

What Shall We Do That We Might Work the Works of God?

by Major Ian Thomas

The work of God is to believe on Him whom God has sent and allow Him to be Himself doing His own work in His own way through us.

Duration: 1:16:59

Scripture: Exodus 28:40, Matthew 16:24, John 6:27-28, John 6:63, John 6:66, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Belief"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the lack of interest among Christians in attending meetings where the Word of God is taught. He suggests that many Christians are only interested in securing an insurance policy for heaven and do not truly desire to understand the implications of the Word of God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of allowing Christ to work through believers and the potential impact it could have on the world. He highlights the disciples' realization on the day of Pentecost that Christ spoke through them, resulting in the conversion of 3000 people. The sermon concludes with a reminder that true discipleship requires accepting Christ's terms and being willing to face the consequences, as demonstrated by the disciples who walked away when they realized the true implications of following Jesus.

Transcript

John's Gospel, chapter six. The Lord Jesus, in the 27th verse, said, Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father seized. Then said they unto him, and the they refers to the unbelieving Jews, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? What shall we do that we might work the works of God? And this is the question that we shall seek tonight to answer.

Because it may be a question that would be sincerely echoed in your own heart. What shall we do that we might work the works of God? In other words, recognizing my responsibility towards the Lord Jesus as one who sincerely loves him, as I have come increasingly to see the implications of my conversion that makes me wholly available to him, what am I now to do about it? What shall we do that we might work the works of God? For now, the Lord Jesus didn't answer the question. Because the question cannot be answered.

Because the question in itself is a contradiction. What shall we men do that we men might do the work of God? Well, that's a question that doesn't have an answer. Unless men can become God.

If men can become God, then men as God will do the work of God. But so long as men are men, men will only do the work of men. And so instead of answering the question, the Lord Jesus gave them a new definition.

And that is what constantly God has to do for us. This is what in many ways he has been doing throughout this week. Redefining spiritual issues for us.

Sweeping out the cobwebs. Destroying false bases upon which, in all sincerity, very often we have been building. Because we have had an inadequate or an inaccurate concept of what is involved in being a Christian.

So the Lord Jesus, instead of answering the question, gave them a new definition. Verse 28. What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

This is the work of God that you believe on him whom God hath sent. And that definition of the work of God in itself will be both baffling and perplexing. Unless we have a new definition of believing.

Because if I accept the commonly current idea of believing on him, Jesus, whom God has sent, that would be relegated to a critical act whereby I have registered a decision to receive Christ as my Saviour. By popular concept, to believe on Jesus Christ, to become a believer, means that you have been converted. I am a believer, yes, because three years ago I accepted Christ as my Saviour.

And if to believe on Jesus Christ is to be confined to one critical act whereby in recognition of our guilt and in repentance toward God we put our trust in Christ as a crucified Redeemer, then the work of God has been accomplished, so far as I am concerned, for the rest of my days and my times my own. Well, that obviously can't be right. For the work of God is not just one critical act in my past history.

The work of God, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, in me and through me, is to be as a flowing river, a continual process. Therefore, to believe on him whom God has sent, if that is the work of God, must also be like a flowing river, must also be a continual process. And of course it is.

As some of us were discussing this morning at the midday meeting, in the fifth chapter of the first epistle of John, we have this same thought underlined. And those who were at the midday meeting will forgive me if I reiterate this point. 1 John 5, verse 11.

This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. So that a man, a woman, a boy or a girl who has eternal life is that man, woman, boy or girl who has Jesus Christ.

So that eternal life is not a destination, it isn't a place to which you are going. Eternal life is somebody who by his Holy Spirit has come to re-inhabit your redeemed humanity. A person, not a place.

Eternal life is Jesus Christ. He is the one who was in the beginning with God and was God, and by whom all things were made, and without him nothing was made that was made, and in him, in his person was life, and this life was the light of man. It was his life within man that lit the lamp of the human spirit.

And he that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life. There are two kinds of people on earth in God's economy. Those who have been re-inhabited by God by the miracle of regeneration that takes place on the grounds of redemption, and those who as yet remain in the condition in which they were born uninhabited by God.

And in all probability in such a congregation as this there will be the quick and the dead. There will be the alive and the lifeless. There will be those who have the Son and there will be those who haven't.

He that hath the Son, Jesus Christ, hath life. He that hath not the Son of God, whatever else he may have, he doesn't have life, so far as God is concerned. He is spiritually lifeless, dead.

May we know that we have life? Of course. These things, verse 13 of 1 John 5, have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, who credit him with the office that is involved in his name. Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

The moment you come for what you are, a guilty sinner, to him for what he is, the sinner's savior, and put your whole trust in him, you may know that you have eternal life. These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. For the moment as a self-confessed sinner you come for what you are, to him for what he is, the sinner's savior.

God accepts you as one cleansed in his shed blood. God receives you back for Jesus' sake and demonstrates the fact that your sin is forgiven by restoring to you the Holy Spirit, by whose gracious presence Jesus Christ lives in you to clothe himself with your redeemed humanity as a member in particular of his new corporate body on earth called the Church. The Fellowship of Forgiven Sin.

Is that all? No. That's the threshold. That's the front door.

That's the ABC. That's the milk for the babies. What does he then go on to say in the same verse? These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.

That believing you may go on believing. That by a critical act of believing you may have him, and by a constant maintained attitude of believing you may enjoy him. In other words, you have received the Lord Jesus within you by an act of faith that his life and activity may be released through you by an attitude of faith.

It is your act of faith in repentance toward God that restores you to your relationship to God as a forgiven sinner that enables God to restore to you the life of Christ. To what end? That from that moment you may live in the good, in the wealth, in the overwhelming plenitude of what he is for every moment of every day and for every step you take so that all your activity henceforth will be nothing less than the activity of the Lord Jesus clothed with your humanity released by your constant, unrelenting attitude of dependence. Now, it's that maintained attitude of dependence which is the criterion of true repentance.

For remember, Adam fell into sin when he repudiated his love toward God and repudiated his dependence on God. He believed the devil's lie, I am what I am by virtue of what I am and not by virtue of what God is in me. I'm perfectly competent to run my own affairs apart from any divine content.

I can be morally good but I don't need to be spiritually alive. This is the basic lie. Now, when the Lord Jesus came, we are told by John in his third chapter of the same epistle that the Lord Jesus came to

manifest, to destroy, to disintegrate, to render null and void the work of the devil, to put into reverse the lie that he perpetrated in Adam.

And if he managed to persuade Adam to believe that he could lose God and lose nothing, that he could be self-contained, that he could be independent, the one thing that God wants to demonstrate in Jesus Christ is this, that you and I can never be independent but we were created always to be unrelentingly dependent. And in the measure in which you and I repent of Adam's sin, we will step back out of independence into dependence, that believing on the one whom God has sent as the true legitimate occupant of our redeemed humanity that releases his divine action through us. In other words, the activity of a Christian is the activity of Jesus Christ.

But his activity will never be released through you until by faith you depend on him for what he is in you, any more than his redemptive activity in dying for you can redeem you until you depend by faith, independence upon what he did to redeem you from what you've done. Or as we saw last night, the life germ in the heart of the grain of wheat will never be released until the grain of wheat has fallen to the ground relinquishing itself into death. Then the life that is within is released and the grain of wheat from that moment no longer has any say whatever about the future, none.

The moment a grain of wheat goes into the ground and dies, its future ends are shaped by the principle within that is now released, life. And that's the work of God. The work of God commences, so far as you're concerned, when you relinquish what you are and take every step in total dependence upon what he is.

Your activity ceases to be your activity on his behalf and becomes his activity through you. With due courtesy to the mother of that little child, I'm going to ask you to remove the child, unless it goes to sleep very quickly. Tonight is one of the most important nights of this series in which we're coming to the final issues.

And in fairness to those who have come so faithfully and for whom tonight is going to be a night perhaps for which life will never be the same again, we can't afford to have any disturbance. And so you'll understand that I make that request most courteously and I'm sure you'll appreciate it. Now, turning back to John 6, this is the work of God.

That you believe on him whom he has sent. And having paused a moment to think of some of the principles involved in that statement by the Lord Jesus, we're now going to follow his exegesis of that principle throughout the balance of this chapter. And as I mentioned just a moment ago, this is going to be one of the most important studies that we have.

Because it is going to involve you and it is going to involve your future. If this issue that is being now enunciated and underlined by the Lord Jesus has never before been clearly presented to you nor appreciated by you or faced by you, then from this moment you will never be the same again. You will go in one or other direction as you will discover.

Tonight I'm going to put the proposition to you as the Lord Jesus himself puts this proposition. And having given you the proposition at the close not just of this meeting but at the close of this week's ministry, I shall invite your participation. You see, when the Lord Jesus said this, he was met at once by this objection on the part of those who had questioned him.

You tell us that the work of God, the tangible work of God is constituted solely by an attitude of dependence, by an attitude of faith, by, in other words, a spiritual relationship. They said in so many words to the Lord Jesus Christ that this was pure hypothesis. This was altogether too theoretical.

It was altogether too much in the area of mysticism. They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then that we may see and believe? What dost thou work? And then they cited Moses. They said now Moses, he was a practical man.

He didn't talk in this hairy, fairy, theoretical, mystical kind of way. No, no, no. He was a practical man.

He gave them bread from heaven to eat when our fathers did eat manna in the desert. He fed hungry men. That's the kind of gospel we need.

That's what they said. We want the kind of gospel that does things. Now Moses gave them bread from heaven and when they saw what Moses gave, they believed.

Jesus Christ said, you're twice wrong. First of all, verse 32, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. My father gave you the true bread from heaven.

And secondly, you say that because Moses gave them bread, they believed. For forty years they grieved God, that generation, because they believed not. And they died because of their unbelief in the wilderness.

The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. A quality of life that men do not by nature possess because man is man by virtue of what God is in man and man is not man by virtue of what man is apart from God. And the bread of God is the Lord Jesus, he which comes down from heaven that men might have what they don't by nature possess.

Life! Whose life? His life. And because it's his life, his activity. An activity which will only be released by a spiritual relationship of total dependence which will be the expression of complete repentance.

Your fathers, when they saw the bread that Moses produced, did not believe. They died in unbelief. And I say unto you, verse thirty-six, that you have also seen me, thee, bread from heaven.

And you believe not. They saw and didn't believe. You've seen and didn't believe.

For seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. Action, in other words, does not produce faith.

Faith produces action, if it is to be divine action. The only action which is produced apart from faith is carnal action. Faith produces spiritual action.

You can always produce action apart from faith, but it won't please God. Without faith, Hebrews 11, without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Hebrews 11, 6. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Impossible! That doesn't mean to say that you can't try to please God without faith. Of course you can. It doesn't mean that you can't be very busy trying to please God without faith.

Of course you can. You can work yourself to the bone. But you won't please God.

Because without faith, it is impossible to please God. Why? Because this is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom God has sent to occupy your redeemed humanity, that by your maintained attitude

of dependence, you release what He is in terms of what you are. Faith releases divinity.

And whatever you do other than in an attitude of dependence upon Christ is not what Christ is doing through you, because what He does through you is only released by faith. Therefore, what you do other than in dependence upon Christ must stem from some other source. And the only other alternative source to Christ is the flesh.

So without faith it is impossible to please Him, because faith alone releases His activity through you, and only His activity through you pleases God. What's the alternative? What's the reverse? If without faith it is impossible to please Him, alternatively, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14.

Romans 14. Here is a general principle applied to a particular case. The particular case was as to whether they should eat meat offered to idols.

That was the particular case, but it is covered by a general principle. The last verse of Romans 14. He that doubteth is condemned if he eats, because he eateth not of faith.

And whatsoever is not of faith is sin. The man who has doubts, misgivings, and uneasy conscience about eating, and then eats, perhaps because of you, stands condemned before God because he is not true to his convictions. He does not act from faith.

For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin. Because faith alone releases the activity of Jesus Christ through you, and only the activity of Jesus Christ through you is legitimate. Any activity that does not stem from Jesus Christ in you, operating through you, can only stem from the only other alternative source of activity, and that is the flesh.

The sin principle of satanic origin. Whatsoever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin. That is, whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sin.

In other words, sin involves infinitely more than telling lies, getting drunk, running off with your neighbor's wife, being proud, dishonest. Sin involves all activity that does not stem from the sovereignty of Christ within your human personality, whose activity alone, clothed with your redeemed humanity, will ever receive the favor of God. And as I pointed out the other day, that involves teaching your Sunday school class in anything other than an attitude of dependence upon Christ.

This involves getting up in a pulpit and preaching a sermon in anything other than an attitude of faith in Jesus Christ. This involves taking out your checkbook and writing out a check for fifty pounds to some missionary society in anything other than an attitude of total dependence upon Christ. All these activities in the area of Christian service can originate from the flesh and are sin.

Now, this is hard to be uttered. Not only is it hard to be uttered, it's hard to be heard. Because it means that a great multiplicity of so-called Christian activity which originates and stems from the flesh stinks in God's knowledge.

And that is why, by and large, the activity of the Church in all its multiplicity of direction and all its multiplicity of machinery achieves so pathetically little. Never was the Church of Jesus Christ, in all its intricate organization so well equipped with every kind of mechanical vice and with all the human personality and gift available to it, never in all human history, was so much available to so many to achieve so little. Because the Church of Jesus Christ, by and large, has missed the whole principle of divine action.

This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom God has sent and allow him to be himself doing his own work in his own way through you as, when, and where he will. And your activity on his behalf will never, in God's economy, be a substitute for what he is and does. Now, my dear Christian friend, this has absolutely nothing to do with the sincerity of your motives.

Nothing whatever. You can be as sincere as the devil himself in the service of Christ. What do you want, please? Christ, of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing, for when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles.

These are the first principles. The baby talk, the first principles of the oracles of God. Hebrews 5, verse 12.

You are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, he is a baby. And I warned you at the beginning of this week that I was not intending to keep on feeding milk to babies who've been sucking milk for donkey's years.

Or baby's years. My object was to teach you what you don't know, because that's what a teacher's for. To help you to understand what you haven't understood before, because that's the only purpose of talking to people.

The tragedy is that we've largely educated the Christian church to be content listening to the same thing being said again and again and again and again, week after week, month after month, until you can recite it backwards. It's less disturbing to your conscience. Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, to recognize the evil in what appears to be good, and which passes muster for good.

It's a terribly hard lesson for us to learn initially. That simply because an activity happens to be in an area of Christian service, it isn't necessarily spiritual. That the fact that a missionary has gone to a mission field does not make that activity spiritual.

That the fact that you happen to be in an evangelical church preaching or teaching at an evangelical Bible class, that that fact in itself does not make it spiritual. There is only one criterion as to what is spiritual and what is not spiritual, and that is the origin of the activity. You can engage in Christian service for every kind of ulterior motive.

Did you ever notice in Ezekiel 44, verse 18, it concerns the priests. May I remind you that every forgiven sinner is added to the universal priesthood. You as living stones have built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

You are a chosen generation, you are a royal priesthood, you are a holy nation, you are a purchased people that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, Peter says. And this concerns the priesthood. And all the Old Testament foreshadowings have their spiritual implications in the New Testament.

They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and they shall have linen breeches upon their loins. They shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. These were God's instructions concerning the priesthood in the Old Testament.

They were not to be clothed with anything that would cause them to sweat in the presence of God. No sweat in God's presence. A priest must never sweat.

Isn't that interesting? Now, the distinction between carnal activity and spiritual unction is just that, sweat. Beware of the busyness, the sweat of a barren life. God preserved us from being busy.

As a compensation for our spiritual ineptitude. God says, no priest must dare to come into my presence sweating. And yet lots of us congratulate ourselves.

We come bursting in sweat pouring down our faces and we tell everybody how busy we are in the service of Jesus Christ. And everybody is impressed. Except God.

Who says a priest is not allowed to sweat in my presence. On the contrary, verse 23 of Ezekiel 44 Bear in mind the words that I read you from Hebrews 5. Discerning between good and evil. They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane.

That which derives from God and that which doesn't. They shall cause them to discern between the unclean that stems from the flesh and the clean that stems from the spirit. And a priest who has learned not to sweat in God's presence has the office to teach God's people the difference.

That's what we've been seeking to discover this week. The difference between the clanking bustle of man's activity on God's behalf and that easy flowing river that stems from a divine source. The lamb upon the throne.

As a young man I once went to a voice trainer. Once. She didn't seem to consider that it was worthwhile my coming again.

I can't say that we got on too well from the start. For one thing she looked a bully. She was a great big buxom woman.

And when I came to the room she said, I'm going to teach you how to breathe. You don't know how to breathe. I said, pardon me, I've been breathing ever since I was born.

No you haven't, she said, no you haven't, you haven't been breathing yet at all. So I wondered how I'd survived for so long. Now she said, expire.

I said, I'm too young. And she didn't think that was funny either. So, I expire.

She said, that's not the way to expire. This is the way to expire. From being about that size in wits you went down to about that.

So I expire. And I can feel my ribs touching. Now she said, inspire.

So, I inspire. She said, that's not the way to inspire. This is the way to inspire.

And all the pictures came off the wall. And then she said this, it was a pocket sermon. She said, you will never learn to inspire until you know how to expire.

It's a spiritual principle. Until you have learned to expire, I am crucified with Christ. You will never inspire.

Christ lives in me. You'll just perspire. You'll sweat in the energy of the flesh.

And you'll be congratulating yourself in being so busy in such demand in the service of Jesus Christ. And you'll be kidding yourself. Receiving everybody except God.

And there'll be nobody more pleased than the devil himself. For he has successfully neutralized you by keeping yourself wholly preoccupied with what you can do for God. Which is precisely nothing.

And it's amazing how busy you can be doing nothing. And how much sweat is generated in the process. God said to Abraham, in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Abraham was an old man. Over 80 years of age. His wife was barren.

She had never borne. Physically it was impossible for her to bear. And God said to Abraham, the word of faith.

In thy seed shall all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Sarah shall bear a son. That was the word of faith.

But of course, God had misjudged the issue. And fortunately, he had a man like Abraham to keep him on beam. Fortunately, he had in a man like Abraham somebody who had level-headed common sense.

Who could face issues as they were. Without being mystical and unrealistic. And he realized that God had got himself in an unusual dilemma.

And so he had a committee meeting with Sarah. And they decided that God had overlooked the fact that Abraham was so old and that Sarah was barren. And they decided that they must help God out of his awkward dilemma.

And no doubt God would be extremely grateful for their endowment. And they invited Hagar, a bondwoman, into the home. And of Hagar, in conformity to the resolution that had been passed at the committee meeting between Abraham and Sarah.

Ishmael was born. The son of a bondwoman. And they presented Ishmael to God.

Thinking how grateful God would be that they should have taken care of his interests so thoroughly on earth. In the situation that had arisen as a result of God's absent mind. Now wasn't that nice of Abraham? And Sarah.

How lucky God was to have folk like that around the place running his affairs. And for fifteen years Abraham said to God, all that Ishmael may live. And God said, I have not begotten Ishmael, nor have I any interest in Ishmael.

You can fire him out. For fifteen years he nurtured in his bosom that which was born of his sheer fleshly carnal sincerity. He wasn't a hypocrite.

He didn't even know that he was repudiating God's sovereignty in his life. He didn't even know that it was rank unbelief that prompted his sincere endeavors. He thought that God should have congratulated him upon his ingenuity.

God said, Sarah shall bear a son. My covenant is with Ishmael. And not with Ishmael.

And God repudiated Ishmael, born of Abraham's sincerity on God's behalf. And Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations, who have breathed murder all down history. And today surround Israel in the Middle East, the flashpoint of human history in our twentieth century.

And there are armed men at this very moment facing each other across their rifle barrels and their machine guns with jet fighters waiting to take over the moment's notice at this moment while I'm talking to you because of Abraham's sincerity on God's behalf in begetting Ishmael in defiance of the word of faith. That's why God said, don't sweat in my presence. Or you could go all down the history of the word of God and see again and again and again how well-meaning men have tried to organize God out of business.

Lord Jesus said, this is the work of God that you believe on him whom God has sent. John 6, verse 35. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.

He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. This is a key verse without which you will not grasp the significance of what later he has to say. You will be completely bewildered or you will become a Roman Catholic.

I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger. When do you cease to hunger? When you eat.

He says, when you come, it will be as good as eating. You will not hunger. So to eat is to come.

He that believeth on me shall never thirst. When do you cease to thirst? When you drink. So to believe is as good as drinking.

When you believe, you drink. So from now on, when the Lord Jesus says, drink, he will mean believe. To eat is to come and to drink is to believe.

Now that's the key. He uses the particular illustration because it was placed in his hands, as it were, by the Jews who had quoted Moses in the wilderness. So the Lord Jesus picks up the parable.

He speaks about bread and he says, I am the bread of life. When you come, you don't hunger. When you believe, you don't thirst.

So to eat is to come and to drink is to believe. A very beautiful picture. Physiologically correct.

For it is the fluids of your body that apply what you eat to the place where it's needed. It's the bloodstream that takes to the extremities of your body, the nutriment, the healing properties of all that you take as nourishment. And if you didn't drink and you didn't sustain the fluids of your body, you could put all the nutriment in the world, in your mouth, and you would die of starvation.

And you can come to Jesus Christ for what he is, but if you don't apply what he is by faith to your need, you will die in your sin. You come and believe. You apply what he is to what you are.

That's the secret. That's the symbol. Verse 47, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

The moment you come to me for what I am, admit yourselves to be what you are, guilty sinners, claiming the adequacy and the efficacy of my atoning death upon the cross. Your sins are forgiven you, and my Father restores to you the life that sin forwarded. The Holy Ghost comes to re-inhabit your human spirit,

and your body becomes the temple of the living God.

You have everlasting life. My life. Then said Jesus unto them, verse 53, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, come and drink his blood, believe, you remain in the condition in which you were born.

Ye have no life in you. You're lifeless. For my Father cannot restore to you my life by the gift to you of my spirit until first you have been cleansed.

And you can never be cleansed from your sin until first you have come and believed. Now that's the evangelistic, no, that's the evangelistic message. This is the threshold, this is the front door through which you enter into life.

And if there's a man or a woman or a boy or a girl here tonight, and you've never come to the Lord Jesus nor believed on him as your Redeemer, the Lord Jesus says to you tonight, you have no life in you. You're dead. For he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

You're dead. And before one word more that I could say to you would ever help you, you've got to obey the gospel in this first initial act of faith that receives what he is, life. That thereafter you may depend as an attitude of faith upon what he is, moment by moment.

But you cannot depend as an attitude upon what he is in you until first by an act of faith you have received him in you. So without this act of faith whereby you come and believe, says Jesus, you have no life, you're dead. But of course that isn't the gospel.

That's the beginning of the gospel. That's the evangelistic note of the gospel. This is God's command to all men everywhere to repent and be converted.

Now he goes on in the rest of the chapter to explain what it is that happens once you have life. What are the implications of coming and believing? Verse 56. With you, imparted right at your salvation, God sees you in Christ, fit for heaven.

Christ in you makes you fit for earth. His righteousness clothed in you, accepted in the beloved. His righteousness clothed by you, his righteousness declared on earth in terms of transformed human character.

So that the demands of the law are fulfilled in you. Who has learned by an attitude of faith now to walk in the spirit. Releasing by faith what he is in righteousness through you.

So when you come and believe, there is initiated a unique relationship between you and the Lord Jesus. You're in him and he's in you. Now what's the nature of this relationship? Is there any parallel? Yes.

What is the parallel? The relationship that existed between himself as man and the Father. For constantly the Lord Jesus claims to be in the Father and the Father in him. So says the Lord Jesus, if you are truly converted, genuinely regenerate, you have entered into that relationship with me that exists between me and my Father.

While I'm here on earth as man. For the Lord Jesus on earth as man, behaved as man was intended by God to behave. He need never have become man, for he was God.

But when he became man, he set aside those divine attributes that would have been other than in conformity to his true manhood. And so he said for 33 years, so long as I'm here on earth as man, I walk as man by virtue of a relationship with my Father, whereby I am in him and my Father is in me. And this unique relationship, said the Lord Jesus, is going to be the relationship that will be established when you are redeemed through my atoning death between you as man on earth and me as God.

You're going to be in me and I'm going to be in you. Have you got that? Now verse 57. What's the conclusion? What's the proposition? As the living Father hath sent me, as.

And I live by the Father, as. So, on exactly the same basis, in accordance with the identical principle. He that eateth me, he shall live by me.

As the Father sent him and he lived by the Father, if you come and believe on Jesus Christ, you are now to live by him. That's an important verse then, isn't it? If you are a Christian and you have the slightest desire whatever to live the kind of life on earth that is worthy of the one who redeemed you and pleases him and pleases God, this will be one of the most important verses in your Bible. It will be heavily underlined with a big exclamation mark in the margin.

Because as he lived by the Father, you are now to live by him. Therefore, priority number one for you as a sincere, earnest Christian who means business with God will be to discover how, how, how did Jesus Christ as man on earth live by the Father because that is how I as man on earth am to live by him. And I cannot rest until I have discovered how it is he lived by the Father that I may know how I may live by him.

Of course, you couldn't possibly rest if you are a sincere, earnest Christian who genuinely wants nothing less than God's best for you. As a forgiven sinner, you could not possibly rest until you have discovered the secret, furthermore having discovered it, obeyed it. So the important thing is to discover how Jesus Christ lived by his Father.

But you can see therefore now that we've come to this stage that if you once discover how he lived by the Father and he demands thereafter that you live on the same basis by him, it is going to present you at once with a moral issue. For standing back from the facts that have been marshaled, you will have to decide, am I prepared to live on this basis in my relationship to Jesus Christ that he lived in relationship to his Father? And that'll be the issue that you'll face tonight. What's it going to involve? Well, we need to reemphasize just at this point some of the truths that we've already found underlined by the Lord Jesus as he declares the basis upon which he lives by the Father.

How much did the Lord Jesus Christ do for the Father while he was on earth? How much was the Father dependent upon the Son in the fulfillment of his Messianic mission in redeeming a lost humanity? Would you say that Jesus Christ did his very best for the Father? Would you say that Jesus Christ did his very best for you and for me? Well, probably, almost instinctively, as an expression of your reverence and devotion to the Lord Jesus, almost without a moment's hesitation you'd say, well, of course, he did everything. But what does he say? John 5, 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Thee, Son, can do nothing of himself.

For the Father is not dependent upon the Son as man. The Son as man is wholly, utterly dependent upon the Father. The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do.

What thinksoever he doeth the Father, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Son, as the final exegesis of true humanity, is totally, unrelentingly, moment by moment, dependent. Because I have come to be what Adam ceased to be when he stepped out of dependence into independence.

I have come to be on earth man for the first time, as God intended man to be since man fell into sin. And because I am man, I can only be what my Father does. That's my office.

Simply to be the humanity that my Father occupies and through which my Father works. Verse 30. I can of mine own self do how much? Nothing.

Jesus Christ, the creative deity, the one who was in the beginning with God and was God, by whom all things were made. Jesus Christ, who could say and know that it was true before Abraham was in your past, since I am. He said, by virtue of the fact that I am man, I can of mine own self do nothing.

Just as I here I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me. That's my office as man. So according to the Lord Jesus, how much could he do apart from the Father? Nothing.

How much was the Father dependent upon him? Not at all. He simply claimed and obtained his availability. Would you tell me, Christian friend, what that estimate is that you have of yourself that persuades you to believe that you can do apart from Jesus Christ what he couldn't do apart from his Father? Would you tell me upon what basis it is that you deign and dare to take action in anything other than the same attitude of dependence upon Christ that he showed in his dependence upon the Father? Would you give me any area of latitude that the Lord Jesus allows you for activity outside of his activity in you and through you? If you are to live by him as he lived by the Father, how much did he do for when he died for you? John 8, verse 28.

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that in the very act of dying for you I do nothing of myself. But as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things, and he that sent me is with me. The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.

And the Lord Jesus says, If you're a Christian, if you come and believe, you are to live by me now as I have lived by the living Father. So if the Lord Jesus, apart from the Father, could do nothing, would you tell me, please, how much you can do apart from Jesus Christ? John 15, 5. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, notice the relationship, in me, I in him, same relationship that exists between myself and the Father, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

The man, the woman, the boy, the girl, who has learned to abide by virtue of this relationship that I enjoy with my Father as man will bring forth much fruit. For without me, you can do just as much as I as man could do without my Father. How much, then, is your activity worth that you do apart from Jesus Christ? If without him you can do nothing, and you're busy doing without him, how much will you accomplish? Nothing.

You're just sweating. You're just sweating. God says no priest ever sweats in my presence.

As a royal priesthood, Peter says, you are to bring sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. His activity alone is acceptable by the Father. I am the vine, ye are the branches.

This was the verse through which Hudson Taylor made the great discovery. He was an earnest convention speaker, Bible teacher, but forever he discovered the secret of fullness of life in Christ. He was soundly converted, he was completely redeemed, his name was in the Lamb's book of life, he was well on his way to heaven, but he had never discovered the secret.

And he was just exhausting himself, doing for Jesus Christ and accomplishing nothing, sweating in the energy of the flesh, and then he stumbled upon John 15, 5. And for the first time, like a flash of lightning, it dawned upon his soul, I am not a branch stuck onto the vine, the vine includes the branches. I am simply that part of Jesus Christ called branch through which he, the vine, bears fruit. All I've got to do is stick my fingers out.

And a thousand missionaries went to China. That's the difference between carnal sweat and spiritual unction. That's why it isn't only you that are going to reap the benefit of this unique spiritual relationship if you've never entered into it before by faith.

Your Bible class, your Sunday school, your own children at home, the neighbors down your street, the city of Adelaide is going to feel the impact of the release of what Christ is in terms of your redeemed humanity. For the moment you recognize that you're nothing and he's everything, and you place yourself at his disposal with vacant possession just like an empty old drain pipe, open both ends and nothing in the middle, heaven can empty itself into the city of Adelaide. And God knows it needs it.

If Jesus Christ did nothing, who did everything? John 14, 10. And I want you to notice the relationship. John 14, 10.

Believest thou not that I am in thee, Father, and the Father in me, in the same way that you are in me, and I am in you? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, the Father that dwelleth in me, to whom my whole humanity is yielded, unreservedly, he doeth thee works. Who did the works? The Father. His office as man was to be, the office of the Father who indwelt him through the Eternal Spirit was to do.

Your office as a forgiven sinner is to be that Jesus Christ dwelling in you by the Holy Spirit may do. That's why the Lord Jesus said this is the work of God. Don't you believe? Don't you believe? That's all.

On him whom God has sent. Not just to die for you historically 1,900 years ago. No, no, no, no.

Who was dead but is alive again. Who did die for you historically 1,900 years ago, but who rose again from the dead on the first occasion at Pentecost to inhabit your redeemed humanity and live his life in you and through you. This was the revolutionary discovery that the disciples made on the day of Pentecost.

That they all had to be while he did. Christ spoke through their lips and 3,000 were converted to God. Wouldn't it make a difference if Christ were released in action through every man, woman, and child who is a forgiven sinner in this building tonight? I wonder what would happen.

I wonder what would happen if you and I honestly faced this issue and said God, I don't want to be myself for what I am anymore. I only want to know what you are expressed in terms of my redeemed humanity placed wholly, utterly, and unquestioningly at your disposal. Do on through me as when and where you will come what may and God take the consequence.

Tell me this. If the Lord Jesus by virtue of his relationship to the Father could do nothing without the Father how much margin for self-effort and self-pleasing did this allow to the Lord Jesus? How much could he please himself? I mean with the best will in the world. How much could he exercise his own discretion? How much could he say what he wanted to say? Romans 15 verse 3 tells us.

You may not like this because it presents you with a moral issue. You see, it may expose to you the nature of your faith till now skin deep. Even Christ as man pleased not himself.

How often have you claimed the right to please yourself? You are to live by Jesus Christ as he lived by the Father and he couldn't please himself. So would you tell me how much latitude God gives you to please yourself as a Christian? None. I can almost hear you thinking.

And you say, oh but nobody explained this to me when I was converted. When I responded to the appeal I didn't realize that I was going to be completely obliterated from the scene and only Jesus Christ was going to be given the legitimate right to live his life through me. Nobody told me that when I came to Christ and sought forgiveness it would relieve me at once and forever of the right to please myself and carve my own future and live the kind of life I wanted and marry the girl or the boy that I wanted and choose the house where I live and the profession that I would follow and how I'd spend my money and how I'd spend my time.

Nobody told me when I was converted that I wouldn't have the moral right anymore to please myself. Why didn't they tell me? I didn't intend this kind of life when I was converted. I would never have been converted if I had known this.

Didn't anybody tell you? Didn't anybody tell you when you were converted that the moment your sins were forgiven Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection would be the only person so far as God is concerned who would have the right to live his life in you as when and where he willed and if he wanted to leave you as he did Stephen bleeding, dying, stoned to death in the gut he'd have the right to. Didn't anybody tell you that? I wonder why they didn't because that's the gospel. Maybe we shouldn't have so many converts.

Then you see we're not commanded to produce converts. The Lord Jesus said go into all the world and make disciples. I'm not interested in converts.

I'm interested in disciples. And discipleship involves the cross. Whosoever taketh not up his cross and followeth me.

And the cross isn't your mother-in-law or your bad temper. That's your sin. Your mother-in-law is your choice.

No, no. When the Lord Jesus bid you take up your cross and follow him it is to the end that he took up his cross to die on you. Nothing less than that.

I say, how much enthusiasm did his disciples show when the Lord Jesus began to explain to them the implications of the new relationship that was precipitated by regeneration? Were they wildly enthusiastic? You look in John 6 again. John 6. Do you know why evangelistic meetings are more popular amongst Christians than teaching on the implications of discipleship? Well, you see, it's because evangelistic meetings just invite people to get converted, full stop. So that you get set for heaven but you're left to do as you please on earth.

So you get masses of Christians blocking to evangelistic service. They've heard it all anyway. And they're just curious to see how many people will respond to what they responded to 10 years ago or 50 years ago or six months ago.

It's just good spiritual entertainment. It doesn't involve anything. It doesn't affect my pocket.

It doesn't affect my time. It doesn't affect my home. It doesn't affect my career.

It doesn't affect my future. It doesn't affect my neighbours. It doesn't affect my children.

I'm just in an evangelistic service. Only customers are open. Unless it's a plate and I put six minutes in because people see.

It's cheaper entertainment you can get in most cinemas. But why don't Christians flock to meetings where the word of God is unfolded to show the true implication of discipleship? Because I'm sorry to have to say the vast majority of Christians don't want discipleship. All they want is an insurance policy to get to heaven one day.

Leave me alone while I'm down here. John 6, verse 60. Many therefore of his disciples when they had heard this said this isn't hard saying who can hear it? Literally when his disciples heard this many of them said this is a hard and difficult and strange saying an offensive and unbearable message.

Who can stand to hear it? Who can be expected to listen to such teaching? Oh, I say don't be angry with the disciples. Similar thoughts have been flitting through the minds of some of you just while you've been sitting here tonight. These very sentiments have been echoed.

The same principle of satanic origin will have been pretty busy while I've been talking to you telling you that this is entirely unreasonable. This is absolutely going to extremes. This is sheer fanaticism.

Oh yes, you're quite right. Being a Christian is sheer fanaticism. It was sheer fanaticism that took Jesus Christ to the cross.

If Jesus Christ had been sensible if he'd been rational if he'd been reasonable if he'd been down to earth he'd have listened to what Peter said to him right at the beginning. Not so, Lord. This shall never be.

And if Jesus Christ had only been reasonable he could have been a liar. Into old age without a cross. But sheer fanaticism took him to the cross.

If fanaticism means that you're completely sold out for the purpose which God has commissioned you and sheer fanaticism and nothing less will take you to the cross with your heart's consent to God's verdict upon what you are fit for nothing but the place of exile. Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at him verse 61 Murmuring. What was the characteristic of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Out of Egypt but not in Canaan.

What were they doing for 40 years? Murmuring. Murmuring. Complaining at the total demands of the lordship of Christ in the life of the believers.

The carnal Christian the wilderness dweller always murmurs at the claims of Jesus Christ. Always murmurs at the totalitarian claims upon the life of the believers. Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples were complaining and protesting and grumbling about it said, Is this a stumbling block and offense to you?

Does this upset and displease and shock and scandalize you? So the lord Jesus realized that his preaching was shocking upsetting and scandalizing his own disciples.

Not a few it says but many. Tell me he would say what is it in you that is upset displeased shocked and scandalized at the suggestion that the God who made you and the Christ who has redeemed you should exercise total sovereignty over you? What is it in you that would she be shocked at that? May I ask you tonight what it is in you that is shocked and scandalized displeased and upset at the suggestion that the lord Jesus God himself who created you and redeemed you should exercise total unquestioned jurisdiction in terms of your future?

Would you tell me what it is in you that rebels at that? He tells you. Verse 63 The flesh prophetess Nothing The sin principle of satanic origin The perpetuation of the original basic lie that persuaded Adam to believe that man is man by virtue of what man is apart from God lose God lose nothing The flesh that's what rebels The flesh that's what considers it to be scandalous and shocking and displeasing that God should dare to have the right dare to claim the right to have any jurisdiction over me as to what I decide and where I go and what I do In other words in the heart of every believer there's the fifth column of the devil himself In the heart of every redeemed sinner in the heart of every believer whose name is in the Lamb's book of life there is the fifth column of dialectic materialism God hating Christ rejecting communism In the heart of every believer The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life for it is the spirit that raises the dead And now they are faced with an issue Will they accept Christ's terms of discipleship or not?

This is where you are faced with an issue What happened? I hate to have to tell you Verse sixty-six Preacher Sunday school teacher Bible class leader Potential missionary Evangelist Those of you who are training for future ministry Are you prepared for this as a consequence of your teaching and preaching? If you're not you're not ready for discipleship Look at it Verse sixty-six From that time many not a few many of his disciples went back and walked no more They said nobody told us that this was what was involved in conversion We never intended this When we registered our decision we're going home many Then said Jesus to the twelve I'd go home too Simon Peter answered Lord to whom shall we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life They bewilder us They overwhelm us We can't see our way through yet We don't understand that we don't know where else to turn Somehow we believe and somehow we're sure that thou art the Christ the son of the living God but we we don't understand it all we don't understand it all we don't know where it's going to lead us And they didn't Christ knew they didn't But they didn't go back and on through the cross to the upper room where he stood risen from the dead with the wounds in his hands and his feet where he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures and see the purposes of God being wrought out in his obedience in terms of his complete humanity wholly available to God promising them power from on high when on the day of

Pentecost they too would have become the recipients of what he was in the power of his resurrection so that his life might be lived through them that they might know indeed the work of God which is to believe on him whom God sent on through Pentecost to evangelize the world in one generation Stephen to be stoned to death James to have his head cut off Peter to be crucified upside down John to go into the isle of Patmos and there be an exile into his old age Yes That's what it involves For except to grain his feet fall into the ground and die relinquishing what it is a step in the dark I don't know quite where it's going to lead me I've never experienced really the principle of life within I've only known second hand that it's there but I'm stepping I'm stepping in blind faith into death

believing somehow that within me there's a principle of life that can govern my future ends and shape the things to come and I'm prepared to step out into the dark and the one grave that comes next the life is imparted through death to others the latent lordship of the life within released will he also go away is somebody wanting to go home is somebody wanting to get back to their own church where they are a bit more sober a bit more reasonable a bit more rational where you can get to heaven without cutting with the world where you can get to heaven and still hold on to your bank balance where you can get to heaven and still play and toy with sin where you can get to heaven and be reasonable because you're so wedded to your ill forgotten Ishmael that you're not prepared to have God's

Isaac you want to go home well I'm sure there may be some but I'm sure there are others who will say with the disciples of old we're not quite sure where it's going to lead us but we've nowhere else to go somehow deep down in our hearts we know and believe and we don't want our lives anymore we want your lives live through us as when in prayer you will to the outermost ends of the earth well that's the proposition and I invite your participation and I do this advisedly at the close of this week's ministry we shall bring our meeting now to a close but there will be a brief word of instruction specifically for those who recognizing the claims of Christ in total lordship upon your life are prepared now as God enables you to have nothing less this is what you want there are some folk who are

beginning to say in their own hearts I'm sick and tired of being what I am and at last I am prepared to relinquish to release his light a light that alone can make me what I was intended to be I want to be one of God's originals

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