social welfare where the government assumed responsibility for paying a mother to take care of her own child.

And we think we're smart. And Moses, adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, nursed by his mother, brought up in the royal court with everything that money could buy and the best possible education in the world. We're told in the Acts of the Apostles that at the age of 40 he came back learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Mighty in word and deed. He could match all his words with his deeds. He was a tremendous fellow.

And a crowley at all. He was no braggart. He wasn't conceited.

There was nothing ostentatious about him. We're told that he was of all men most humble and capable of deep compassion. Genuine compassion.

And it was his genuine compassion that motivated him as you will remember to go out and seek to relieve the oppression of one of his own kith and kin being whipped and thrashed by an Egyptian taskmaster. But Moses made a fatal mistake. He was preoccupied with the need and not in any braggartly way.

He was preoccupied with his own capacity to meet that need. He felt quite genuinely if ever there's a man that has been privileged to be in the position today to bring help and succor to my own people, I must be that man. I must be true to my destiny.

Having been given this amazing privilege as a Jew myself, as a Hebrew myself, brought up in the royal household, how can I stand by and see my own kith and kin thrashed and ill-treated in that way? Don't misjudge his motivation. It was utterly sincere but tragically misguided. It says here that he looked this way and he looked that way.

In other words, he was overly preoccupied with what other people thought and didn't seem to be preoccupied with what God thought. Now so much of our noblest endeavors derive from this misguided

dedication. This is how Abraham begat Ishmael, misguided dedication.

That's why there are 100 million Arabs around the little tiny state of Israel today. That's why the fierce battles going on at this very moment over the Suez Canal. Because of Abraham's misguided dedication when he begat Ishmael instead of Isaac.

And within a matter of hours, 24 hours, Moses had burnt himself out and was fleeing for his life and went into oblivion for 40 miserable years in the backside of the desert. Employed by his father in law, fancy being your wife's husband for 40 years. That's all you are.

Shoveling a handful of sheep around the backside of the desert. A man brought up in the royal court with honours degrees and everything. Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, verse 1 of chapter 3. And he led the flock to the backside of the desert and he came to the mountain of God even the horrid.

And there the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. And he looked and behold the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. You remember the story.

It's a very familiar one. It was a bush that burned and burned. Moses went for a little walk and came back and it burned and burned and burned.

And then he scratched his head and he looked around all the other bushes and when he came back to the first bush it burned and burned and burned. He said that's a very remarkable bush that burns and burns and burns and burns. And he couldn't help probably but compare himself with that bush.

He said I've burned myself out in 24 hours and here's a bush that burns and burns and burns. Must be a very marvelous bush. And there was created within his heart a holy curiosity to discover the secret of the bush.

And so he made intelligent inquiry and he made a very wonderful discovery. God called him by name. That's normally when it happens.

It took 40 years, 40 years to get Moses into the place where God could call him by name and catch his attention. Almost every name that you can think of down Christian history that has made spiritual headlines is the name of a man or a woman who out of years of dedicated service finally through the bitterness of despair rediscovered the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. Hudson Taylor came back trashed and defeated.

From the mission field. Moody, Andrew Murray, A.B. Simpson. Once it was the blessing now it's the law.

Once I worked for him now he works for me. George Muller. We call them spiritual giants.

They weren't. God was the giant. They just discovered the giant.

That's all. And let God be as gigantic as God is. Don't congratulate them on their faith.

Congratulate them on discovering a great God. You get the principle. And this is what Milton had to find out.

God said in so many words to Moses, you think this is a marvelous bush. It isn't a marvelous bush at all. Just like any other bush.

See that one there half eaten by a goat. That one would have done. And this one here with its beautiful foliage just come out from the hairdresser's.

Had a perm. That one would have done. You see Moses it isn't the bush that sustains the flame.

If this bush was seeking to sustain the flame Moses by its own substance it too would have burned itself out as you burned yourself out 40 years ago. It too would have been a heap of ashes as you would be in the desert. Take your shoes off your feet.

You're on holy ground. You're not in the presence of an amazing bush. You are in the presence Moses of an amazing God.

Draw not nigh hither put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said I am the God of thy father. I am the God of Abraham.

I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob. These were not great men.

These were very ordinary men who had a great God. And I'm their God. And what Moses I have been prepared to be to them I'm prepared to be to you as I have been prepared to be it to this bush.

And any old bush will do. Even you Moses. And what was God trying to teach Moses? Well exactly what we've been talking about this weekend.

The life of God in the soul of man. God in the bush. That's all.

But if we're reconciled to God by his death we're saved by his life. But it's not what you and I can do for Christ that counts. It's what you and I are prepared to let Jesus Christ do through us.

And as Dr. Davis reminded us this morning. The Lord Jesus amazing pledged the things that I do you'll do also. Because I'm going to my father.

Because when I go to be with my father I'm going to be with him in glory as God to you. What my father has been through 33 years to me. That's all.

The amazing things that you've heard me say and seen me do my father has said and done. I made myself available to him. And I as God now I'm going to do just as marvelous things and say just as amazing things through you so long as you're prepared to be to me what I was prepared to be to my father.

Available. Just as simple as that. This is what God was trying to teach Moses.

He was teaching the indwelling life of Christ. In the language of the Old Testament. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Crediting the life of God to the soul of man. Just so gloriously simple. Now Moses got the doctrine.

And this is the important point. Moses at this stage I believe understood what God was getting at. He got the message loud and clear.

And he was recommissioned to the task. God said I now I'm going to do through you Moses what 40 years ago you tried to do for me. I will be with you.

Come now. I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said but who shall I say has commissioned me sent me.

God said to Moses I am that I am the eternal presence. The eternal presence that told Abraham all about you more than 400 years ago. I am that I am.

Thou shalt thou say unto the children of Israel I am hath sent me unto thee. The eternal deity. The timeless deity.

Is going to clothe his timeless ends with my humanity. Tell him that. Moses got the message.

But I'll tell you something. Although Moses mastered the message. He failed to practice the principles.

And this is going to be the greatest stage at the end of this week when you go back down the mountain. That you will have mastered the message but when it comes to the stern business of living your life you'll fail to practice the principles. Chapter 4 verse 1. 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.

What did he say? He said God they won't believe me. They won't listen to what I have to say. And they'll tell me that you didn't really appear to me.

I said who is he still preoccupied with? Moses. Now isn't that absolutely pathetic? That a man could be so thoroughly schooled in sound doctrine and immediately go out and fail to practice the principles. Utterly preoccupied still with himself.

They won't believe me. They won't listen to what I say. And they'll tell me that I haven't really had an encounter with God.

And so many words God said who cares? What's it to do with you anyway? I'm sent. Whether they believe you or whether they listen to you is totally irrelevant. So long as you are related to me as the one who sends you, you do as you are told.

That's all. I'll take the consequence. What's that in your hand? Well that question took Moses by surprise.

Perhaps it took you by surprise. Perhaps you had a look. God said what have you got in your hand? And this is the question that God is going to ask you tonight.

It'll take you by surprise perhaps. And it will be the point at which you, like Moses, will be tempted to argue. Because you see when Moses looked and saw what he had got in his hand, he'd had it for so long that he'd almost forgotten he'd got it.

And he said why? A piece of stick, a rock. Why? It was a piece of wood. Picked up in the desert.

God said drop it. But God it's only a piece of stick. I picked it up in the desert.

You know what he did when he was in the desert? He picked up this bit of wood and it was just exactly right. You've picked up a stick like this when you've been on vacation haven't you? It just fits snugly. And you walk around with it and you take it home because it's so nice, so comfortable.

And next time you go for a walk you go out again with it. And after a bit, well it lives with you. And you wouldn't dream of going out without it.

You pick it up and you don't even know you've picked it up. Now it isn't worth two cents. But you'd rather die than lose it.

It's some of that treasured junk that you've been accumulating for years. Isn't that right? Now that's what Moses, it was the symbol of his defeat and poverty and bankruptcy in the desert. This was the stick with which he shoveled those sheep around.

But he'd had it so long he'd almost forgotten he'd got it. And he said God I never did any harm to anybody with this. It never did me any harm.

Why drop it? Hmm. God said drop it. So he dropped it.

And it became a serpent. A snake. And Moses fled from before it.

Ran for his life. Chased by the snake. And over his shoulder he said God it's a snake.

God said yes or no. That's why I told you to drop it. Because you see you didn't know there was a snake in it.

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

Stop running away. Turn right round. Face it.

Look it straight in the eyes. God said God put forth thine hand, verse 4, and take it by the tail. That's what God said.

Put out your hand and 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? What's God trying to teach Moses? God said you take it by the tail.

I'll take care of its head. That's my end of the business. All he's teaching Moses is appropriated victory.

That's all. I don't like snakes. Sometimes I have to go to countries where they've got snakes.

I was in Papua, New Guinea just recently. Central America. South America.

Central Africa. I remember I was in Katanga. And before I turned in for the night I played with a little white kitten.

And in the morning on my windowsill it was dead, cold and stiff. And in the tent just a couple of yards from my door, in a tent which fortunately was empty, there was the poisonous snake with which it had played and killed it. I don't like snakes.

But could you imagine sitting in a cabin one evening just reading a book or writing a letter? And suddenly you become strangely aware that you're not alone. Have you ever had that feeling? And very slowly, half frozen, you look round and there's a Balkan Strip. Between you and the door.

And you and the window. And looking at you with obvious interest. And moving slowly in your direction with saliva slobbering down both sides.

Window, it gets you or you get it. Where would you want to get it? By the tail? I wouldn't. If I was in that position and I had to get it or it would get me, I'd want to get it right behind the neck.

And hold tight. And shout loud. But you see the marvellous thing was this, that God said to Moses, you take it by the tail, that's your end.

You know what God meant. After Satan had deceived man that he could be a man without God. And he repudiated that relationship of love for God and dependence on God.

And obedience to God that lets God be God in man. God turned to Satan and said, you serpent, you snake. I will put enmity, Genesis 3.15, I will put enmity between thee and the woman.

Between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, though thou shalt bruise his heel. This was the first foreshadowing we have in the Bible of the cross.

The seed of the woman. Jesus, born of Mary, who had to come as he came to be what he was. Seed of the woman.

Enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The Lord Jesus, John 8, turning to the Pharisees said, you are of your father the devil. You are the seed of the serpent.

And the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and that is why you want to kill me. He is the father of lies, that is why you reject the truth.

All his lusts you make incarnate in terms of your prostituted humanity. You are the seed of the serpent. But the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, we are told in the epistle to the Hebrews, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil.

Though Satan bruised his heel, there upon the cross the Lord Jesus bruised Satan's head. And today the devil is a defeated foe and he knows it. He can only cheat you, he can only deceive you.

The Lord Jesus Christ has already won the victory by his death and resurrection. He is more than conqueror. And you and I are to share his victory.

To you and to me is given the privilege of taking Satan by the tail. God has already smitten him in the head. This is what Moses had to learn.

Appropriated victory. And he stretched forth his hand and caught it. And it became a rod in his hand.

Harmless. He dropped it and God gave it to him back. When he was prepared to take it.

But God took the snake out of it. And it became no longer Moses' rod. Symbol of failure and defeat in the devil.

It became the rod of God. His on trust. Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand.

Where would thou shalt do signs? Moses took his wife and his sons and he set them upon an ass. And he returned to the land of Egypt and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. This was no longer his rod.

He dropped it, he threw it away. But God picked it up and gave it to him back. But he took the snake out.

And with the rod of God he smote the waters of the Red Sea and they parted asunder. It was with the rod of God he filled the heavens with hail. It was with the rod of God he turned the rivers into blood.

It was with the rod of God he filled the ditches with fog. It was with the rod of God that Amalek was thrashed. Appropriated victory.

That's all. Just letting God get into action. The one who has already accomplished.

What have you got in your hand tonight? That's the relevant question. And this will be the point at which you will be almost prepared to argue. God says, what have you got in your hand tonight? To a boy it might be nothing more than a football.

And immediately he flushes around the cheeks and says, can't a boy engage in sport? And God says, oh yes. But you better drop that football. Maybe I'll give it to you back, maybe I won't.

Could be a cricket bat, or a tennis racket. Or a speedboat. Or a surfboard.

God says, you better drop it. Because you see, I can never give you anything back that you haven't already dropped. Maybe I'll give it to you back, maybe I won't.

But if I give it to you back, I'll tell you something, God says. I'll take the snake out of it. Then it won't be yours, it'll be mine.

On trust. You see, God says, I can't give you anything back that you do not drop. And what you have not dropped, and what I have not given to you back, is stolen.

You can never know that it's yours, legitimately. In the language of the New Testament, it is only what you and I are prepared voluntarily put into debt, that Jesus Christ can give us back in the power of his resurrection. Whosoever said the Lord Jesus, there be among you that forsaketh not all that he hath.

How much is left when you have forsaken all that you have? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Said Jesus, he cannot be my disciple.

So what is it you've got in your hands? Could be a musical instrument. Could be a violin, or a guitar. Or a cello, or a piano, an organ.

A bit heavy for one hand. A musical instrument. Oh yeah.

And immediately you flush round the cheeks again and say, can't I use my gift to God's glory? Oh yeah, that's alright. I thought of music. But you better drop that 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 you. It's become the object of your idolatry.

Now your life is no longer oriented around Jesus Christ, it's around your music. Your talent, your gift. God says under those terms of reference, you'll never know my will for your life.

You'll spend all your days traipsing the earth, demonstrating your own inherent ability. You'll use me as your stage, and then wait for the applause. God says you better drop it.

Maybe I'll give it to you back, if I can trust you with it, without it becoming your God. Or the only criteria in a Christian service, which is one and the same thing. If I give it to you back, I'll take the snake out of it.

Then it won't be yours, it'll be mine. What you got in your hands? Books. Oh well, you'd better drop those books.

Can't I study? Oh yes, God said, there's nothing that you can study that I didn't first think of. But you may have the wrong set of books. You may be in the wrong faculty, if you haven't consulted me.

So you better drop your books to make quite sure you've got the right one. Any that I want you to have, I'll give you back and add a few more. And I'll take the snake out of it.

Then you will not have chosen your profession, you will be in my vocation. What you got in your hands? Key. Oh, you got a key.

Key to what? Father's office? Is that right? What you got your father's office key for? Oh, you see, I'm taking over the business. Third member of the family in three generations. Keeping the family name in the business.

I'm the only son. Dad's a bit dicky around the heart, you know. Could pop off any time.

And I'm taking over... Oh, you are, says God. Better drop that key. Can't I take over my father's business? If you want to, I could make you go bankrupt within three weeks.

If I wanted to. Maybe you better drop that key. Perhaps I'll give it to you back, perhaps I won't.

The fact that you've had already two generations in your family business doesn't mean that I as God don't have the right to send you to the heart of Africa. Unless you're God and not I. Maybe you better drop that key. Perhaps I'll give it to you back, perhaps I won't.

But if I do, I'll take the snake out of it, then it won't be your business. It won't even be the family business. It'll be my business.

What you got in your hands? Your bank balance. Oh, we could go down the list, couldn't we? Your children. It's amazing how dedicated parents would give everybody else's children to the mission field but their own.

Ever come across that? God says you better drop your children. Drop them, I say! Maybe I'll give them to you back and maybe I won't. But if I do, I'll take the snake out of them that you've been wrestling with perhaps for years.

And you can't tame it. What you got in your hands? A letter. Oh, better drop that letter.

Can't I have a girlfriend? Oh yes, God said, I even thought of that. But you better drop the letter, otherwise you might have the wrong girlfriend. Oh, you won't.

Because you're afraid I won't give you that letter back. Okay, God says, keep the girlfriend and keep the snake. But don't blame me when your marriage is wrecked within 15 months.

And she's gone off with another man. Maybe you would have been wiser to let me make the choice. What have you got in your hands? One of the hardest things for a dedicated, earnest, gifted, able, enthusiastic

young Christian.

One of the hardest things to drop. Their own plans for Christian service. God says you better drop them too.

I don't challenge your sincerity. I don't challenge the human wisdom that has led you to the decisions that you have been making. That my ways aren't your ways.

You see, God can only fill empty hands. How's it with you tonight? Anything that you are not prepared to drop is something which has been stolen. I've talked about legitimate things that God could give you back.

There are certain things that God never could give you back. And which you have been holding on to. And God says tonight, drop them.

Trumbull, when he was a young man visiting England, went to a circus. It was the last act on the program. The lights were dimmed.

There was a buzz of excitement. And in the central arena the colored spotlights focused. And then one picked out the animal trainers.

He swaggered into the center of the big circus tent. All the imitation jewels on his gorgeous uniform sparkled in the light. He cracked his whip and there was a rustling in the grass around him.

He cracked it again and the ugly head of a boa constrictor reared above the grass and slowly twined itself towards him and around his ankles and his calves and knees and thighs and waist and chest until with a thunderous roar of applause and clapping and cheering his head was lost to sight in the ugly coils of this horrible reptile with its head waving above him. And in the midst of all the thunderous applause and clapping and cheering there was a blood curdling shriek and a silence then that you could have cut. And in that silence they heard the cracking and the snapping of his bones and his body was crushed apart.

He had captured it when it was nine inches long. It was no thicker than his thumb. He played with it and he thought he had tamed it.

Between his fingers he could have killed it then but it killed him. That sin which when it hath conceived brings forth death. God says what have you got in your hand tonight? I can only fill empty hands.

Let's bow ahead in prayer. God can never give you back what you have not dropped and nothing will be known to you as yours legitimately yours but what God himself has restored. But remember everything that he gives you he takes the snake out of it.

It's yours on trust. It's in the power of his resurrection and with it you can go out and do exploits. If once you have learned that your life derives from Jesus Christ that the Christian life is a derived life and victory exclusively God given.

Have you got something to say to the Lord Jesus this evening? Maybe some such words as these will echo the thoughts of your heart. Lord Jesus you died for me. Two empty hands nailed to a cross.

Everything dropped to receive only what your father was pleased to give you back in resurrection. I want to be empty handed tonight Lord Jesus. Whether things may seem to me to be legitimate and harmless or patently wrong I've dropped dropped, dropped and now Lord Jesus nothing seems really to matter much.

Dead men can't die and dead men don't have plans. Thank you for your life your resurrection life and all that of me with which you will choose to clothe your divine program. Thank you for the relief at last of being utterly abandoned no strings attached totally expendable to step out into a future God breathed and God ordered in reckless abandon God take the consequences.

Thank you Lord Jesus now because you're my life and my future nothing can frighten me. Nothing. I don't know what it's going to mean, don't know where it's going to take me.

It may leave me in business in Sydney, it may send me to teach in a school, it may send me to some jungle waste. I don't care. I just don't care tonight Lord Jesus.

It's just thrilling and marvelous and wonderful to know that at last as God you can be as big as God is in my life. Thanks for what this is going to mean to my family. Thanks for what it's going to mean to my children.

Maybe it's going to be pretty revolutionary, it may cancel out all my programs. It may close down my business and I don't care. Thanks for what it's going to mean to my neighbors, fellow students.

Thanks for what it's going to mean to my employees, my parishioners and my employer. Thanks for what it's going to mean to some unknown boy, some unknown girl or man or woman whom I've never met and into whose face I've never looked and whose name I've never heard but across whose weary path one day you're going to lead me because you have something to say to them and my lips are yours to make what you have to say articulate. This is exciting.

Lord Jesus the sky is the limit and I thank you for your name's sake. Amen. With the chairman's permission I'm going to ask that we might sing again the hymn that we sang at the conclusion of yesterday morning's service.

It's number 80. Now I have presented you as God has enabled me with a moral issue that only you can face. I believe that in the quietness as we prayed together there were many who did real business.

No strings attached, no preconceived notions as to what God's going to do with your life that's gloriously now and securely and solidly in his hands in his predetermined purpose. Story written now now to be told because you're available and I don't feel that we should intrude upon this transaction that has been enacted between you and Christ. The fact that tonight I'm not going to give any invitation or even announce an after-meeting or instruction doesn't reduce the solemnity of the issue that I've asked you to be confronted with.

It may well be that before the end of this weekend some of you will want to bear open testimony to a transaction into which you have entered. That could be and it can be helpful but don't delay facing the issue. If an invitation is given to you before this weekend is out to bear testimony to a new relationship into which you have entered with Jesus Christ let it be in glad, almost hilarious affirmation.

I think it's much healthier to give testimony to something that's happened rather than maybe ill-advisedly on the crest of some way make a commitment that is less than real. I'm excited about what God's going to do in years to come as a result of this weekend that we spend together because of the new liberty he has been given in your life. Great isn't it? Isn't it marvelous to think that in the eternal economy of a timeless God boys and girls, men and women are being born again at this moment.

Historically right? Futuristically as far as God is concerned it's still to happen in your life and mine but because of your relationship to Christ it's a settled issue in God's eyes. Great! Some mission field is going to feel the impact of tonight. I don't know which.

None of us would have the right to guess but isn't that exciting? All you've told God is that he can tell the story that he's already written for you. He's at liberty. He can get into action.

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