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The Key Steps to
Becoming a Christian

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This booklet is based on a talk. Originating as it does from the spoken word, its style will be found by many readers to be somewhat different from my usual written style. It is hoped that this will not detract from the substance of the biblical teaching found here.

















As always, I ask the reader to compare everything I say or write with what is written in the Bible and, if at any point a conflict is found, always to rely upon the clear teaching of scripture.

David Pawson

















EXPLAINING The Key Steps to Becoming a Christian



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EXPLAINING
The Key Steps to
Becoming a Christian

DAVID PAWSON

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1

JESUS, SAVIOUR

My subject is how to begin the Christian life – how to be born again; how to become a Christian; how to enter the kingdom – but let me begin by talking about Jesus, because he is the one who has called us. Altogether, Jesus has about 250 names and titles, and a good devotional exercise is to find them and write them out. But fashion dictates that they come and go, and I notice that some of his names and titles are popular at one time and not at another. I have noticed recently that one of his titles is not as prominent as it used to be, and it is a pity because it is one of his best. It is the word *Saviour*. I don't know if you have found it, but I don't hear people talking about the Saviour as much as they used to – but that is what he came to do. He came to *save* people.

I want to talk about saving and salvation in this first chapter before we get down to the nitty gritty of how to get into it and how to get started. His name means 'God saves'. 'Je' are the first two (translated) letters of the Hebrew word for God, and 'sus' is part of the root word for 'salvation'. So the name he was given means 'God saves'. In fact, in the village where my wife and I used to live we had a postman in charge of the local Post Office and local store and his name was Mr Godsave. That is exactly what 'Jesus' means – God saves! In Hebrew, his name is Jeshua. The 'J' is pronounced like a 'y' and it is the same as the name 'Joshua'. There is a book in the Old Testament with this title, and that is the same word exactly; it is the same meaning: 'God saves'.

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But what does he save us *from*? That is the most important question we can ask. Jesus was not born to save us from our fears or to save us from our boredom or to save us from our hang-ups, though he can do all those things. But that is not the main reason he came. He came to save us – to save us from what? Hell? Well, yes, that is a bonus thrown in, but it is not the main reason. He didn't get the name 'Jesus' because he would save his people from their futures. He came to save his people from their sins – all of them. And until you have got rid of all your sins, you are not saved, not fully anyway. So we are beginning to get a different feel of the words 'saved' and 'salvation'.

In World War 2, when I was a boy, the word I remember most is the word 'salvage'; it is the same as the word 'salvation', and we saved all our paper so it could be salvaged and made into new paper. We saved our pots and pans because aluminium could be built into spitfires and we wanted to build spitfires in those days. So the word 'salvage' was very popular. That has gone right out today. I never hear the word now but I hear the word 'recycling' – same meaning – and you know what recycling is all about. It is to take rubbish that is no use to us now and to make something useful out of it. That is what 'salvation' means. There is a tiny book in the New Testament called Philemon but it is a letter to Philemon by Paul about a runaway slave called Onesimus, and the word Onesimus means 'useful' and this slave had run away from his master and was no use to his owner any more, and Paul is sending him back to be useful again. He actually says that in the letter: I think you'll find him useful now. That is what salvation is – it is to make us not rubbish but useful again to God. Until that happens, you are not saved; you are not salvaged; you are not recycled, these words tell us that you are saved *to* something, not just *from* something.

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Now the word 'hell' as Jesus used it stands for a huge rubbish dump outside Jerusalem on the south side and all the rubbish of that city was thrown into this deep, dark valley where the sun never reaches the bottom but all the rubbish did. And the gate of Jerusalem on that side is called the Dung Gate which tells you what they did with all their sewage. There were no flush systems in those days so you took all your rubbish and your dirt – anything you didn't want – and you threw it outside the city into this deep cavern, and it was called Gehenna or The Valley of Hinnom. That is what Jesus used for his picture of hell and it is a sobering picture.

When I first went to Israel – can't think how long ago that was – it was still a rubbish valley and there was blue smoke coming up from it. When I looked down into it and saw all the rubbish being burned, I was looking into what Jesus referred to as a picture of hell. Hell is God's rubbish dump where he throws people who are no use to him, who have 'perished'. Now we misunderstand that word if we think it means that they have ceased to exist. If you have a perished hot water bottle or a perished tyre, it looks like a tyre, it looks like a hot water bottle, but it is no use because it is perished. That is what the word 'perished' means in the Bible. It doesn't mean to cease to exist. It means to become useless for the purpose for which it was made, and therefore God throws you away. Have you noticed that you never 'place' rubbish in the bin, you always 'throw' it. In the Bible, nobody is sent to hell, they are all thrown into hell, and that is the most horrible thing that can happen to a human being – to be thrown away as useless to God. What a terrible destiny. But that is the destiny of so many people who are perishing. They don't know it, they don't realise it, but they are heading for God's rubbish dump, when God says 'you're no use to me now' – I can't use you for what I made you for and so I am throwing you away.

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Now ‘salvation’ or ‘salvage’ or ‘recycling’ is being saved from that and made useful to God again so that he can say ‘now I can fulfil my plans for you’. That puts a whole new light on it, doesn’t it? It is therefore a process that takes time. It takes a lot of time to take rubbish and turn it into something useful again. Therefore, salvation is not something that happens in a moment, it happens over time. It takes time and that is a very important insight and that is going to affect our thinking about how you begin to be saved. In fact it is more true to the Bible to say not ‘I was saved 20 years ago’, or ‘we had 7 people saved last Sunday night in church’, we should rather say ‘I began to be saved 20 years ago’, or ‘we had 7 people on Sunday night in the church who began to be saved’. That is why it is called in the Bible ‘the way of salvation’. And ‘the way’ means a road, a journey, and it is a process that will take some people years and it is only complete when every bit of sin is out of your life and no longer spoiling you for God, and no longer making you useless for God.

When we look into the New Testament teaching of salvation, you find there are three parts to it. I will give you the technical theological names which are rather horrible. I don’t like big names or especially what is called ‘Latin’ English. I prefer Saxon English with its short and picturesque words. But here are the three Latin names for those three phases of the process: justification, sanctification, glorification. Those three together make up salvation, and salvation is not complete until you have got all three. Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation started by Martin Luther so concentrated on justification that people have come to think that is all of salvation and that if you have been justified, you are saved. That is a very big error because what is forgotten is what you are being saved for, or rather *to*. In fact the New Testament says ‘He is able to

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save to the uttermost'. The way most people read that is 'from the guttermost'. But it doesn't mean that. It means to the uttermost. He is able to complete what he has begun in you, and he has got his eye on that future of what you and I will be when the process of salvation, of salvage or recycling is complete.

I am looking forward to being saved, aren't you? Or did you think you were already? No, salvation in the New Testament – or 'saved', the verb, is in three tenses: past, present and future. You have been saved, you are being saved and you will be saved. And guess which of those tenses is the most common in the New Testament. The answer is the future – not the past or the present. The emphasis of scripture is on your future salvation and the completion of the process when you will be totally free from sin and God can say: now I can use you for what I intended when I made you.

Now, just go back to those three tenses. I have been saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. Those correspond to three deliverances for you, three things from which you are set free. First, justification is to be set free from the *penalty* of sin. Sanctification is to be set free from the *power* of sin. And glorification is to be set free from the *presence* of sin. That is what we are all heading for, what we are looking forward to. So you are reading the words of someone now who is not saved yet. But, as the Bible would say, I am on the way, and it talks about the way of salvation and how to get on to the way, how to keep on it and what happens to those who get off it. But we will look at that later.

So, have I said enough to show you that salvation is a process? It is not an instantaneous thing. It is not a thing that is complete yet, but praise God, he has started. If you were in my home, looking at me now, you would be looking at part of me that is not saved yet because salvation includes a new body and I am in an old body and it tells me every day that

it needs to be saved. I have got cancer in me – in my skull, in my backbone and a number of other parts in my skeleton – and there are plenty of other things wrong with me. We don't get younger. Did you know we are going to have a new body like Jesus' body, and he is thirty-three? Fancy being thirty-three again when you are in your late eighties! You really look forward to that because at thirty-three you are at the height of your powers physically, mentally, spiritually. And we shall be at our best again. Did you think that I would be tottering around heaven with a stick? Did you think there are old age pensioners in heaven, just hanging on to life by their fingertips? Think again. We are going to be salvaged and this old body of mine will one day be salvaged and set free from all that is wrong with it. Hallelujah for that. Are you looking forward to having a new body? I certainly am.

Can I approach all this from another angle? For many people, salvation is a vertical line between the unsaved and the saved and you cross this line in an instant with just one step, and you are through. That is not the New Testament concept of salvation but it is the one that most people are working with today, even evangelists. They draw this very strong vertical line between those going to hell and those going to heaven, those who are unsaved and those who are saved. And that is what has made people use the word 'saved' entirely in the past tense. I was saved. But that is only one of the tenses we should be using. I am being saved and I will be saved.

If you have doubts about whether the New Testament really does have that future aspect of salvation in mind, let us just go through one or two texts. There is one in Romans 13:11 which says this: 'Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.' Now I have never heard a preacher preach on that text, for obvious reasons. But how does that fit into your thinking? Your salvation is nearer than when

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you first believed. That is future! Or take another verse – Hebrews 9:28, which says that Jesus is returning one day, not to deal with sin – he did that on his first visit of course – but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. There's a thought. In other words, salvation will come when Jesus comes. That is the future of salvation. Take another example: 1 Peter 1:5 – where Peter talks about a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time, a salvation reserved in heaven for you, a salvation that depends on Jesus coming back and bringing it to us. It is all there.

So we have these three things. Charles Wesley wrote an amazing hymn once and here is one verse in it:

A charge to keep I have;
a God to glorify;
a never dying soul to save,
and fit it for the sky.

Now there is a charge for you. It is not just to get people over the line, it is to fit them for the sky. And that is why the New Testament talks about the way. That was the first name for Christianity – The Way – and there is a church in America called The Church on the Way. Its pastor has written a chorus which you will know: *Majesty, Worship His Majesty*. I was very impressed with that name – Church on the Way. I didn't realise at first why it was called that. I assumed it was called that out of humility – we're not the church that has arrived, we are the church on the way. But in fact the street outside is called The Way and they were simply called The Church on The Way for that reason. I was so disappointed. I thought every church is the church on the way. I am on the way! I am not saved yet but I am on the way and I am travelling on the way. And that is the assurance I have, not that I am perfect, not that I have arrived, but I am

on the way, and one day I will be perfect. My wife finds that rather difficult; she knows me too well. But one day you and I will be perfect. We are on the way to that. Everybody you meet will tell you that no-one is perfect. We can always say: 'Well, one person was.' And we can also add, 'and I'm on the way to being perfect.' That is what salvation is; that is what salvage means; that is what recycling is, and to be on the way of salvation is the important thing in your life. To be heading for this amazing future when you will be without fault, without weakness; you will be perfect – as Jesus was and is, perfect. And you will be in his likeness 'because you shall see him as he is'.

One of the books apart from the Bible that makes this so clear but which alas very few people have read today was by a man called John Bunyan; and in prison for the Lord in Bedford he had a dream and that dream was put into his most famous book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Every Christian ought to read it because in the most amazing way he sees Christianity as a long road from where he was to where he is going to be, and all the problems that come as he travels along the road, and all the delights that come. As you read that book, you read yourself. You can see yourself on that road walking with him. Even right at the end someone turns aside from that road and Bunyan wrote this amazing sentence: 'And I saw there was a way to hell at the gates of heaven.' He saw this poor friend go off down a side road even when they were within sight of the heavenly city. It is an amazing book. I have a friend who rather naughtily announced it as the progress of a pilgrim's bunion. That got the interest of his audience but it didn't help.

Now we are talking about the first steps on the road. How do you get started? How do we get others started? Because one of the sad features is that when you are trying to get someone else started on the road, you tend to put onto them

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the way you started, which may or may not have been the best way. We all tend to do that. I can give you an illustration of that from a very apt source. Don't take this in the wrong way. I had the greatest respect for Billy Graham who was one of the greatest evangelists of all time, but he made this same mistake. When he wrote his autobiography I read it with real interest to see how large a part baptism played in his salvation. To my surprise I found he had been baptised three times – once as a baby in a Presbyterian church, once in Florida and once somewhere else. When I was in Florida, they said to me, 'Would you like to see where Billy Graham was baptised?' I said, 'Oh, yes.' We went to a riverside. There was no monument, no plaque, nothing. But my friend pointed to the water and said, 'That was where Billy Graham was baptised'. I said, 'It's very interesting to me to see where he was baptised but I want to know why he was.' It was because he had applied to join a Baptist church in Florida and they said, 'You can't join unless you're baptised,' so he said, 'Okay you can baptise me.' That was the second time he had been baptised. The third time was when he applied to join another Baptist church which was so strict that they would only accept into membership someone they had baptised themselves – which is very naughty. But he said, 'Fine, I will get baptised again so I can join you.' In other words, for him baptism was a church issue. It was a church membership subject. It was not part of salvation and therefore when he wrote a book called *Born Again*, the whole book never mentions baptism, and he never mentioned it in his preaching. He never told anybody to be baptised and that was because he got 'saved' without any reference to being baptised. It was all a church issue. So for the rest of his ministry he left it to the individual and to the church. If I asked you, 'Do you need to be baptised to be saved?' I wonder what you would say.

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We don't want to load on to other people the way we have been saved. We want to get them into the kingdom the way the New Testament did it, the way the apostles did it – so we are not doing it simply the way we did it and we ourselves need to be defended against that.

So let us turn to the New Testament. How did they get born again? What was done for them? What steps did they take? I am going to teach you the four basic steps they all took to get on the way of salvation – and this was just to begin it, of course. For those four basic steps I remember the word 'rubber' and cut out the two vowels, leaving the consonants RBBR. These are the first four steps on the way of salvation that I have been able to find in the New Testament: REPENT, BELIEVE, BE BAPTISED and RECEIVE. But there is a little more to it than that. The Trinity is involved from the very beginning, so: REPENT towards God the Father; BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus; BE BAPTISED in water, and RECEIVE the Holy Spirit. You see, Father, Son and Spirit are there and the baptism is in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When you are properly initiated into the way of salvation, you already have a personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and so many Christians have not had that kind of birth. To tell you the truth, it took me seventeen years to get those four things sorted out in my life. It need not have been seventeen years if those who knew me when I first began to struggle on the way had guided me rightly. I could have had them in seventeen days or even seventeen hours. It would push it to make it seventeen minutes. The trouble is too many people have been helped to start the way at the end of a meeting and before the bus comes to take them home, and in just a few minutes they can't be helped through those four steps. At least they could be told there are four steps. That has been my approach to it when there

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has been pressure of time on getting a person started. I have said: I can help you with the first step but there are three more steps you need to take at the very beginning and if you really mean business with the Lord you will find that he will lead you to those four steps. But you can't in seventeen minutes take people through those four steps. And so many people are rushed through those initial stages.

Now let us go to the New Testament. Where do I get those four things from? First of all, let me say let us use the New Testament language. Unfortunately, we fall into the habit of using euphemisms, which means using other words and we think we are meaning the same thing but we may not be. Let me give you an example. How do you talk about a person beginning the Christian life? Do you tell them to ask Jesus into their heart? Do you ask them to make a commitment to him? Do you ask them to let Jesus take over their lives? What do you say? Now none of those things will you find in the New Testament and yet we all use them. We have fallen into the habit of using euphemisms, of using other phrases. The apostles never told people to give themselves to Jesus, or even – and this I will have to explain later to you – they never told people to receive Jesus. Also, the word 'receive' is never applied to Jesus in the New Testament except when he was on earth and people did receive him, they let him into their homes, gave him lunch, and that is always said to be receiving him. Physically, it was – welcoming him into their homes. But after Jesus ascended to heaven, they never used that phrase again. They always said, 'Believe in Jesus' and 'receive the Holy Spirit'. And we have bundled that all together into this phrase 'receive Jesus' and never mention the Holy Spirit to people – not at the beginning. You see how important language is and if we are going to talk about the way of salvation as the New Testament does, we need to help people into the stated steps that are first taken on the way.

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The other thing I want to say is we have got to build, never on one text, our understanding of how you begin because if you do that, you will inevitably miss out on some of those four vital steps. For example, it says in Acts 16 ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.’ If you take that text by itself, you will only tell people, ‘Believe and you will be saved.’ You will say nothing about the Holy Spirit, you will say nothing about baptism and, more serious, you will say nothing about repentance. That, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the most serious omission from evangelism today – the word *repent*. It doesn’t usually come into a Christian’s life until later on when they suddenly realise, and it should have started before they took any further steps. We shall see it is the very first step you take into the kingdom of God on earth.

So where are we going to look in the New Testament to find about those first steps? Well, the first thing I must point out is that the Gospels are too early to give you an adequate answer. It may come as a shock to you but you see at least the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, covered his earthly ministry, and therefore faith could not be what it later became. Faith in the resurrection, the death and the ascension of Jesus comes later and so you don’t find the four steps together in the first three Gospels. You don’t find repentance in the fourth Gospel. That may never have struck you, but there is not the word ‘repent’ in the fourth Gospel because it was written to people who were already Christians. It is therefore assuming they have already repented. In the other three Gospels, you find all four things mentioned, but never together. There are texts about repentance, there are texts about baptism, there are texts about faith in Jesus, there are texts about receiving the Holy Spirit, with the warning that nobody could receive the Holy Spirit then. He was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. So the

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Gospels, even though they mention all four steps separately, never put them together.

The epistles were all written too late for us because they were all written to those already in the kingdom, to those already on the way, to those who had started. There is one place in the epistles (letters) – Hebrews 6 – that does say all four things together, but it says: we don't want to start you all over again, that is the beginning of things, that is for a spiritual baby. You should know all that. In fact, that is what happens in all the letters. They all look back to these four things in retrospect. They are looking back to their initiation. When Paul talks about baptism, he says: don't you know that when you were baptised, this is what happened. Then again, he says, how did you receive the Holy Spirit? He keeps looking back to these four steps – sometimes one, sometimes another – but he never spells it out.

Well now, if the Gospels are too early and the Epistles are too late, what are we left with? The book of Acts. And here we have the apostles on location, doing it. We have the apostles telling people how to get started and this is where we find the best teaching on this subject and I shall be referring to Acts a great deal in this book. The very first mention in Acts 2, the very first preaching, the very first evangelism, the first time people are told to start, three of the four things are mentioned. When Peter preached, he preached so powerfully that they believed what he said and they said, 'What shall we do?' And he said, 'Repent, be baptised, every one of you, and you will receive the Holy Spirit'. The only one he didn't mention was *believe*. Why didn't he mention that? For the simple reason that when somebody says, 'What shall we do?' they really believe what you have been telling them about Jesus. So Peter assumed they were already believing in the Lord Jesus and they wanted to know what to do about it. So what he does is to tell them about the other three

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things. He said you need to repent, you need to be baptised, and you need to receive the Holy Spirit. There, right at the beginning of Acts we have the beginning of the Christian life – three out of the four steps that I mentioned and the fourth is assumed.

Turn to a later example in Samaria. Persecution broke out in Jerusalem and it spread the Christians. It sometimes takes persecution to send people out, and they came to Samaria, had a great mission there. The people repented, the people believed – it says that – the people were baptised in water and there was great joy in the city. Now I am afraid most of us today would say that was a very successful mission. But there is something missing – none of them received the Holy Spirit. They had all repented, the whole city. They had all believed in Jesus, they had all been baptised in water and they were all full of joy – and most people would say that was a great crusade, and forget about anything else. But none of them received the Holy Spirit, and as soon as word got out that that had happened, Peter and John went straight down to Samaria as fast as they could, to pray for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit – and they did. There was a rather naughty man called Simon, a bit of a magician, and he loved tricks; and when he saw that they were filled with the Spirit when the apostles laid hands on them, he said that he must have that trick. What's the secret? Sell it to me. And Peter said to him: your money perish with you. Or to put it in crude modern language: to hell with you and your money; you need to repent! That has gone down into history as a crime of trying to buy your way into God's grace, and it is called simony, after the first man who did it.

But the point I want to make to you is this. What was the reaction of the Christians, and the apostles in particular, when one of those four things was missing? It was to go immediately and put it right, and say: you haven't got

properly started and you must have all four things.

The average motor car in Britain runs on four cylinders and four sparking plugs, and when you have got an engine running on all four, it runs well and you can go far and fast. If you are only running on three, you can still go, but as soon as you come to a steep hill, the car begins to falter. You can actually go forward on two out of four cylinders if you have a strong wind behind you and you are going downhill. One? You've had it! I found out fairly early in my ministry that there are Christians trying to run along the way of salvation who are only firing on three out of four, or two out of four – even one out of four.

When I was a pastor, I gave every Monday evening to counselling and anybody could come and see me knowing they would get half an hour of my time. In that way I was able to counsel hundreds of people. I think I did more good on a Monday night than I did on Sunday but that was my habit. Counselling hundreds of Christians with problems, I discovered then this amazing fact that in many cases (but not all) their problems went back to the way they had started – to their conversion. After a bit, if a man or woman came to me with a problem I said, 'Don't talk about the problem for a moment, tell me how you began; tell me about your conversion.' I listened carefully to see if they had all those four things, and invariably at least one, even two, and in rare cases three out of four things were not there. So I used to say: 'Let's go back and put your first steps right.' When we did that, their problem either disappeared altogether or they said, 'I think I can deal with that problem myself now.' They had got off on the wrong foot, or to put it in another way they had had a bad midwife who didn't tell them those four things, didn't make sure they started firing on four cylinders. That is what led me to write the book *The Normal Christian Birth*. That is why I am giving you these thoughts, because

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so many Christians began without the four basic steps.

I found them in Acts 19 where Paul asked an amazing question. He came to Ephesus and found some disciples (that is what they were called) and he asked them this question: ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ That alone would tell us that it is possible to believe in Jesus and not receive the Holy Spirit. He discovered they had never even heard about the Holy Spirit and their faith was not in Jesus. They had been baptised according to John the Baptist’s baptism, which was good for repentance, but no more. Again, Paul said we must make up the other three things so he baptised them into Jesus – into his death and resurrection – and then he laid hands on them and prayed and they received the Holy Spirit.

There again is this pattern: when somebody lacks those four things, make them up as quickly as you can so that they are firing on all four cylinders and then they can go far and fast. So there it is. That is the New Testament and that is how they initiated people into the Christian life. That is how they got them started.

There are two reasons I am telling you all this. One is because I hope that you will convert other people and, if you do, please tell them about the four things they need. Don’t base their start on one or two of them, tell them about all four. My wife and I had a great time once in a camp of well over a thousand young people one Christmas (only because it was in the Southern hemisphere, not the North where we would have been frozen). A thousand young people would gather in a big woolshed where they used to clip the sheep and we had hay bales for them to sit on and I would preach to them every morning – a wonderful opportunity. I preached on the kingdom every day and then by the Thursday or Friday the Lord said to me: ‘You’ve told them about the kingdom but you haven’t told them how to get into it.’ I said, ‘Sorry

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Lord, we'll put that right' and so on Friday morning I said to them: 'I've told you what the kingdom is like. If you want to get into it, come back to the woolshed at four o'clock this afternoon and I'll tell you how to get in.'

Well, the afternoon was perfect – blue sky – and they all went swimming in the Pacific Ocean. I thought: that's the end of it; there'll be nobody in the woolshed. There were five great big wonderful young men who were lifeguards and they were lined along the beach while a thousand young people were swimming, and one of the lifeguards went to the next one and said, 'Would you look after my part of the beach? I want to go to David Pawson's meeting at four.'

The second lifeguard said, 'But I want to go too.' So they went to the third – he wanted to go. They went to the fourth and the fifth – they all wanted to come and they didn't know what to do. They had to look after the swimmers. So they got together in a huddle and said, 'Lord, we don't really know how to pray, but can you get us to David's meeting' – and they opened their eyes and looked out and saw sharks coming into the bay. They could see the fins in the water. So I got a thousand young people at the meeting. That is the secret to getting people to meetings – you just need sharks to chase them in.

At that meeting I said, 'I promised to tell you how to start life in the kingdom and I said, there are four things you need to know, and I'll help you with the first this afternoon, but you'll have to seek help from others for the other three because the camp ends tonight. So I majored on repentance. Now many of those young people were in street gangs in the main town in New Zealand; many of them had awful tattoos – 'H A T E' on their knuckles, and they had 'Outlaw' tattooed round their throats and I told them how to repent. The exciting thing was that long afterwards – after the camp was closed down – I got reports of what was happening to

the young people who had followed through and taken the other steps. I even bumped into one gang in the main street of the biggest city there, and in fact I remember vividly they walked right past me and one of them said, ‘You’re not speaking to us then?’ I looked round and it was the lad with the worst tattoos of them all, and they were fading from his skin. You could only just see them.

One parent came up to me and said, ‘What have you done to our son?’

I replied, ‘What do you mean, what have I done?’

‘He’s keeping his bedroom tidy!’ She was almost angry but she was certainly surprised.

Now that has been my method – to tell people about all four, spell it out, and to help them with the very first if you have only got a limited amount of time. But tell them to go on and seek the others. So I am hoping you will be used to convert other people. If you are, either take the time to help them through all four or tell them the first and get them started. The other thing is counselling them of course. The worst thing you can do, I think, is to give them the ‘sinner’s prayer’. That is a little prayer that has gone round the world – ‘Lord Jesus, I’m sorry for my sins. Will you please come into my life and help me. Amen.’ You can say it in thirty seconds. The one thing it won’t have done is helped with repentance. It won’t have got them baptised. But many Christians have started with the sinner’s prayer and we need to urge them to get all four basic steps and then they can run the race along the road, the way of salvation.

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I want to explain the very first step along the way of salvation, and I begin with an extraordinary statement in the Book of Acts where Paul, in Athens, says that in the past God overlooked such ignorance but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. A literal translation is: ‘In the past God winked at such ignorance.’ I think that just about covers everybody – *all people everywhere* are commanded to repent. Now repentance is the very beginning of the Christian life – the first step *before* believing. It is amazing how often the two words go together in the New Testament in that order: repent and believe. John the Baptist said that, Jesus himself said it, and the apostles Peter and Paul said it. You’ll find all that in the New Testament: always ‘repent and believe’.

It is amazing how many people are told that you can begin the Christian life without repentance. I call it Christianity without tears. Not only is repentance essential to begin the Christian life, it is essential to continue it, and you find yourself repenting again and again – it is a life. If you go to a Church of England service they will tell you to repent every Sunday. The trouble is they do it with a prayer called the ‘general confession’. It says those who truly repent are welcome to take communion. ‘Truly’ means really, genuinely, honestly.

Now let us begin by saying what repentance is not. It is not regret. Regret is what you feel at what you have done

to yourself and with your own life, and the older you get the more regrets you have. As you look back over your life, you regret some decisions, not realising at the time how far-reaching those decisions would be. Regret is feeling sorry over what you have done to yourself, the wrong decisions you have made. You may have ruined your health, you may have lost all your money, you may have lost your reputation, and these bring regret – you are sorry at what you have done to yourself. And some people are only sorry for their sins because they have been found out, which is hardly being sorry for the sins; it is just being sorry for the loss of reputation or the loss of whatever. Repentance is not regret.

Secondly, repentance is not remorse. Remorse is what you feel about what you have done to other people. I will never forget a tragic experience of a man I counselled who had venereal disease as the result of his life. But worse than what he felt about what he had done to get that was that he had passed it on to his lovely little daughter who was not even ten yet. But you could see the remorse on his face, that he should have passed it on to her, and that this would blight her life. That is remorse, when you have hurt someone who is innocent, an innocent partner and innocent children. But it is not repentance.

The third thing to say is that repentance is always about what you have done to God.

In the story of the prodigal son Jesus told in Luke 15, the boy came to himself and then ran home to his father and said, 'Father, I've sinned against you and against heaven.' Repentance is when you realise what you have done to heaven, what you have done to God; that it is God's law you have broken; that it is God's idea of what you have been; that it is God's love you have abused and God's anger you have provoked and God's mercy you need. All that is a Godward look.

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Repentance is not sorrow that you feel. Godly sorrow can lead to repentance, but repentance is something a little different and I want to share with you the three dimensions of repentance, together making up the whole thing. They are repentance in *thought*, repentance in *word* and repentance in *deed* and all three make up true repentance. When the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England says that all those who truly repent of their sins are welcome to the table of the Lord, this is what it means. True repentance first is in your thought, it is conviction of sin and that is the very first step, the very word for repentance – *metanoia* – is the Greek; it means ‘after thinking, after thoughts, thinking again’ about yourself. You see, most of us use wrong standards by which to measure our own character. We usually compare ourselves to other people and by standards of some other people we are pretty good. I am not a criminal, I am not a cannibal, and when I compare myself to those two groups, I feel pretty good. It is the wrong standard.

I remember having my hair cut by a man called Chris who did it regularly in Guildford in Surrey, and one day when he was cutting it he suddenly said, ‘I’m as good as anybody who goes to your church.’

I replied, ‘You don’t know them well enough to know whether you’re as good as any. I think you’d find it difficult to say that if you knew some of them better. But it wouldn’t worry me at all if you were a better person than anybody in our church.’

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘why not?’

‘Because we don’t compare ourselves with each other. We compare ourselves with Jesus. Tell me, Chris, are you as good as Jesus was?’

That produced a bit of silence and he cut round the back of my head and then said, ‘Well, perhaps not quite.’ Then he began to climb down and we had a realistic conversation.

He was using the wrong comparison. You don't compare yourself with others in the church. You compare yourself with Jesus, and that is when you begin to feel dirty. That is when you begin to feel you are unclean.

Have you ever read the old story *Tom and the Water Babies*, by Kingsley? It is all about a chimney sweep boy who used to climb up chimneys and get filthy dirty with the soot, and he lived among other chimney sweeps and since they were all black and he was all black, it didn't worry him. Then, one day, he climbs down the chimney of a big house and finds himself in a bedroom where there is a little girl called little Ellie asleep in the bed, and he walks over to the bed and he looks and it is the first child he has ever seen who is clean, and as he stands by the bed, he suddenly realises how dirty he is and it is the beginning of a change in his life – quite a story.

Once you have met Jesus and you look at him, you realise how dirty you are. That is what happened to Simon Peter. He said to Jesus: get away from me; I'm unclean, I'm dirty. It happened to a man called Isaiah, a prophet in the Old Testament. He saw the Lord one day – had a real vision of God – and God was high and lifted up, but it wasn't his height that troubled him, it was his holiness, and he said: I am a man of unclean lips. It is interesting that dirty speech was what convicted him – whether it was blasphemy or obscenity or even just dirty jokes. But he realised his lips were unclean when he got a real vision of God. And that is what begins repentance. You get a higher view of God and a lower view of yourself. And it is that comparison that begins repentance. So the higher your view of God, the lower your view of yourself. They tried to bring that on artificially in the Middle Ages by building huge cathedrals and you went in and you felt so small before the height of the cathedral, but that was all artificially produced and it did

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not produce the right reaction. But it is when you see the Lord ‘high and lifted up’, high in his holiness, in his purity, that you just feel I’m dirty.

Now most people think of sin as sexual, and it is not – though it would be wrong of me to say that it is not sexual at all. But it is one of the outworkings of sex that often brings conviction and the two big sins there in the Bible are fornication – before marriage, and adultery – after marriage. Those are two major sins but there are others too. There is cohabitation and, above all, homosexual behaviour. Once you see God’s point of view, you see why he is so disgusted by some of these things. In other words, God hates sin. And true repentance begins to share that hatred. But we make a big mistake if we think of sin as only sexual.

Let us look at some of the others. The Sermon on the Mount says that worry is a major sin. It is a libel on your heavenly Father; it is saying that he cares more about his pets and his garden than he does about his children. So why do we worry? It is saying that your heavenly Father won’t look after you, that he has lost control of your circumstances.

Or take another sin in the Bible which we don’t usually regard as sin, and that is laziness – ‘sloth’. In the Book of Proverbs, it is a major sin to be lazy. Even in the New Testament it says: if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. I once had to apply that in practice. A young man we got to know in the church was what I would call a ‘professional student’. As soon as he finished one course as a student he applied for another, and he had been doing this for nine years, living at the taxpayers’ expense, with no intention of ever working. He came to see me once about midday and we had a lounge and a dining area that were one room, an open archway between, and he sat down and kept looking through the archway where he could see our table was set for lunch. And he kept looking at that table. I could read

his mind – he wanted a free meal and I kept him talking until about half past one, I think, and he then made a remark – ‘It’s your lunch time.’

I said, ‘I’m very sorry but the Bible has forbidden me to give you a meal.’

He said, ‘Where?’

And I took him to that verse in Paul’s letter: ‘If a man will not work’ – not if he *cannot* work but if he *will not* work – ‘neither shall he eat’. I continued, ‘You have no intention of working, you’re just going to go on being a student, course after course after course.’ Well, he went away, not in a very good mood I’m afraid. Or at least I sensed that he and I were not the best of friends. Months later, the doorbell rang and when I answered it there he is standing on the doorstep and he said, ‘You can give me a meal now.’

I said, why?

He answered, ‘I’ve got a job, I’m working.’

I said, ‘Come in, come in, you can have all the food in our house.’

Now that may sound a bit harsh but you know the church is not a soft touch and shouldn’t be. We should be sensible and I just quoted that verse at him and he then took it well in the long term, and he came to himself and got a job. Hallelujah for that!

Debt is another sin in the Bible because when you are in debt you are actually stealing money. You are not just taking money out of someone’s pocket, you are withholding from them money that you owe to them and should be paid up. So debt is a sin in the Bible and it is said to be that, and it hurts God when you get into debt. Now don’t get me wrong – having a mortgage on a house is not debt, or having an account at your garage for the petrol, which you pay every month. That is not debt. It is only debt when you get behind with payment. And when someone should have

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had that money and doesn't get it from you – that is stealing.

Now I have just begun to work through a list of which there are 120 different examples in the New Testament alone, and if you just work through them you will hit so many that it will knock you for six. So, in other words, it is when you think like the Lord and you see things his way, and you see what disgusts him and what he dislikes, what he hates, that you begin to get a view of yourself that is accurate.

So we come back to what I said earlier – the better your view of God, the poorer your view of yourself; the higher your view of God, the lower you consider yourself. That applies to those who are mature saints. They have seen God so truly that they are the last to think they are good enough and it is a sign of maturity that you think and feel in a Godly way. To be ungodly is not to think his way, to think like everybody else, and in that view you have lived not a bad life, you are quite good. But when you see God's list of what is spoiling your life, that is a different thing and that of course is why Jesus came to *save!* Not from the sins you didn't realise but from all of them, and the Christian life consists in realising your sins increasingly and saying: God, I want to get rid of *that*, I want to finish with *that*.

So I come to the next dimension of repentance which is repentance in *word*. Repentance begins with rethinking, 'repent' means rethink ('pent' – pensive – you know the word). Now 'word repentance' is confession of sins and that means to name them, not just to say, 'Lord, I'm a sinner'. This is where the sinner's prayer falls down. If you say, 'Lord, I've sinned, everybody has, and I must have,' that is not repentance. Repentance is when you are prepared to say, 'Lord, I've sinned *in this, in that*,' and you list the things before God. That is confession of sin according to the Bible; indeed it is confession of *sins*, plural.

I remember counselling a young girl student in Canada

and she wanted to be filled with the Spirit and we prayed – nothing happened. I said, ‘We are going to change the prayer. I’m going to pray that God will show you what is holding you back from being filled with the Spirit. We prayed that, and when we opened our eyes she looked at me and said, ‘I know what it is.’ Like a fool I said, ‘What is it?’ And she said, ‘I’m not telling you.’

This was in a big city in Canada where the biggest shop was where she had worked as secretary to the boss. When she left me, she went straight down to that shop and went straight into the boss’s office and walked in. He looked up and said, ‘Oh, hello, fancy seeing you again. How are you getting on?’

She said, ‘Not very well. When I worked for you here, I was going home late one night after the staff had gone and I saw a bracelet on one of the counters that I liked and I took it, and it was \$10 and I didn’t pay for it.’ And she pulled out of her purse \$10, put it on the desk, and said, ‘That’s to pay for it.’ He looked terribly embarrassed, as if he was always taking things from the store as well, then said, ‘Oh you shouldn’t bother with that, it was just a bracelet.’

She said, ‘No, but that is preventing me from being filled with the Spirit.’ He did not understand that at all.

He said, ‘Oh well, forget it now.’

‘No,’ she said, ‘I must pay for it’ and she did. She went down to the basement, got into her car, started the engine and switched *herself* on and she was praising the Lord in a new language all the way back to college. Then she told me what she had been up to and you would have said: ‘That’s a little thing.’

Do you know how General Booth was converted, who founded the Salvation Army? He was converted when he confessed to the Lord that he had stolen a pencil from a boy at school years ago – and that was when he was released

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to be what God wanted him to be. A pencil! Yes, a pencil. God's bothered about a pencil. It is when you confess sins – plural. Now Protestants don't do much confession; we leave that to Roman Catholic priests – but it is a healthy thing to do and the New Testament says if we confess our sin 'he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' An amazing promise.

When did we think we could have a 'general confession'? In the Bible, there's no such thing. I think of Zacchaeus and when Jesus said, 'I want to have lunch with you today' and came into his house, Zacchaeus said: I've been fiddling the accounts; I've been charging people more than I should have. I've made a packet out of it. But he said: now I'm going to repay fourfold every person I've wronged financially. If that happened today! And Jesus said: today salvation has come to this house. That was true repentance.

So repentance in thought is *conviction* of sin; repentance in word, *confession* of sin; and thirdly, repentance in deed is the third aspect which is the *correction* of sin – putting right what has been wrong. That is where the rubber hits the road. That is why people begin to find repentance difficult, and yet that is when it becomes real.

I will give you two texts from the New Testament. One is from John the Baptist; his baptism was a baptism of repentance. It was getting clean, washing the past away. So he said: if you want me to wash you, then repent first and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. When they asked what he meant, he said: if you have got too much stuff of your own, go and give some of it away. He mentioned clothes in particular. Then he said, if you are bullying someone, stop bullying them. Now this is very down-to-earth, very practical, very real.

A friend of mine was a farmer and he had sold a cow a year previously to another farmer and he had lied about its

age, saying it was younger than it was, and really it was not worth the money he got. That young farmer went and gave the other farmer the balance between its value at its real age and at the age at which he had sold it. That is very practical.

A friend of mine went and confessed to the police a crime that he had committed and he had never been found out, and most crimes are not found out. He was hauled before the magistrates and a judge and because he had confessed it and brought it out himself, he was sentenced to the lightest sentence in jail and was only there for a few months. But while he was there he led a number of the other prisoners to the Lord and then he had to say goodbye to them. And he remembered another crime he had committed, so he went and told the police that, and he got back into the prison and could go on building up the people he had led to the Lord. He told me himself: 'David, I'm the only evangelist entirely supported by Her Majesty the Queen.' Once he got out from that, he went down to Glastonbury to the big music festival and he started converting the young people there and he took with him a forty-gallon drum and he filled it up with water and he was baptising people in Glastonbury in it. He is a great guy and is a Baptist minister in Surrey now. But that was very real. He was putting right what could be put right.

Here is the other text I wanted to share with you. One was John the Baptist who said 'Produce fruit in keeping with repentance', and he spelled it out for them – and one of the things he spelled out I have never heard preached on. He said: 'Be content with your wages.' Did you ever connect that with repentance? I can understand why that is never preached on, but it is part of God's Word.

Let me give you some illustrations of this from my own experience. There was a young man called Paul who arrived on our doorstep one day, came in and sat down, squirmed his way into our settee – and it never recovered from that;

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it still has the marks on it.

I said, 'What do you want to see me about, Paul?

He replied, 'I want to be baptised.'

I asked, 'You know how we baptise people here?'

'Yeah, you duck 'em.'

'So you want me to duck you?'

'Yeah!'

I said, 'Paul, do you know what the word repent means?'

'Nah!'

'Well, let me explain to you. I want you to go home and ask the Lord one question: Is there anything in my life you don't like? And when he tells you, cut it out, get rid of it. Then come back to me.'

He didn't come back for a week or two and then, there he was on the doorstep. I said, 'Well, Paul, what is it?'

He replied, there!

I said, 'What do you mean?'

'There! I've stopped biting my nails.'

Now you may find that amusing but I said, 'Now I can baptise you.' I didn't say 'you've produced fruits worthy of repentance' to him; he wouldn't have understood it. But he was showing in a very practical, down to earth way that he was finished with anything that Christ didn't like, and that was good enough for me.

Do you know, most people who get baptised in water don't even show that much repentance – 'stopped biting my nails'. For him, that was very real, because if you do that, your nails don't look right before God, and he made them.

I had another experience in oil city Aberdeen. I was preaching the gospel in a theatre for three nights, and at the end of the third night a young lady came up to me. She was in a bad state. She was sobbing, she was angry; there were blotches on her skin and she really looked in a bad way, and she said, 'Mr Pawson, you frustrate me.'

EXPLAINING The Key Steps to Becoming a Christian

I said, 'How do I frustrate you?'

'You've made me want to be a Christian.'

I replied, 'Well, that's why I came to Aberdeen.'

She said, 'No, you don't understand. I've tried to be a Christian for 18 months. Every evangelist who has preached in Aberdeen, I've gone forward at the end. I've been counselled; I've tried to do what they told me. Nothing has changed and I came to the point where I believe there's nothing in it.'

I said: 'And how did you come to be in the theatre tonight?'

She said, 'A friend urged me to come along and hear you. I'd stopped wanting to be a Christian, now you've raised it all again and I'm frustrated.'

I asked the Holy Spirit for a word of wisdom and he gave me one, and I looked her in the eye and asked, 'Who are you living with?'

She coloured up a bit and said, 'I'm living with a young man.'

I said, 'Are you married to him?'

'No.'

'Are you living as if you were married?'

'Yes.'

'Why aren't you married?'

'Well, he doesn't believe in marriage; he said it's just a bit of paper; as long as we love each other that's all that matters.'

So I said, 'You've never made any promises to him; and he hasn't made any to you. So if he leaves you tomorrow, he's not breaking any promise.'

'Oh, he won't leave me tomorrow, he loves me too much.'

I said, 'Well, you've got a very difficult decision to make. I said, I wish I could make it for you but I can't. You've got to decide which man you want to live with – Jesus or this young man – because he won't join in an arrangement like that.'

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She turned on me with anger and said, ‘Nobody else told me that.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘nobody else has helped you. I’m telling you what they should have told you.’

I was really just telling her what repentance means. It means giving up a wrong relationship, apart from anything else. She then turned around and ran out of that theatre and I heard her weeping all the way out, and my heart really went after her.

Immediately I thought of the rich young man who came to Jesus, and he loved him. He said: all that you need is to get rid of your money and come and follow me. The young man loved his money too much, and when faced with the choice, he chose his money.

I have been back to Aberdeen, and I have hoped to meet her again, but I never have and I have never forgotten her; and I knew just how Jesus felt when the rich young man went away, loving his money. I was telling her what repentance meant but that was what she was not willing to do. So you get success with some and failure with others.

I was asked to preach in Canberra – the capital city of Australia – and I had no luggage with me so all my best clothes were in a suitcase in the airport somewhere and I had to go in gardening clothes, roughly, to speak to both houses of parliament there. That was embarrassing for a start. Anyway, I talked about repentance and as the Members of Parliament left, one of them whispered in my ear. He said, ‘I’m going home to rewrite my Income Tax Return.’ Now he wasn’t weeping but there was repentance there.

This is what repentance means. It is being very practical – putting right what can be put right.

Now some things can’t be. There was a woman in France who felt convicted of the sin of gossip. She was the village gossip and she was always talking about other people in the

wrong way – ‘bearing false witness’, as the Bible would put it. She went to the priest, to Confession, and the priest said, ‘You’ll have to do penance.’ This is how the priests behave usually.

She said, ‘I’ll do anything; what do I have to do?’

He said, ‘Go home and pluck the feathers of two chickens and put them in a bag and come back to me.’

She did this and came back and he said, ‘Now you must do more penance. You must walk down the village street and scatter the feathers from the bag’ – which she did.

And she came back and she said, ‘Now can I be forgiven?’

The priest said, ‘No, there’s one more thing.’

‘What’s that?’

He replied, ‘Go and pick up all the feathers.’

‘I can’t do that, they’ve blown all over the place.’

He said, ‘No – and that’s what your gossip has done in this village. You’ve said things you can’t stop and they’ve scattered around in people’s minds. Now we’ll deal with it.’ He was a good priest to say that, gossip being a sin.

It was a schoolboy who said that repentance is ‘being sorry enough to stop’. Stopping to do a thing is part of repentance, and that is why I cringe when I hear people reciting the general confession in church. I want to get up and shout, what are you confessing? What are you thinking of? Most of them, I don’t believe, are thinking of any particular sin, therefore they can’t be truly repenting. But if you are truly repenting, you stop doing it. The Lord will give you grace to do that if you mean business. If people who say the general confession every Sunday morning in church just cut out one sin every week, they would be cutting out 52 sins a year. Imagine what that would do to their character and their behaviour. But when you just make a general confession, it is saying: sign a blank cheque, and everything you have done wrong this week will be wiped out. It doesn’t work that way.

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I remember preaching in Milton Keynes, and in the middle of my sermon a young man got up and left. Well, I don't blame him for that. I don't like listening to myself – on tape, anyway. But he came back in twenty minutes later, carrying a pile of records, and then in front of the congregation he said, 'Can I have a word? I was convicted of the sin of listening to heavy metal music and this is my collection of heavy metal music.' In front of us he broke each record! That was some event in that congregation's life. But you can imagine the effect it had.

Another pastor put a rubbish skip in the front of his congregation and said, 'Next Sunday bring all your rubbish and your sinful stuff and put it in here, and we'll get rid of it.' The next Sunday he was amazed at how many books, records, all sorts of things they brought, and threw them into the skip and off they went. This is repentance. It is paying off your debts, it is apologising to people, it is restoring stolen goods, it is confessing crimes that have never been found out.

I remember a young man filling in an employment form and question number 5 was: 'Have you ever been in prison?' –and he wrote, 'No'. Next question, number 6 said: 'Why?' So he thought a bit and he wrote: 'Never been found out'. Well, have we made the point? Repentance starts in your thinking – it is to do a rethink, to have second thoughts about how good God is and how bad you have been, and the contrast between the two. It then turns into repentance in word as you confess it and name the sin before him. If you don't name a sin, it's not going to be dealt with. You'll just go back into it the next week.

I remember seeing a row of expensive cars outside a little Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines – a good many miles outside the main city. I couldn't believe all those posh cars outside this little country church, and I asked my driver what they were all doing there. Is there revival in

the church and something big happening? ‘No,’ he said, ‘you’ll see them all there every Saturday night.’ I asked why. He replied: ‘There’s an old priest in there and all he tells them for adultery is to say the Hail Mary a few times, so they come out here every Saturday to get the adultery of the week cleaned up, then they go back to it and they will be back here next Saturday to get forgiveness cheaply.’

I thought: that has nothing to do with the New Testament. That is not repenting. Even if you tell them to say Hail Mary ten times, that is not the way to deal with it.

So how do you actually help someone to repent when you have got the chance – when you are leading someone to Christ, getting them started? There are just three things they need help with.

First, they need help to be serious, and true repentance will always have fear of the Lord in it somewhere. To learn to be afraid of God is the beginning of wisdom. That may sound contradictory to you, but when you are afraid of God you have begun to be wise. So how do you do this? Well, you tell them about God’s anger. He is angry about sin. He hates it; he is angry with it. And sooner or later, *everybody* is responsible and accountable to that God for the way they have lived. There will come a day for everyone when we stand before God and give him an account of how we have lived and it is that healthy fear of the Lord that goes a long way to putting us right. We are not playing games with God. We are serious with him, we mean business with him and he means business with us.

The second thing you need to help them with is to be specific and you can do that in a number of ways – a guided conversation. If I am leading someone to the Lord I ask them these questions: I say, ‘Do you want to accept Jesus as your Saviour?’ ‘Oh yes.’ ‘Do you want him to save you from all your sins?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘What sins do you want him

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to save you from?’ And it is funny, that question is when repentance begins: what sins do you want him to save you from? The usual reply is: ‘All of them.’ Then I have to say, ‘You haven’t committed all of them. You have only committed some, so be specific; what sins do you want to be saved from?’ Or, in the case of that girl in Aberdeen, I got a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge from him when I asked: who are you living with? Or you could simply ask, ‘What’s your besetting sin?’ Most people know what they have most difficulty with.

The third thing you need to help them with is to be sensible. Our emotions are very misleading. You can *feel* guilty for the wrong thing – not what you are really guilty of but what you *feel* guilty about. So help people to be sensible – not to let their emotions carry them away, and above all, to be sensible about what they try to put right. Nobody can put right all that they have done wrong. People need help to know what they can do to put right a situation, and that means discussing with them some real difficulties. Some of the most difficult discussions I have had with people are over the matter of divorce and remarriage, which is why I have had to write a book about that, because God does not recognise divorce and any divorced person is still married in God’s sight and therefore, as Jesus said quite specifically, to remarry after divorce is to commit adultery – the sin of married people. You are still married to your first partner. But people need advice to help put things right, and they must not let their emotions govern it.

Repentance will go on for the rest of your life and for the whole of life, as long as you are alive. There is an increasing discernment of sin as you grow older and mature as a saint. You become more sensitive to things that God does not like in your life and you want them dealt with.

What is the importance of repentance? In summary,

the answer is: repentance makes forgiveness possible, and without repentance, there is no forgiveness. That is on God's side, but it applies also to forgiveness between each other. Jesus said that you must forgive your brother seventy-seven times. He also said, 'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him' (Luke 17:3). Did you ever notice that? You can't forgive someone if they don't repent, but if they do, you ought to. So all this talk about after somebody's blown up a bomb or something, of people saying, 'I forgive them...'. You can't if they don't repent. What you can do is say 'there is no bitterness or resentment in my heart, and if they do repent then I can forgive them'. It is repentance that makes forgiveness possible and I just finish by mentioning two verses which tell you this. One is from the end of Luke's Gospel, where Jesus himself says repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And Paul said when he was describing his ministry: so I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven, first to those in Damascus then to those in Jerusalem then all Judea and to the Gentiles also I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is an interesting little phrase. That is what Paul's ministry was; he preached repentance to the Gentiles that they should turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is all I am going to say about repentance.

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Now we turn to the second step on the way of salvation which is to *believe*. And from one point of view this is the most important step of all. It lies behind all the others. Faith is the key to every step you take in the Christian life and so it is essential that we should look into it. Now altogether there are five elements in faith. It is a recipe with five ingredients and it may sound a bit complicated but it is not *saving faith* until it has all five elements in it.

The first element in faith is *historical*. Faith is not based on feelings. It is based on facts, things that actually happened in history 2000 years ago and for which there is historical evidence. Of course, no-one was present. Every jury in every court has to build up a case on two things. First, eyewitness testimony and second, circumstantial evidence. I am just supposing now; but supposing a man is on trial for the murder of his wife. They must build up a case for that murder without having seen it happen, without having been present and without knowing the husband. How do they build it up? Well, first if they can find eyewitness testimony, that is the best evidence in a murder case. If someone can get into the witness box and say 'I saw him stick a knife into his wife's back and then throw her body off the cliff', that is the best evidence of all. But there may also be eyewitness testimony to the fact that somebody saw him walking with his wife towards the cliff edge and somebody else saw him walking

back by himself. That would be eyewitness testimony.

But what would be circumstantial evidence? The answer is, it is discovered that he not only had a wife but had a mistress, and it has also been discovered that he had planned to go away with her, that he had bought two tickets for the airline and not for his wife but for himself and the mistress, and then it was discovered that he had embezzled money from the firm where he worked. All this builds up a picture until the jury is able to decide beyond all possible doubt that he murdered his wife.

Now for an event like the resurrection of Jesus we have both eyewitness testimony and circumstantial evidence, such that one leading lawyer in England said that if anybody would examine the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, any jury in the world would come to a unanimous decision that it happened. But why don't people examine the evidence? They won't. They are scared to, in case it might be true, and if Jesus did rise from the dead, then life has got to change. It is no wonder that people don't want to know about the evidence. But for every part of our faith there is historical evidence; even though we were not there to see it happen we have got eyewitness testimony and circumstantial evidence.

Now our faith is based on facts. It is not shaky; it is not based on feelings though there may be feelings. But it is based on hard evidence. There is a historical element to faith. These things happened once, never again. And the first element in our faith is to believe that they happened and in particular three facts – the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians it says those are the three basic historical elements in our faith – that Jesus was crucified, that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead. All three are evidenced in the normal way any historical event is evidenced.

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So our faith stands very firm because nobody can undo those facts. Nobody can put Jesus back in the tomb. He is out! He is free! Nobody can put Jesus back on the cross. He has been crucified for us – that is a fact! And nobody can bury him again. Incidentally, the burial of Jesus is as important to our faith as his death and resurrection. It is vital that he was buried. I have conducted many funerals and I have noticed this: the burial is the final goodbye. It is strange, but when I go to visit a widow whose husband has died, she talks about him as if he is still around. She says, ‘Would you like to see him?’ I wouldn’t actually – but she would like me to, so I do, and we go into the front room and there he is laid out on a bed and she strokes his forehead, his hair and puts the pillow nicely under his head. She says ‘you can see him’ because he *is* in the front room. Now when the burial has taken place, her language changes totally and she says, he *was* a good husband to me. He *was* a good man. Now what has changed her present tense talking about him to her past tense? The answer is: the burial. The burial is putting a person out of sight and you know from that moment you will never see them again or touch them again. And that happened to Jesus – he was buried. Do you believe that? Because it is part of our faith – not just that he died, but that he was buried and then that he rose again. So this is the beginning of faith: to accept the truth of this story, to believe that it actually happened, and happened for you. That is the historical element of faith.

The second element of faith is the personal element. I have said this to groups of people: ‘Now let me ask you a question: how many of you believe that I exist? Could I see a show of hands?’ Then I ask: how many of you believe *in* me? They are a little slower in that one. I went to Hanover in Germany, to a very posh modern church and a big congregation, and I said, ‘How many of you believe *in*

me?’ About five put their hands up. I said, ‘How many of you believe that I exist?’ All the hands went up. But only about five had put their hands up to say they believed *in* me. That is the difference. Personal faith believes *in* Jesus. It doesn’t just believe that he died, that he was buried and that he rose again (though it does believe that), it is to believe *in him*. Now there was a lady sitting in the front row, quite well dressed and she looked bright and intelligent so I thought I could tease her and I said to her: now you put your hand up and said you believed in me. I said, I don’t know if you believe in me. I said, if you gave me your money to look after I would know you believed in me. Then the whole place froze, went very quiet. The pastor told me afterwards that she was the richest lady in Hanover and that her husband owned most of the property in the middle of the city, and he died and left it to her. I had the feeling she had paid for this new church and there I had said to her ‘give me your money to look after... I’ll know you believe in me.’ So it was pretty true.

But that is the difference – believing *that* Jesus died and rose again is one thing; to believe *in* him is quite another. That is personal and that involves trusting and obeying him. If you believe in someone, you will trust them and you will do what they ask you. We do that every day. Whenever I get in someone’s car, I am putting my trust in them and yes, it involves obedience as well. There are just two people in the whole world whose car I will not get into, who are dreadful drivers, and I just don’t trust them and I will not get into a car with them. But every day you are getting on a bus, you are trusting the driver. You go on a plane and you are trusting the pilot. We are putting our trust in people every day. Put your money in the bank and you are trusting they will give it back to you, though people’s trust in bankers is not quite what it was. But nevertheless, every day you are

trusting people, you are believing *in* them, simply because they appear to be qualified and know their job and so you put your life in their hands.

I have never jumped with a parachute, but if I did I would be trusting a whole lot of people. I would be trusting the man who packed the parachute. Which reminds me of a funny story but I am not sure that I should tell it – the parable of the pessimistic paratrooper. He was told: your parachute will open automatically, just jump out of the plane, you will float down and a lorry will be in the field to pick you up and bring you back to the camp. But he said, ‘What if I catch the tailplane as I jump out?’

‘You won’t, you will be in the slipstream so quickly you’ll never notice’.

He said, ‘But what if the parachute doesn’t open?’

‘It’ll open automatically; you don’t have to do anything. If it doesn’t open, then pull the ring on your chest and it will open.’

Well, the moment came and he jumped out of the plane and thought: I’m sure I’ll hit the tailplane. But he didn’t. Then he thought: I’m sure the parachute won’t open – and it didn’t. So he pulled the ring and still it didn’t open, and as he was hurtling to the ground someone heard him say, ‘And I’ll bet the lorry’s not there either’. He wouldn’t trust anybody and therefore the whole thing failed.

Confucius is dead; Mohammed is dead; Buddha is dead – but Jesus is alive! And therefore I can believe *in* Jesus. I can’t believe in the others – they have all gone – but I can believe in him. I was preaching in Cambridgeshire and at the end of the talk, a lady came to see me. She was an attractive Jewess, about twenty-five, and she said, ‘Mr Pawson, are you trying to tell me that Jesus of Nazareth is still alive?’

‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘that’s why I’m here; I know he’s alive.’

She said, ‘But if he is, he must be *our* Messiah.’ I like

that word ‘our’. She continued, ‘How can I find out if he’s alive now?’

I said, ‘Come with me’, and I took her to a little room at the back of the church, sat her in a comfortable chair and said, ‘I’m going to leave you for fifteen minutes and I’ll come back, and in the meanwhile I want you to talk to Jesus. Talk to him aloud because if he is alive today he can hear you. Tell him about yourself, tell him about your Jewish upbringing, tell him all your worst fears, but just chat with him – talk to him.

‘Is that all?’

I said ‘Yes – that’s how you find out if someone’s alive.’

So I left her and I went back fifteen minutes later and she jumped out of the chair and she said, ‘He’s alive! He’s alive!’ And suddenly she was teaching me the Bible. She knew the Bible. It was in her blood, but she hadn’t got the key to unlock it all. She didn’t realise that Jesus is alive today. And that was all that happened. In fact, to convert a Jew all you need do is persuade them that Jesus is alive. That is all they need. That is all that Saul of Tarsus needed on the Damascus road. He said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’ That, for Paul, was it. From that moment he was a believer.

So that is the difference. You can know Jesus as friend, as brother, as someone you can talk to, someone you can share your life with – amazing! That is how you find out if he is alive – and you very quickly do.

We have looked at the historical side of faith based on facts, we have looked at the personal side of faith where you believe *in* Jesus. The two words go together. The third is verbal – the historical, the personal and the verbal. Just as repentance needs to be put into words, so faith needs to be put into words – spoken – in two ways. First, the way I have already mentioned, talking *to* Jesus. That is putting

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your faith into words, especially if you talk to him aloud, because then you are treating him as a real person. So there are two parts to confessing Jesus with the lips: one is to talk to *him* about yourself and the other is to talk to *others* about him. In those two ways you cement your faith; you make it firm; you make it strong. Every time you talk to someone else about Jesus your faith is strengthened, and every time you talk to him about others your faith is strengthened. Talking strengthens, and that is why the Bible says that if you believe in your heart *and* confess with your mouth, you will be saved. So there is a confession of the mouth and in fact Jesus once said this: if you deny me before men, I'll deny you before my Father. If you are ashamed or embarrassed to acknowledge me in front of people, I will be ashamed of you. That is a pretty strong thing to say.

As I have mentioned previously, I would never use the 'sinner's prayer'. I have found it is much more helpful and interesting and informative to say to somebody: *you* pray; make up your own prayer – you talk to him. Then listen very carefully, and you will learn a whole lot more about their faith and where they are at. Sometimes there are lovely prayers – the first prayer that somebody has prayed, maybe. But it is their own: their own words, their own thoughts, their own feelings. Don't put words in their mouth – they are your words, not their own, and it is very important when their faith becomes verbal that it becomes their own words.

I think of a friend of mine who was asked one day, 'How do you know that Jesus is alive?' Like lightning he replied, 'Well, I was talking to him only this morning.' I thought that is about the best answer you could give. It was his own, genuine – his own words. So get people to use their own prayer – don't say 'Say this after me...' because if you do that, you are producing no more than a budgerigar. I am sorry to say that, but I mean it. There is a lady in a South Wales home

for the elderly who has a budgie who sings hymns, and when people go into the lounge of that old people's home, they hear a piping little voice singing, 'What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear' and they look, and here's a budgie singing the hymn – because the budgie has heard the old lady sing it so often that it knows it by heart. I tell you there are an awful lot of budgies in church – people who know the hymns so well they can sing them by heart. But a budgie is not a believer. A believer is someone who – in their own words – talks to Jesus and knows that he hears. That's the third dimension of faith – *historical*, based on facts; *personal*, trusting and obeying them – because if you trust someone, you'll do what they tell you; thirdly, *verbal*. (Did you know that faith was so complicated?)

The fourth dimension is the practical dimension, because when you really believe, then you do something about it. Just as repentance is something that you do, faith is something that you *do*. It is not just accepting the truth of the gospel; it is *acting on* the truth of the gospel. It is doing something about it. If you really believe in Jesus then life becomes different; you do things differently.

Now here I want to mention a big controversy that has arisen between Paul and James. They *seem* to contradict each other. Paul says we are justified by faith *not by works*, whereas James says you can see that we are not justified by faith only, but also by works. At first sight, that seems a direct contradiction. James actually goes on to say that if your faith doesn't have works then it won't save, it is useless, helpless. What is the answer to this apparent dilemma? The answer is they are both using 'works' in a different sense and they don't conflict at all. When Paul talks about 'works' he thinks about good deeds and we are certainly not saved by good deeds, so that kind of 'works' is out. But when James talks about 'works', he is talking about actions of

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faith and that is a very different thing. An action of faith is to show someone you believe in them, that you trust them. And James gives us two amazing examples – one of a bad woman and the other of a good man – both of whom did something about what they believed. Let us look at what they did. Take Rahab first. She was a prostitute; she lived in a brothel in Jericho, a house right on the wall, and she saw the Jews camped on the other side of the Jordan ready to come in and take Jericho. She had heard how they got out of Egypt and how God had divided the water of the Red Sea so that they could walk across dry, and she believed that God would part the Jordan as well so they could cross on dry land and invade the Promised Land. She really believed that, so that when two spies came in from the Israelites to spy out the land of Jericho she hid them from the authorities and she got them to leave the city by another way. So they literally owed their lives to her. She was acting on her belief that God was with them and therefore her faith was practical and she became one of the ancestors of Jesus – she is in his family tree in Matthew 1. Fancy finding a prostitute there! But she is there because she believed. She acted on her faith.

Similarly, Abraham was a much better man than she was, as humans judge; but Abraham was told by God: I want you to take your son and sacrifice him to me in the place where I show you. There was wood for the fire and a knife to kill the victim. Isaac was puzzled and Abraham had to break the news to his son who was his hope for the future. God had promised many descendants. (He did have another son by the maid but that was at his wife's suggestion. Isaac was his only son by Sarah, and by this time he was ninety and his wife was pretty old too.) Because God had told Abraham that he wanted him to do this, Abraham was prepared to do it. Together they climbed Mount Moriah. I had a little sculpture made for me by a Jew in Jerusalem – it

has Abraham offering Isaac on the altar and then an angel up in the sky saying, ‘Stop! Don’t do it! That was a test of your obedience.’ When Abraham stopped and didn’t kill Isaac, God said the most amazing three words – I still can’t get over it: *Now I know* – that you fear me; which means, quite simply, that God didn’t know until then. It was making God sure of Abraham and not just Abraham sure of God. Amazing! That Abraham’s faith would be obedient as to cut off his only hope for the future – but he was prepared to do it because he was obedient. He trusted God and it is the most amazing example of faith in the Old Testament, I think.

So that is very practical. Justification is by faith alone but faith is never alone. If you *really* believe in someone, you will show it in action and that is really how James ought to be translated. Faith without *action* is dead! It cannot save. If faith never does anything to show that you trust the Lord, it is not saving faith. The only faith in the New Testament is the faith which *acts*. The letter to the Hebrews has a wonderful chapter in it – chapter 11 – of all the Old Testament heroes of faith and it says Abel offered a sacrifice pleasing to God. Enoch went for a long walk with God, such a long walk that God said: you’d better come and spend the night with me. You can’t get home now. Noah built a big boat – an ark. Abraham left home and lived in a tent. Isaac blessed his son and Jacob blessed his sons. Joseph made arrangements for his own funeral. Moses’ parents hid him from Pharaoh. Moses identified with slaves and fled Egypt and killed a Passover lamb. The people crossed the Red Sea and then marched round Jericho until the walls fell. Rahab – there she is again – hid the spies.

Now, what is it with all these people, do you notice? They *did* something, and it says about every one of them, ‘by faith’. It was *by faith* Noah built the ark, *by faith* Moses did this, that and the other – *by faith*. It goes on. The whole

chapter is of heroes of faith and all it does is say what they did, and everything they did showed God that they believed in him, that they trusted him, that they obeyed him. That is all that God looks for. He is only needing people who believe in him. Halfway through that chapter there is a most amazing verse and it says this: 'All these were still living by faith when they died.' None of them lived to see what God had promised. They all died still believing in what they could not see. Isn't that amazing? If you want to know why God regarded them as heroes, that is the reason. Their whole life they believed in something that they never lived to see. That is faith! And of course, in a very real sense, all of us believe in heaven but we shan't see it before we die. You have got to believe in heaven until the last minute you breathe, and then you are in this line of heroes. So much, then, for the great heroes of faith.

Now on the whole, you and I don't need faith to live. We live in such a comfortable, well provided society – we have doctors, dentists, supermarkets. In a former day, when life was more precarious and not surrounded by safety all the time, you needed faith just to survive – maybe for the next meal. We don't; we just need to go to the supermarket and stock up with food. We can go to a doctor and get examined; go to a dentist and get our teeth fixed; go to a lawyer and just about get everything else fixed. That is one reason why our faith is weak and small. We don't need it, not unless there is a big crisis or some catastrophe happens, then we try to have faith. But if you are not living by faith all the time, it won't be very strong when you need it.

There is one other vital ingredient, namely the *continual* aspect of faith. Faith is not saving unless it *goes on believing*. That is such an important part of saving faith. I read a book by a well-known preacher in London which said that if you believe for two minutes during your life, you will finish up

in heaven. All you need is two minutes' faith. I don't know whether to say 'rubbish' or 'blasphemy'. Faith in the New Testament is continual faith. It is *faithfulness*. Indeed, in the Greek language and the Hebrew of the Old Testament, 'faith' and 'faithfulness' are the same word, and it is the same thing. Faith needs to be faithful if it is to be saving. Believing today and not believing tomorrow is no good. It won't help you. It needs to be continual, so much so that in the Greek language there are two kinds of tense of verb – there is what is called the aorist tense and when that is used it means once only. There is also the present continuous tense which means to go on doing something. Now in English, we have a rather more subtle way of distinguishing between a thing that you do once and a thing that you go on doing. We end a verb with 's' if it is continuous and with 'd' if it is one-off. Have you ever noticed that? Supposing you witness an accident and someone is knocked down on the road by a vehicle. People rush to help and someone says, 'he breathed', with a 'd' on the end. He means he breathed once. But if someone says, 'he breathes', with an 's' on the end, it means he is going on breathing. We usually say 'he *is* breathing' for that. That is the equivalent of the Greek present continuous tense.

Now unfortunately, since most are not familiar with Greek and we don't notice whether it is a 'd' or an 's' at the end, we don't get the message. Take John 3:16. Every Christian knows that verse, yet, did you ever notice that the word 'believe' has an 's' at the end and not a 'd'? It is not, 'whoever believed in Jesus has eternal life', but 'whoever believes' in Jesus. That is terribly important because the verbs of John 3:16 are divided up between one-off verbs – that something happens only once – and present continuous verbs which means to go on doing it. Let me translate that verse for you properly and it will be a shock. 'For God so

loved [one-off, means he loved *once*] when he gave *once* his only begotten son that whoever believes (goes on believing) – will never perish (once) but go on having eternal life.’ Now has that changed the verse for you? It must have done surely. It is a promise to those who *go on believing* and it is a promise that they will *go on having* life. Now I used to think that eternal life was a package that was given to you once only and you had it then for the rest of your existence. No! You only have eternal life as you go on believing. He is the True Vine. If you *go on abiding in him*, you will *go on having life*. Branches don’t have life in themselves and I am just a branch. He is the vine and as long as I stay in him, he said it: abide in Me, *reside in me*, stay in me. And you will go on having life from him. The vine has life, not the branches, and he went on to say that if a branch does not produce fruit, he will cut it off and it will wither and die and be thrown into the fire. Nothing could be clearer than that.

So we need this continual faith. We need to be able to say with Paul: the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God. It is a *life of faith* that saves you; it is not the faith you start with, it is the faith you finish with that saves you.

Let us finish this chapter by looking at one verse in the Old Testament. Habakkuk is one of my favourite prophets because he dared to argue with God and had a huge argument with God one day. He said: God, look at the state of Jerusalem. It is your city and it is full of crime and vice and sin. What are you doing about it? You are doing nothing; you are just letting it go on. And God said: Habakkuk, I am doing something about it. What are you doing? I am bringing the Babylonians. What? You can’t do that! That’s too much. They kill everybody; they even kill all the trees and the bushes and the animals. They don’t leave anything alive – we’ll all die, and even your faithful people in the city will die. God said: no they won’t – ‘The righteous will

survive by keeping faith.’ Or in the translation that you may be more used to – ‘the just shall live by faith.’ That became the ‘magna carta’ of the Reformation – Luther’s favourite verse. It is quoted three times in the New Testament. Every time, it is quoted to show that faith is continual if it is going to save. It is quoted at the beginning of Romans where Paul says that we are saved by faith. It is from faith to faith, even as it is written ‘the just shall live by faith’. From faith to faith, or as one translation puts it – ‘faith from beginning to end’. Then it is quoted in Hebrews – ‘we are not among those who shrink back into perdition. We are among those who keep it up for the just shall live by faith.’ The word ‘faith’ there is being used in the sense of faithfulness. So that is my last word on faith. The just shall live by faith, meaning the righteous will survive whatever happens by keeping faith.

BE BAPTISED IN WATER

We seem to be the only planet that has any water and in fact, from one point of view above the Pacific Ocean, if you look at our planet it is all water. That is why there is life here. Water means life – particularly in the Middle East, in the Bible area, there is precious little clean fresh water. But it has become part of Christian initiation to be plunged into water and then lifted out again. We call it baptism and I want to move to that now. Without water life is impossible and sometimes with water life is impossible. Water is associated with life and death, and baptism is associated with life and death. There is likely to be a shortage of clean water in the world in the next few centuries.

Water played a vital role in the Bible – in life and in death. One thinks of Noah and the water that destroyed an entire generation. But he and seven of his family were saved through water, and that becomes in the New Testament a picture for baptism. Then there was Moses who brought them through the Red Sea as later they would travel through the Jordan. Salvation had a lot of water in it for those situations. Then there was Jonah who was flung into the ocean and incidentally drowned and died. If you read the book of Jonah carefully, in chapter 2 he is praying from the dead, and he has gone right down to the bottom of the ocean where he says his hair got caught in the seaweed, and he lay there until picked up by a whale or big fish. So water

plays a lot of part in the Bible story, one way and the other.

But it also plays a part in the life of every Christian – or should. It begins with a death and a life, a plunging into water which would mean death if we left people there, and then being brought up out of water as well.

Let us begin by thinking about the word ‘baptise’. It is not an English word, it is a Greek word – *baptizein* is how it is rendered by the Greeks, and it means one thing and one only. It means to immerse an object in a liquid. Funnily enough, the British and Foreign Bible Society is forbidden to translate that word into English and so it is always transliterated (which means spelled out in English letters) but never spelled out in English meaning. It is a nickname and it was given to John, Jesus’ cousin, because he plunged people into the Jordan and so they called him ‘John the Plunger’ – that is what the word ‘baptist’ means. John the Dipper, John the Sinker, John the Soaker. That is what the word ‘baptise’ means – to put a solid in a liquid.

For example, it is used in Greek language for dyeing wool and you get a dye in a big bucket or something and you get the wool and you dip it right in and you make sure every bit of it goes in so that the wool is dyed. They also use the word ‘baptise’ of ships and in a Greek newspaper it may be announced that a ship has been baptised. Now we think therefore it has been launched and somebody has smashed a bottle of wine over it – and ‘God bless all who sail in her’. That is not a baptism of a ship – the Greeks know perfectly well – it is only when it sinks to the bottom of the ocean that it is ‘baptised’. Therefore only when a ship is sunk is it ‘baptised’ in Greek.

Now I hope I am conveying to you the meaning of this word. It literally means to go *under* the liquid, to be plunged into it, to be soaked in it, to be dipped in it. So they gave John, Jesus’ cousin, the nickname ‘the baptiser’. What many

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people don't realise and don't know is that Jesus is called a baptist – not with a capital 'b' but with a small 'b'. He is also a baptist like his cousin; the only difference is that John baptised in water whereas Jesus baptises in the Holy Spirit, but they are both baptists or they are both dippers or they are both sinkers or they are both 'baptisers' because it is usually a verb and not a noun.

That became the way of initiation for every Christian on earth. Baptism is the third step on the way of salvation and it is a vital third step. It is part of being saved; in fact Jesus said it. He said, he who believes *and is baptised* will be saved. And Peter certainly said it. He said baptism now saves you. Why then have we got to the position where we think baptism isn't essential for salvation? It is probably because we think in terms of a vertical line instead of a horizontal line; we think of salvation as a boundary to cross rather than a journey to make – the *way* of salvation. The first four steps on that way are the steps that I am describing – repent, believe, be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit. They are all four essential steps on the way of salvation and yet many Christians don't even connect baptism with salvation. It is also because, I think, for many it has become a symbol rather than an event in which things happen, an event in which God does something.

Why do you think Jesus told us to be baptised if it wasn't for our good and for our help and for our salvation? I don't think Jesus for one moment thought: What can I do to test my disciples' devotion to me? I know, I wonder if they're willing to be soaking wet in front of other people. Do you think Jesus is like that, and would have thought up a humiliating experience to test his followers? No! Most Baptists that I meet think of it as a symbol of something that *has* happened or that hopefully is going to happen, but not an event in which something happens itself. And that is so

contrary to the New Testament, which doesn't regard baptism as a symbol or a dramatic presentation of something but as an event in which God does something for the person; and therefore part of the saving process, part of getting us ready for heaven. So I am going to treat it here as an event, not a symbol, not a kind of dramatic presentation of the gospel, or worse still, not as a personal testimony – for that again is how many Baptists talk about it, as if you are making a witness to people. But a baptism is equally valid if nobody is present at all except the baptiser and the baptised.

Think of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 – there was nobody present but Phillip took him down into the water, baptised him, and then Phillip was caught up in the Spirit and taken away and he saw him no more. But the baptism was valid because what makes it valid is that the Lord is present in it and it is what *he* does that is the important thing. So if there is one thing I want to say to you that you must remember it is that baptism is *not* a symbol; it is an event. And it is not important because of what it dramatises or enacts which could be something that has happened before or will happen later, but it is what happens at the time.

Why are we baptised? That is the crucial question and the answer is twofold. One, dirty people need a bath. Two, dead people need a burial. When you are plunged into the water, that combines a bath and a burial. It is a bath and it is a burial and it achieves both – an amazing act of God takes place in baptism.

Let us take the first. The main use of water apart from drinking is for washing and cleansing. Most of the water we use in our homes is for cleansing, for washing, for bathing, for washing up the dishes – for making dirty things clean. Now baptism is to wash dirt away. It is to wash sins away, and when Saul of Tarsus came to faith in Jesus on the Damascus road, he was asked a few days later, 'What are you

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waiting for? Rise and have your sins washed away.’ Now it is amazing but many Christians just can’t seem to get hold of that. Baptism is God’s way of washing your sins away, of giving you a clean start in the Christian life, and we need that because we have lived dirty lives, we have lived sinful lives, and therefore we need cleaning up and this is God’s gracious way of giving us a clean start.

I remember when I baptised Cliff Richard. He writes about it in his autobiography: ‘David Pawson washed me, rinsed me and hung me up to dry – and I never felt so clean in all my life.’ A simple testimony, but that is what it is supposed to do. It is supposed to help you to feel clean, because as the water washes your body, God washes everything off your conscience and Peter says in his letter: ‘baptism now saves you, not by washing dirt from your body but by an appeal to God for a clean conscience.’

I can remember a man called Roger. He was a very skilful consultant engineer travelling all over Britain advising people on engineering. He had had an accident with a lathe and a piece of steel had gone into his left eye and robbed him of sight, and you can imagine what that meant for a highly skilled engineer. But with one eye he was as skilful an engineer in the most careful engineering. Then the right eye began to go because he was overusing it and Roger, who was now a believer, went to his optician and told him that Jesus was going to heal his eye, and he not only healed the right eye, he gave him sight in the left eye again after years without. The optician said it was a miracle; and Roger said, telephone my pastor and tell him it’s a miracle – which he did. The optician was not a believer.

But what I wanted to tell you was that Roger, before his conversion, had misbehaved. Every town and city in England that he went to as a consultant engineer, he was

unfaithful to his wife and found a woman to take to bed with him. When he became a Christian, he couldn't cope with the memory of this and he came to see me. 'David,' he said, 'I know the Lord has forgiven me but I can't face my wife over breakfast. I can't look her in the eye when I think of how I betrayed her everywhere I went. I've told her and she's forgiven me but I still can't bear to look into her face when I think of how I've betrayed her.'

I said, 'You know what you need Roger, don't you?'

'No, what?'

I replied, 'You need to be baptised.' I showed him in 1 Peter where it says that it is not washing your body that saves you, it is cleansing the conscience; and when you plunge the body into water, God cleanses the conscience. I baptised him and his wife the next Sunday. I will never forget it. His wife went into the water first and she came out and was standing there with a towel round her, and as Roger went into the water, he said, 'Lord Jesus, cleanse my conscience,' and he went down into the water, came up out of the water and ran to his wife and held her and looked into her eyes without any embarrassment or shame. The Lord cleansed his conscience of everything, and thereafter he could talk about his betrayal without any embarrassment, almost as if he was talking about someone else. That is what it did for him – it cleansed his conscience – clean. That is what it is meant to do – it is a bath to cleanse dirty people. Yes, your sins are washed away in heaven by the blood of Jesus but on earth they are still on your conscience and baptism is God's way of giving you a bath in your conscience.

You see there are two sorts of dirt – there is clean dirt and dirty dirt. Clean dirt is what you get on your body and you can wash it off, you can cleanse your body. Dirty dirt is what happens in your heart; that takes a bit of removal but baptism removes it.

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I have had some amazing experiences with baptism and I will mention just two. Once, when we emptied the baptistry pool in the church we found a pipe and a tobacco pouch sodden in the bottom of the water. That was somebody washing away something out of his life. One of the most dramatic was conducted by a friend of mine in a swimming pool in a private garden in Basingstoke where we live now. There was a Hell's Angel and he was into drugs, motorbikes, everything, and as a Hell's Angel he had the devil tattooed on his chest among other tattoos. When he became a Christian, he wanted to be baptised but he noticed that when you went into the water, your shirt became transparent. He thought: I can't be baptised and let people see the devil on my body so he went to our local hospital in Basingstoke and spoke to a plastic surgeon and asked: can you get this off?

The surgeon said: 'There are two ways I could get it off. One is by burning it off, but it leaves a scar. The other is by grafting a patch of new skin from your thigh to your chest and that way we can remove the tattoo and graft a piece of skin. But you can't get it on the National Health Service. It will cost you money and time.' The dear boy said, 'I have neither the time nor the money,' and he asked a friend of mine to baptise him in the swimming pool in a private garden though it was surrounded by Christians at the time. He went down into the water to bury his past, to wash it away, and he came up out of the water minus one tattoo, and the devil had gone from his body. That was a tattoo washed away by H₂O! Nothing but water had touched him but it had gone. If you tell that boy baptism is only a symbol, he would laugh at you and say: it's more than a symbol for me; it was the way the Lord washed the devil off my body.

That is at least one of the two things that baptism is about. It is about having a bath at the beginning of your Christian life that cleans your conscience and you can know forever

after that your conscience was cleaned. It is a simple meaning but the important thing in baptism is not what we do for the Lord but what he does for us, and he wants to get us cleaned up. And he doesn't want anything on your conscience. He wants you to have a clean, fresh start in life and how nice of him to want that, how thoughtful of him. That is why he said, 'Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, *baptising* them....' That is the first thing you do for people – wash them, give them a bath so that they know what it is to feel clean. That is a beautiful gift.

But there is something else. It is a burial for people who are dead. Let me tell you a most dramatic story. A friend of mine, a Baptist pastor in North London, told me this himself. When he was at school as a boy in Bristol, he had a best friend and the two of them did everything together. But when they left school, they lost touch with each other and their lives went separate, very different ways. One of them became a Christian and a Baptist pastor – that is the one I knew in North London. The other one, whom he had lost touch with and didn't know what had happened to him, literally went to the dogs. He became a drug addict, he got into crime, was in trouble with the police, went downhill and wrecked his life. When he was at rock bottom, contemplating suicide, he remembered his friend from school and he thought: if there is one person in the world who could help me now it is my old friend from school. But he didn't know where he was or how to get hold of him so he actually went to a spiritist medium and said 'I need to get in touch with an old school friend; can you contact whoever you contact on the other side and find out where they are?' The medium said, 'I can. He's living in North London in a house with green paint opposite a park with trees and described this house for him. But I'm sorry to tell you he's no longer alive; he's died, and I can give you the date of his death.' And she did.

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Nevertheless, he didn't believe her that his friend was dead and he set off to look for him and he went round and round North London until he found a park with trees and then he went round and round the park until he found a house with green paint, and he went up to the door and rang the bell and the Baptist pastor came to the door and it was his old friend from school, and he then confessed to him: my life's a mess; I've come to the end of the road, can you help me?

The pastor led him to the Lord, saved his life and got him straightened out, and everything was happy afterwards.

The pastor asked, 'How did you find me?'

The new believer replied, 'I went to a spiritist medium and she described your house but she said you were dead and she gave me the date of your death.'

The pastor said, what date was that? He gave it to him and the pastor said, 'That was the day I was baptised.' Isn't that interesting? The spirit world knew about that date. It was the date of his funeral. A dead person needs to be buried; it is the last dignity you can give to a person who has died – to treat them as human. So often people are very anxious after a natural disaster. They want the bodies, they desperately want the body back, even if they are not alive. They want the body so that they can treat it with honour and give it a decent burial, and it is much worse losing a loved one if you cannot have the body. It makes grief much worse when you can't honour the dead with proper burial.

Now when you become a Christian, when you come to Christ, *you* die! Your old life is dead and gone, and the sooner it is buried the better, and that is where baptism comes in. You are being baptised into the burial of Jesus and raised with him to newness of life. You begin the Christian life by identifying with Christ by being buried with him and raised with him.

I will never forget my own baptism. It was in a baptistry

pool in the Pennines, away up the valley, and I don't think the pool had been used for years because it was mouldy. The sides were just mouldy green, and as I went down into the water I had a vision of Jesus going into the Jordan before me. Maybe the green sides did it. But it was a wonderful vision, realising he was just there in front of me. I was doing what he did. I was being identified with him. I was becoming part of his life and his burial and his resurrection. You see, part of being a Christian is not just to say 'Christ died for me', but being able to say, 'I have died with him; I've been crucified with him.' It is not just being able to say that he was buried for me; it is to be able to say, 'I've been buried with him'; not just being able to say, 'He was raised for me,' but to be able to say, 'I've been raised with him.' That is how life becomes for the Christian – a matter of identification with Christ so that we are now not living but 'Christ lives in me'. Now all that is part of baptism and to think of it just as a 'wet witness' is totally inadequate. God meant us to benefit from baptism.

Now at this point I ought in honesty to deal with one or two serious questions, and the most obvious one is: what about baby baptism? The majority of people in this country have been baptised or christened as babies, so where do they stand? They are baptised in the sight of the church but I question whether they are in the sight of the Lord. Indeed, I have to say that I cannot find infant baptism in the New Testament. There are many reasons given for doing it; none of them are to be found in scripture, but here are three of the main ones. First, it was given because it was genuinely believed that you saved a baby from hell. They softened that a bit later to say, well it saves them from 'limbo' – *limbus infantum* is the Latin word for it – as if there is another place in hell that is not quite as bad as hell but it is certainly not as good as heaven. And that is where unbaptised babies

go. It is all conjecture, all speculation, but that was the first reason given.

Secondly, in the Old Testament, Jewish babies were part of the Jewish nation and therefore, in the new Israel or the new nation or the new covenant, babies are included provided their parents were Christian. That is still the official teaching of many evangelical Anglicans.

But there is a third reason now being given and that is that it speaks about the ‘prevenient grace’ of God – that he loves us before we love him, that he takes the initiative – which is true, but not of infant baptism.

My problem with infant baptism is that it is neither a bath nor a burial – the baby is not dirty, not spiritually dirty anyway; and the baby is not dead yet. It is people who are dirty who need a bath, and it is people who are dead who need a burial, and baptism meets both needs. And that is how it is described in the New Testament, so I am very sorry but I have to say I cannot justify infant baptism from scripture, which means that a person may be baptised in the sight of their church but not in the sight of God.

What do I suggest such people do? Well, there are thirty passages in the New Testament about baptism, one for each day of the month, and I suggest that they go away and find those thirty passages and read every one of them and then ask: can I apply that to my christening as a baby? Funnily enough, I have had many requests from people who say, ‘I want to be baptised *again*.’ I have said, ‘You can’t be baptised again. It’s a one-off and once it’s happened, it’s happened.’ It is like a wedding – you don’t keep getting married, you remember what your wedding meant. And all the teaching about baptism in the New Testament is retrospective. It is looking back on baptism, it is realising what happened. So, if somebody came to me and said, ‘I was baptised as a believer, such and such a date, but I didn’t

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realise all it meant, nobody told me, nobody took me through those thirty passages,' I'd say, 'Well, don't worry about that. When I got married I said things I didn't realise.' We both said them; neither of us realised what it meant fully to say 'in sickness and in health'. We found that out later but we didn't have to get married again. We just said, 'Now we understand.' In the same way, you don't need to know everything about baptism when you're baptised, but you do need to read back into your baptism what the New Testament teaches happened, and realise it happened, and thank God it happened and praise God for your baptism.

Satan hates your baptism, I know that. Your baptism as a believer, he hates that. Not your baptism as a baby, no. You don't remember that – it has no effect on your daily living and there it is.

* * *

I have been asked: is baby baptism always a sin? My answer is that it is not what the Lord wanted for us and I do think it does become a sin when you use a christening to deny someone the experience of baptism, and the tragedy is that when so many babies have been baptised, when they grow up and they get dirty and want a bath or when they do die to their old life and want a burial, you can't give it to them because they are told: you are baptised. The question is, are you baptised in the sight of the Lord? I don't think it's going to be a 'sin' to be misled in that, but when you become enlightened and find out what it should mean, then I think it is going to become a sin. Hundreds of people in this country have simply done it because their parents did it and their grandparents did it, and the church told them to do it, and

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so they did it. They didn't stop to ask or stop to think, but I think it's tragic if it robbed them of the experience of New Testament baptism.

My wife and I were both christened but she was the first person I baptised. That is what we look back on. Though I was christened by my grandfather, I didn't know it at the time.

Here is another question I have been asked. If a person becomes a believer, if a person believes but is never baptised, or for whatever reason never has the opportunity to become baptised, is that person saved?

We had a home for the elderly next door to our church, and to that home came a lady. The family said she was 94 and needed a home, could we fit her in? We said yes and we took her in, and after a fortnight she said, 'This isn't a Christian home is it?'

We said, 'Yes it is, do you enjoy being here?'

'Oh yes,' she said, 'I love it but I hadn't reckoned on it being a Christian home.'

Well, it wasn't long before she became a Christian and at 94 she said, 'I must be baptised', so we fixed it up for the first convenient Sunday. Two days before that, she went to sleep one night and woke up in heaven and missed her baptism. I have no doubt whatever that she is saved. The Lord knew her heart and knew she wanted to be and intended to be. That is what he is asking. He is not such a legalist as to say you haven't been baptised so you are out. My problem is not with people who die before they are baptised but people who live and don't get baptised, and who live to a ripe old age and never get baptised. They are missing out on a vital help to their salvation, but once again, you see, I am thinking of being saved from your sins, and if ever there was a help to be saved from your sins, it is to get them washed off your conscience and to bury the past,

finish with it. And somehow, baptism provides the funeral for your old life. It gives you the date on which you buried what was left of your old life. All this is saying baptism is not a church ritual; it is not a symbol; it is not an act, it is not a drama, it is an event in which God cleans me up and buries my past. Hallelujah for that! Every Christian needs that help but it is not the only baptism they need. There is another one that we are going to look at next.

May I suggest that you look up the thirty passages in the New Testament about baptism and find out what that says about it all. There were, it is true, two or three household baptisms in the book of Acts in which all the members of a household were baptised. There are two things to say: First, the word 'household' does not mean family. It means everybody living under one roof, including all the slaves; and two-thirds of the people then were slaves. The Philippian jailor is one example of a household baptism. His whole household was baptised but it also says that Paul preached the gospel to his whole household and they all believed and so they were all eligible for baptism. There is no known case of a baby being baptised in the New Testament.

Another question which puzzled me for years was why Jesus told them to baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and yet all the way through the book of Acts they baptised in the Name of Jesus. Well, there is a discrepancy there. I used to use a formula, if you like, that combined them all. I said, we baptise you into Jesus Christ, into his death, burial and resurrection in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and in that way I kept everybody happy. But I don't think God says the formula must be exactly right.

I was asked: if you were baptised as a baby, can you also be baptised as an adult when you become a full believer? The question is: when were you a believer? If you were

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not a believer when you were either dipped in water or had a bit of water sprinkled on you, that is not a baptism. I was speaking in one situation where there was a lady from Jamaica listening to me and at that point she cried out, 'I is a Methodist. I is dry cleaned.' I said, I like your humour, but not your theology. No, if you are a believer and are baptised, then the Lord counts that – if you have repented and believed before baptism.

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In the New Testament we have John the baptiser and Jesus the baptiser, and they offer two very different baptisms, both of which every Christian needs. It is interesting that John said, 'I come baptising you in water but there's someone coming after me who will baptise you in the Holy Spirit', and those are the two baptisms we want to talk about. We have thought about baptism in water. But now we look at being baptised in the Holy Spirit by Jesus himself.

You can be baptised in water by anyone, even by someone who has not been baptised. Jesus was. John the Baptist said that *he* needed to be baptised by Jesus, not Jesus himself. But Jesus said: it's alright, we are to do everything that's right and so I need to be baptised – which, by the way, takes an excuse from anybody who says, 'I don't need to be'. If Jesus needed to be, then *we* do. It is as simple as that. The one person who had nothing to wash away was Jesus himself, but he still submitted to it.

We saw that the verb 'to baptise' means to plunge a solid entirely in a liquid. It was used in the ancient Greek world of dyeing wool in a whole bowl full of liquid or dipping a cup into a bowl of punch or wine – and you dipped the whole cup in to get it full. Or it was used of a ship that was sunk in the bottom of the ocean. With us, I am afraid, if we hear of a ship being baptised we think of a bottle of wine broken over its bows, and God bless all who sail in her, but no, the Greek word means to be sunk right under.

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It was a nickname applied to John and he applied it to Jesus. But it was John who said: there is somebody coming after me who will plunge you into the Holy Spirit, who will take you right under and soak you in the Holy Spirit; and that is mentioned at the beginning of every one of the four Gospels. It is mentioned at the beginning of Acts, it is mentioned in Corinthians and at one or two other places too.

Now a baptism consists of two things – in and out, down and up. You go down into the water and you come up out of the water and so there are two Greek words that are applied to every baptism. One is the little word ‘en’ from which we get the word ‘entrance’ or going in, and the other is the little two letter word ‘ex’ from which we get ‘exit’ or going out, and it is interesting that both these two little words are applied to the baptisms – in, out. It is interesting too that in John 3:5, where Jesus is putting Nicodemus right in his theology, Jesus uses the ‘out’ and when Nicodemus is puzzled as to what it means to be born again, Jesus says, to be born again is to be born *out of* water and Spirit. I am afraid the word ‘out’ there is rarely translated, but Jesus used the ‘ex’ – born *out of* water and Spirit which means that somebody was first put into water and Spirit, and I reckon the phrase ‘born out of water and Spirit’ is a reference to the two baptisms that every Christian needs and which come from John and Jesus.

So that is a little clue. You may have been puzzled by that phrase ‘born out of water’. Well I think it means water, quite simply, and it is a reference to water baptism as ‘born out of Spirit’ is a reference to Spirit baptism. One refers to the medium in which you are baptised and the other refers to the necessary raising afterwards. So there is an in and an out in baptism and in the Greek it is very obvious when you read it that Jesus said it is coming *out of* water and Spirit and that is being born again. Now that may be news to you.

This phrase ‘baptised in the Holy Spirit’ comes from John

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and he is drawing a parallel with his own baptism in and out of water, to the baptism in the Spirit, in and out of being plunged into the Spirit and therefore it is a total experience, obviously. Now when we study the language they used about baptism in the Spirit we learn a whole lot more. It is such a rich vocabulary. It is a rich experience and so a whole lot of different words are used – verbs and nouns. Let us look at some of them.

First, there are a lot of liquid words used and the Holy Spirit is referred to as ‘living water’, as ‘poured out’ on you, and so there are liquid words about baptism in the Holy Spirit, drawing a parallel. There are also some words like ‘come upon’ or ‘fall upon’ – the Spirit coming on people and falling on people. Then there are words like ‘filled with’ and that is used as an alternative for baptism in the Holy Spirit – filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now God has given each of us an overflow. If you want to know where it is, put the finger on the nose and just go down a bit and about an inch below your nose you will find your overflow. Whatever your heart is full of will overflow there. That is how you know when your tank of petrol is full on your car. Nowadays the pump shuts off automatically but I can remember the days when petrol gushed out and you knew the tank was full. When you know a person is full of something you know it because it comes out of their mouth. If a person is full of fun and humour, they laugh. If they are full of fear, they cry out. If they are full of anger, they shout. Whatever the heart is full of comes out of the mouth – Jesus said that. If the heart is full of dirty things, that will come out of the mouth sooner or later. When the heart is full of the Holy Spirit, filled to overflowing, something is going to come out of their mouth. That is the usual thing that we notice in the New Testament. When they were baptised in the Holy Spirit something came out of the mouth. It wasn’t always

the same thing. It was *usually* a totally unknown language.

I hate the word ‘tongues’; it sounds like babbling or something, but it isn’t. It is languages and God speaks at least 1600 languages which is how many languages there are on earth; he can speak them all and he can listen to them all and he knows them all. Therefore one of the things that can come out of your mouth when you are filled with the Holy Spirit is a language you never learned. That is why the gift of ‘tongues’ (or rather the gift of languages) is so often mentioned as the proof that someone has been filled with the Spirit of God, and it should come as no surprise to you that you can speak a language you never learned which God knows, and when God has the whole of you, and especially your tongue, you can expect him to prove it by giving you one of the other languages he knows. But it will be a real language and not babbling.

One preacher I know in England has been teaching people to say ‘banana’ backwards and when they do he says, you have now got a tongue. That is rubbish actually. Yet he is doing something helpful, as I will show later. One of the real barriers to being baptised in the Holy Spirit can be a cultural barrier due to Britishness. British people often don’t like the thought of speaking what we don’t know we are saying, and we hold back. Many people who speak in tongues or speak in a language of God doubt whether it is a language.

I spent some time in Hong Kong with Jackie Pullinger. I was in the walled city with her which was the most dreadful place, full of rats and thieves and disease of every kind, and it was the one bit of Hong Kong that wasn’t under law, and therefore criminals lived in that horrible place. Right in the middle of it, Jackie Pullinger had a room which she rented and which she used to win people for Christ. It was the worst place I think I have ever been in. But she was telling me that she prayed to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and she

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opened her mouth and a language came out but she could not believe it was a real language. It sounded like rubbish so she did a very wise and helpful thing. She decided for fifteen minutes every day to use this language for one month, and if nothing was any different after one month she would give it up, but within the month she was seeing miracles and things were happening which she had never realized before. She realized it was a real language.

A friend of mine in Los Angeles, in Orange County, is a pastor of a Pentecostal church and he had this gift of language and used it frequently, and he met once a month with all the pastors and ministers and clergy of the area, and they all knew that he used this unusual gift and they were puzzled and so they asked him to give a paper on it to the ministers and the clergy. That is what they love to do – listen to papers being read. It doesn't do much good but they like it. So my friend (Ralph) prepared a paper for them, but before the day came to give it, there was a Methodist minister nearby, and one morning this Methodist minister rang his doorbell. Ralph invited him in and said, 'What can I do to help you?'

The Methodist minister said, 'I want that gift that you've got; I want the gift of a new language to use in prayer and praise.'

Ralph replied, 'Well, kneel down on the carpet', and he knelt down, Ralph put both hands on his head and prayed that he might have the gift of a new language and the Methodist minister opened his mouth and said, 'abbi dabbi, abbi dabbi'.

Ralph thought that was not much of a language and he said, 'Just keep on just resting in the Lord and I'll pray some more.'

His visitor said again, 'abbi dabbi abbi dabbi', and he never said anything else, and Ralph just didn't believe he had got a gift of a new language. The Methodist minister heard that Ralph was going to give a paper on 'tongues' at

the Ministers Fraternal and he said, ‘Oh, I’ve got to be there.’ Ralph thought: Help! If that man opens his mouth and says ‘abbi dabbi....’ By this time it had become his nickname. Everybody said: ‘There’s abbi dabbi going down the road,’ and Ralph was dreading him saying this in front of the other pastors and said, ‘Now look, it’s me they’ve asked to give the paper, so you just sit at the back and pray for me. Just leave it to me to talk about it.

On the day itself he tried to hang out the paper for the whole hour – but as soon as he finished, up jumps the Methodist minister and says, ‘Brethren, God has given me this lovely gift and he’s telling me to exercise it now so that you know what it’s like’ and he opened his mouth and said, ‘Abbi dabbi abbi dabbi abbi dabbi.’

Well, there was a stunned silence and Ralph couldn’t wait to get home. He got out of the meeting as quickly as possible and went home. The very next morning an Episcopalian (Anglican) was knocking at Ralph’s door and he said, ‘Ralph, can I come in and talk to you?’

Ralph said, ‘Yes, come on in, now what do you want to talk about?’

He said, I want that gift you were talking about yesterday.

Ralph said, ‘I’m astonished – after that outburst from that Methodist minister, you’re still interested?’

‘Oh, it’s not because of you, it’s because of him that I’m here.’

‘Because of him? What was impressive about that?’

The Episcopalian said, ‘Look, that man is a doctor five times over from the university. He’s got a brilliant brain. He could do better than that if he was inventing it. It’s because of him I want that gift.’ So Ralph prayed for him.

Months later, Ralph was in Africa, in the heart of the jungle in a little African village. As he walked through the village a voice behind him said, ‘Abbi dabbi, abbi dabbi’,

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and his first thought was: what on earth is that Methodist minister from Los Angeles doing in the middle of Africa? He turned round and he was looking into the face of an elderly African. The Lord rebuked Ralph and said, ‘Ralph you didn’t think this was a language; now you know it is.’

Ralph said, ‘Why did you only give him just two words?’ And the Lord said to Ralph, ‘Because he’s so clever that I had to make him like a little child, and he was childlike enough to say that’s my language.’

Ralph couldn’t wait to get home and as soon as he got back to Los Angeles he went straight to the Methodist minister and he said, ‘Brother, please forgive me; I have never believed you had the gift of language but now the Lord has rebuked me in the middle of Africa and I’ve come to say sorry.’

So there can be doubts about the language, because when you don’t know a language and find yourself saying something, of course your brain says: what on earth are you talking about? But it could be a language. The difference, of course, between babbling and a language is that a language has structure, syntax. It is put together properly and I know someone else who recorded various tongues that he had heard and he submitted them to a linguist and said: are all these languages or not? The linguist came back and said: ‘No, they’re not all proper languages but some of them are and I’ll tell you which are real.’

‘Filled with’ is a very common way of referring to baptism in the Spirit because that is what is happening. You are filled to overflowing. And I remember talking to a missionary in Brasilia, capital of Brazil, and we were sitting in a public park having a picnic and a lot of families were all around us, each with a picnic and eating away. I was talking to this missionary, a British man, reserved, controlled – a real public school boy. But he had devoted his life to missionary work in Brazil and he said, ‘David, I’ve longed to be filled with

the Holy Spirit but I've dedicated all the natural gifts I've got to the Lord, I've served him faithfully for years but I don't have any supernatural power. We talked for a while and then I said quietly, 'Would you let me lay hands on you and pray for you?' And he did and there he was – this quiet Englishman – and as soon as I did that, he shouted 'Hallelujah!' With as loud a voice, it rang round the whole park; everybody turned round and looked at us, and I sort of turned away, tried to dissociate myself from him, but it was no good, I had to acknowledge. Do you know that within twenty-four hours he had healed two sick people? Just with a word. He had never known that before; he had dedicated all his natural gifts to the Lord, he had done his best to serve the Lord, he had been so conscientious, but he hadn't got the power and he knew it. Now he didn't speak in a language, he just praised the Lord. I said to him, 'You've never done that before in public, have you?'

He said, 'No fear. I'm English; I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing.' But he was just caught up in praise to the Lord. So 'filled with' is common.

Now the one difference between baptised in Holy Spirit and filled with Holy Spirit is that 'filled' is repeated in scripture. Your baptism in the Spirit is never repeated, it is an initiation, an introduction to the Spirit. But being filled...why in Acts 2 they were filled, in Acts 4 they were filled again; and in Ephesians 5:18 Paul tells people to go on being filled with the Spirit, and interestingly he says that when you are you will find yourself singing, and singing to other believers. So filling is repeated. The verb 'baptised' is not repeated; it is kept for the first step – the first initiation.

But there is one word that they all used for this event and it is the verb 'receive'. Whenever a New Testament Apostle mentions the word 'receive' he is referring to his baptism in the Holy Spirit, referring above all to the Day of Pentecost

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when 120 of them *received* the Holy Spirit – including Mary the mother of Jesus. She was among those who were praying between the resurrection and the Day of Pentecost. So when I am speaking to Roman Catholics I love to tell them that Mary was a charismatic and that she spoke in tongues. I have never heard another preacher say that, but it has struck people very much.

When I am talking to the Welsh I love to tell them of St. David's baptism in the Holy Spirit. On March 1st, St David's Day, you are supposed to wear a daffodil or a leek and that is *the* big day for the Welsh. But St David was the Bishop of Wales; having been a slave boy, he went over to Ireland, came back to Wales to be the bishop, and when he was ordained a bishop he wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He wanted to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and so he set off on pilgrimage to Jerusalem with a number of other monks who accompanied him. Now they had to walk in those days – to Jerusalem – no flights in four hours, they walked for weeks. They got as far as Lyons, halfway through France or what was then called Gaul, and the monks were keeping a diary of the journey and I have read that diary and it says, 'Ye holy father David came to Gaul and there ye holy father was baptised in ye Holy Spirit as in ye days of ye apostles and he spake in other tongues as in ye days of ye apostles'. And I love telling the Welsh that, because they have no idea that the Bishop of Wales, St David, was a Pentecostal; at least he knew what they knew at Pentecost. So – 'receive'.

The Apostles used that word when they were questioning people, checking them. For example, when Paul came to Ephesus, he found a group of disciples. They are called disciples though they had only just begun the discipleship. He was puzzled – there was something missing from them and so he asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit

when you believed?’ Now that tells us a number of things. You *can* receive the Holy Spirit at the same time as you believe or you can not, and I want to underline this very strongly. You can believe in Jesus and *not receive* the Holy Spirit and that is a very needy situation and Paul had missed something from them. They were talking about the Bible – the scriptures – they had been baptised, though only with John’s baptism, but there was something missing and Paul knew it was the Holy Spirit. So he asked them that question, or as some translations put it, ‘since you believed’. It doesn’t matter – it can mean either. Did you receive the Spirit when you believed or since you believed? He is asking them a very important question. One New Testament scholar called William Barclay said that every member of a church needs to be asked this question, because it is possible to believe without receiving. That comes as a shock to people.

But they were not the only ones to do that. If you turn back to Acts 8 where Phillip went to Samaria to preach the gospel, and had a great time, they repented, they believed, they were baptised, *but* – and there was the big but – they had not received the Holy Spirit. So Peter and John came hurrying down from Jerusalem to put this right and sure enough, when they laid on hands and prayed for them, they received. Now ask yourself two very important questions. Question number one: how did anyone know that they had not received? There must have been some clear indication that they had not, which Phillip knew and reported to the apostles back in Jerusalem. Now when you look at what had happened in Samaria, that was a successful crusade, wasn’t it? The whole city of Samaria repented, they all believed the gospel, they all were baptised, and it says the city was full of joy. Now if that happened at a Billy Graham Crusade, people would say it was a successful crusade. But they didn’t say that in those days because they noticed they didn’t *receive*.

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What did they expect?

Then the second question you need to ask about that event is this: How did anyone know when they did receive? Because they all knew so definitely that one of them, a conjuror, a professional magician called Simon said, 'I would like that power; I would like to be able to do that to people', and he offered money to Peter for the secret of the 'trick' and Peter said: to hell with you and your money; you need to repent. Because you can't buy spiritual things, you can't purchase them.

So these are important questions. How did anybody know when someone hadn't received the Spirit and how did anyone know when someone had? To put it crudely: to be baptised in the Spirit is such a definite event that not only will you know it but everybody else present will also know it. Now that seems to me as clear as possible. However, it does raise a question. When people have repented, believed, been baptised and still haven't received, what is their relationship to the Holy Spirit? Surely the Holy Spirit was helping them to repent and believe. Well, my answer to that is that for the first disciples Pentecost was a change in the relationship with the Holy Spirit. It changed from what Jesus said, 'He has been *with* you, he will be *in* you' and that is a very important change of preposition.

I was a minister of the gospel before I was baptised in the Holy Spirit, and I preached and the Lord blessed and used that. I became known as a Bible teacher but I didn't know the Holy Spirit, and therefore for me one Sunday in the year was very difficult indeed – Pentecost Sunday, when I had to preach on the Holy Spirit and produce two sermons, not one. I used to dread that Sunday coming, but I have got enough books on the Holy Spirit on my shelf and I could usually read up enough to get by with two sermons, and I was jolly glad to get back to the gospel the next week and

preach about the Father and the Son – which tells you where *I* was. Therefore I couldn't help the people get to know the third Person of the Trinity.

I am going to go on with my testimony, because it is important to me and it may help someone else. I preached faithfully on Pentecost Sunday on the Holy Spirit once a year because I had to, and then it was all over, thank goodness, for another year. I thought: this is dishonest; how can I, a preacher of the Word of God, steer carefully away from the Holy Spirit? I have since sat under other ministries that do the same, and I cringe when it happens, and I know that we are not going to deal with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, which is a tragedy.

Well, I made a decision. I decided to preach my way right through the Bible and cover every text on the Holy Spirit and, in this way, force myself to face the whole truth of the third person of the Trinity. I began the series, starting in the Old Testament – ‘the Spirit of God moving on the water, causing the dry land to appear’ at creation. Then I moved on and found people like Samson. Tremendously strong? No, he wasn't; he was weak as a kitten. It was only when the Spirit of the Lord came on him that his strength was able to do remarkable things. There were others; I found that everybody who said anything particular or who did anything particular or who was anything particular in the Old Testament owed it to the Holy Spirit, and I produced some good sermons on the Spirit in the Old Testament, but I was getting nearer and nearer to Acts 2 and I thought: what am I going to say about that? I dreaded that coming. In fact, having started a series of twenty sermons, I thought: how can I stop it before the end?

Something happened before I got as far as Acts 2. There was a man in the church called Jimmy, and he was the self-appointed leader of the opposition. Do you know what I

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mean? There is one in every church who sees their calling in God to correct the pastor and to put him right. James had a brilliant brain. He was in charge of a patent office in London. I used to come home from a church meeting and say to my wife, 'Oh dear me, James...again.' She would say, 'Look, the other members are all with you; don't worry about one member who's against anything you suggest.' He had two reasons to oppose anything I suggested. One, 'We've never done that before; we're not going to try'; and two, 'We did it before and it didn't work.' So those two things flattened every new suggestion.

Now I did get relief from James. Once a year he developed hay fever of a really bad kind and was simply 'out for the count', and he had to go to bed for up to six weeks, and I got relief from James for those weeks and we could push things through quickly without him. When I got to Matthew's Gospel in my series on the Holy Spirit, he went down with his hay fever and his lungs filled up with liquid, and he would lie in bed looking grey and really washed out. I thought: I must go and see him. But when I went I had no intention whatever of doing anything other than telling him the news and praying with him and maybe reading the Bible to him. But all the way there, on a Sunday afternoon, I kept hearing: 'James 5, James 5.' I thought: well, his name is James, but what's the five? Then I remembered that in the letter of James in the New Testament, chapter 5 says: 'Is any among you sick? Let him call the elders and let them lay hands on him and he will be healed.' So when I got to his bedroom and he lay there without even a pillow, just flat on his back, his first question to me was, 'What do you think about James 5?'

I said, 'Well actually I have been thinking about it.'

He said, will you come and do that to me? Which I had never done before. I asked why, and he said, 'I've got to go to Switzerland on Thursday on business, and very important

business, and the doctor's put me to bed for at least three weeks so I can't go. Would you come and anoint me with oil?'

I replied, 'I'll pray about it' – and that is usually a copout. I went away on the Sunday afternoon; I did pray about it but I didn't get through to heaven. Heaven was brass.

On the Wednesday I had a phone call from his wife who asked, 'Jimmy says are you coming to do it?'

Very reluctantly I said, I'll come tonight and I'll bring some of the leaders with me. So that afternoon I bought a bottle of olive oil in anticipation and about four o'clock in the afternoon I went into the church and I knelt in the pulpit where I usually preached – don't know why, but I went into that pulpit. And I tried to pray for Jimmy. Have you ever tried to pray for a sick person who you are glad is ill? It is not easy to know what to say, and so I didn't really know how to pray for him, and then quite suddenly I was pouring out my soul for him and really praying for him and wanting him better, only I was not using English. As far as I could tell, it was Chinese or a similar language and I remember looking at my watch and thinking: I haven't been praying for him for an hour? Then I thought: I wonder if I can do that again? I began to pray again but this time it was more Russian than Chinese, and I thought: what's going to happen tonight when we go to Jimmy's house?

That night, I went with the elders and my bottle of olive oil to Jimmy's home, and he lay there gasping for breath, and I opened James 5 and we used it like a car handbook for servicing a car. First of all, it said confess your sins to one another so I said, 'James, I've never liked you.'

'That's mutual.'

So we got all that out and a few other things too, and then I said, 'Well now it says anoint him with oil' – so I took the bottle, took the cork out and poured it on his head, and guess

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what happened. Absolutely nothing! I said, 'Well Jimmy, we have done what the Book says, I can't think of anything else,' and I got up and literally began to run away to the door. There at the door I paused and looked back, then said, 'Jimmy, have you still got your airline ticket for tomorrow?' 'Of course.'

'I'll pick you up and run you to Heathrow airport' – and I ran.

I didn't sleep much that night and I didn't dare to contact him in the morning. I couldn't face it. I thought: he was difficult enough before, but now he'll be terrible. I will be nothing in his sight now.

He rang me about ten o'clock and said, 'Can you run me to the airport?'

I replied, 'Jimmy, are you alright?'

'Yes.'

'Does the doctor say you can go?'

'Yes,' he said, 'I'm fit enough to travel. I've even been to have my hair cut and the barber said he would have to give me a shampoo first. He said he had never had such a greasy head of hair to cut.'

'What happened?'

'In the middle of the night it was as if two big hands squeezed my chest and I brought up half a bucketful of liquid, and my lungs were emptied of the liquid and I could breathe.'

So I ran him to Heathrow Airport.

What happened as a result? First, he became my best friend and my best supporter; secondly, he and his wife both got baptised in the Holy Spirit; thirdly, he never had that problem again and he had had it every year without fail from his boyhood. Now if you tell me that is the work of Satan I can't believe you. That is the work of God, surely. He became the secretary of the church and when the time came for me to leave Chalfont St. Peter and go to Guildford,

he was the first person I went to see and tell.

Well, that is what happened. The next Sunday, I was still in Matthew on the Holy Spirit, so I didn't get to Acts 2 the next Sunday though I now knew what to say. I now knew what had happened to them and I could speak from knowledge. But the next Sunday I spoke from Matthew, from notes I had prepared over months, and a young man called Ken, a carpenter, came to me after the service and asked, 'What happened to you this week?'

I replied, 'What do you mean, what happened to me?'

He said, 'You're different.'

'In what way?'

He said: 'This Sunday you know what you're talking about.' Yet I had said nothing particular. I had not mentioned what had happened. But that was his verdict on my ministry – 'you now know what you're talking about'. What a terrible thing to say, but nevertheless it was true.

That began some extraordinary experiences. It wasn't one long list of miracles but things began to happen and I began to have words for people, began to believe in healing, began to do all kinds of things, not least get really interested in Israel. The Holy Spirit taught me about Israel, and if you know my ministry at all you know that I am always talking about God's chosen people and their future in God's plan. So, that is just a little testimony.

I was speaking in Colston Hall Bristol which was the biggest public hall in Bristol, and they asked me to speak about the Holy Spirit. There was a lady sitting in the front row and I said, 'The Lord can fill you with his Spirit any time. You've got to ask him; I can't do it for you, he can.' This dear housewife suddenly – in a loud voice – spoke out in praise to God, but not in English. Now she was English and she was an ordinary housewife, but there was a man from Pakistan sitting about four seats along and he leapt out

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of his chair and ran along to her and said, ‘You’re speaking my language.’ She looked at him blankly. He continued, ‘You’re speaking Urdu. That’s the language I was taught as a boy.’ That happened in the middle of my sermon in Colston Hall, Bristol.

I remember hearing a man in Guildford speak in perfect Hebrew and he praised Adonai – Lord – in a string of perfect Hebrew. I am quite sure I knew him, a working man with no knowledge of Hebrew at all. I was thrilled when a missionary told me that Africans were praising God in perfect English in the middle of the jungle.

We must get down to some brass tacks. It could be an outburst of praise. It could be an outburst of prophecy, that is mentioned in scripture. It could be a simple loud ‘Hallelujah’. But it is proof that the Holy Spirit is there.

I have been asked a number of questions, all of which began with the words ‘at what point’ – are you sure of your salvation? ... become a Christian? I have problems with people who want a point. The real truth is that you cannot be sure of your salvation until you are filled with the Holy Spirit. That is God’s way of confirming that you are his child. It is the ‘confirmation service’. How do you know you have repented enough? How do you know you have believed enough? How do you know you have been properly baptised? When God confirms you and that is what God’s confirmation is. You cannot be one hundred percent sure that he has accepted you until he gives you his Spirit, pours his Spirit into you, and then you will know; you will be sure.

I have just given you an impression of one of the wonderful events which is yours in Christ.

THEOLOGY

Everybody has a theology. Theology is what you think about God, but there are theological issues behind all that we have considered so far – two in particular. The first is the question of responsibility. Who is responsible for these four steps happening? Or who do you blame if they don't happen? Which is another way of putting it. There are three streams of theology through the last 2,000 years of church history and they all have very different answers to that question.

First, there are those who believe that God is responsible for all four things and he alone, and that he is to blame if they don't happen. The second stream says: no, *man* is responsible and we must blame human beings when they don't happen. The third – which is my own answer – is both! It is both God and man responsible for people coming in to the kingdom.

Let me spell those out and mention some of the names of those in history who have been guilty of bringing these different views into the church. First of all, there are those who believe that God is responsible for everything, that he chooses us, that when he has chosen us he leads us into repentance and faith and that the whole thing is God from start to finish. This stream talks about the 'sovereign will of God' – that he is almighty, he is in charge of everything and therefore when these four things happen, he must make them happen. And all the responsibility is his.

Now let me give you some of the names of people who

have held this view. The first I want to mention is Augustine way back in the fourth century. He has influenced Protestants and Catholics. The second man I want to mention is Martin Luther who also held this view. The third man is Calvin and the fourth man, least known but most responsible for this view is Theodore Beza who was Calvin's successor in Geneva. Now these four men together have deeply planted the idea into the church and it has been widely accepted by all who call themselves Reformed theologians. Ultimately Beza was the man who crystallised it. Funnily enough, Martin Luther was a Calvinist and Calvin wasn't! That is always confusing. Beza is the man responsible for out and out Calvinism, and he propounded the five ideas corresponding to the word 'tulip', t-u-l-i-p. Those five words came out of a Synod of Dort in the Netherlands. And the Netherlands really accepted this. The five things are these. **T** – **Total** depravity. That means a man can do nothing about his salvation. He is totally depraved; he is so far gone that only God can do anything about it. **S** – **Second**, **Unconditional** election – that God has chosen us, not because of anything at all in us. It is entirely his decision to save us and we have no say in it whatever. We are unconditionally chosen, 'elected' to be his people. **T**hird – **L** – **Limited** atonement. That is the belief that Christ died not for everybody, he died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, because, as they say, how can someone be punished twice for sins? And if Jesus has been punished for the sins of the elect he has not been punished for the sins of the others. **'I'** is the most important one – **Irresistible** grace. This stream of Christians talks very freely about the grace of God as something that you *cannot* resist. If grace has touched your life, you can do nothing about it but submit to it. God is sovereign. Probably that is the key one of the five. The fifth is – **'P'** – **Perseverance** of the saints, or in very simple English, 'once saved, always saved', which

is not a phrase in my Bible but these people talk as if it is. Mostly, those who accept this stream of teaching – that God himself is responsible for all the salvation of people, are on the whole churches that practise infant baptism. Because this for them is a supreme example of how God has chosen someone before they have even thought of him.

Now that is stream number one and it is a very common stream. You will encounter it in many Christians in England. The Church of England is officially mildly Calvinist in its 39 Articles. It is not my position. I cannot teach a God who does all that without any reference to me.

The second position is the opposite extreme: that salvation is all due to the will of men and what *we* do is a crucial thing.

To recap: we are trying to answer the question: why isn't everybody saved? Why doesn't everybody go through these four steps? The first answer was: well, God didn't choose everybody, and that is why so many are not saved. The second stream would say: the only reason why people are not saved is in them. They have not decided, and that puts all the emphasis on human responsibility. The man who made this popular was a British monk called Pelagius, and Pelagius and Augustine were at 'daggers drawn'.

Pelagius went to live in Rome and was horrified by what he found there. Rome was the headquarters of the church; it was the centre of Christianity in his day, and he found such corruption among the other monks there and among the Christian leaders that he was horrified and he said the reason they are in such a state is their own fault. You can't blame God for it; it's their own fault. They are undisciplined, they are not in charge – in control – of themselves; and so he developed a system of what I would call 'do it yourself salvation', and he put the whole responsibility on human beings for not being saved. Very congenial to the British people – do it yourself salvation. It keeps our pride intact

– we are responsible for ourselves, and if you choose to go to church that is your choice. If you want to be saved, that is your taste. So this was a reaction to Augustine and to the emphasis on the sovereign will of God being the decisive factor.

So when we ask why everybody is not saved the first answer was that God decided that, and he chose some to be saved and some not to be. I find that a terrible picture of God, as if God is picking names out of a hat, as if it is arbitrary and very speculative. Then there was this reaction of Pelagius against Augustine and even in their day there were people in the middle, mainly in France. Augustine was in North Africa, Pelagius came from Britain to Rome – but the French were halfway between, and Augustine very naughtily called the French ‘semi-Pelagian’ and by using Pelagius’ name against them he tarred them with the same brush, and I think that is very unfortunate.

So the third stream, in which I will put myself, are that *both* are responsible – God and man together. The Divine takes the initiative but the human decides to respond. It is not ‘totally depraved’. We can respond to the gospel – and we can refuse. We can resist God’s grace. It is not irresistible. I believe it is both, simply because both are mentioned in the New Testament. We are commanded to repent; God commands *us* to repent. Yet another verse will say he *grants us* repentance. It is this mixture of texts, some of which say God gives us these things and some which say we produce them, and the answer, I believe, lies in the fact that both are true, and the man who mainly injected this thought into the stream of church life was a Dutchman called Jacob Hermanzoon. When he was a college student he changed his name to a Latin name – as was the custom at the time. They each gave themselves a new identity in college. He gave himself the name ‘Arminius’ and you may have heard

of him and what he stood for. He stood for this co-operation between God and man – that there are things that we have to do to make salvation possible, but there are things that God has done and is doing to make it possible. It is a question of co-operation. That is where I basically stand, though it is a minority position, alas.

Let me try and picture it for you. I am thinking of a man drowning at sea and there are three people seeing him drift out to sea in the water and one of them says, ‘There’s nothing he can do – he’s drowned, he’s actually dead in the water.’ If he is to be saved, someone has to dive in and pull him out and pump him dry. That is the Calvinist view; that is the view that God is in charge of our salvation. He has sent his Son to dive in and to pull us out and save us, and there is nothing we can do about it; we were dead in trespasses and sins, we were drowned; we were helpless. It needed God to send someone to fish us out of the water and virtually give us the kiss of life and bring us back and thus save us.

At the opposite end is a man like Pelagius, and he says: the man is still alive but he will drown; he is drifting out to sea and what he needs to do is to swim to the shore. So the second man on the shore is shouting to this man drowning: ‘Pull harder, swim harder, stretch for the shore, come this way, you can do it. You can save yourself if you only set your mind to it.’ That is not the truth either.

I want you to consider a third possibility. The man is drowning and he is drifting out to sea, but the third man on the shore throws a rope to him and says, ‘Grab hold of this and I’ll pull you to the shore and save you.’ There has therefore been a co-operation from the man. He has needed to do something; he has needed to grab the rope and hold on until he is safely on the shore. But nobody could say he saved himself. He was saved by the man who threw the rope. Call the rope ‘the gospel’ and you have got the third

picture, and I believe that, as it were, the gospel is being thrown out to drowning people and they are told: grab hold of it and be pulled to the shore. He doesn't do the pulling. He doesn't do the saving, and a man who has been pulled to the shore by grabbing hold of a rope will never say that he saved himself. He will always say of the man who threw the rope: he saved me; and all I did was grab the rope and hold on. That is my picture of salvation. We have been thrown a rope; the gospel has given us the chance to be saved and we have grabbed hold of it and hung on until we got safely to the shore.

I hope that simple picture has given you the three streams in perhaps an over-simple way. But those are the three main views of salvation that are being preached in the church today.

That first view is the strongest and yet it is being preached by children of the Protestant Reformation because Luther and Calvin both held it. The left wing of the Reformation, as it is called – the Anabaptists – were of the third view, not that first view; they were of the co-operative view, that it is co-operation between God and man that leads to salvation, both together.

The big name in that third view of God and man co-operating was John Wesley – and Charles Wesley – and he had a magazine for the early Methodists which was called *The Arminian*. Wesley and his brother were both Arminians in theology and they therefore believed that the gospel was offered to people and if they grabbed hold of the gospel and hung on to it they would be pulled safely to the shore – or in other words, to heaven one day. That is why Wesley was one of the very few evangelists who saw it as vitally important to follow up a decision in their crusade. He had developed a system called the class meeting, and every convert that Wesley brought to the Lord he put into a class meeting to

see that he went on. George Whitefield was a contemporary evangelist with John Wesley but he was of the first view – the Calvinist view – and Whitefield was a great evangelist, particularly in America, very good at getting people started, but he said to Wesley: ‘Your work will last longer than mine because you followed it up and you keep building people up.’

As mentioned earlier, Charles Wesley wrote a hymn which goes like this:

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,
a never dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky

It was ‘fitting people for the sky’ that occupied both the Wesley brothers most of their time. While it probably saved England from the French Revolution – historians seem agreed on that – nevertheless, it was because he did not just ‘get decisions’, he took them into a class meeting to see that they grew up and went on with the Lord.

The word ‘keep’ is interesting. Who does the keeping? Now for the first view (that God does it all) they all consistently teach ‘once saved, always saved’ and say it is God who keeps people up; it is God who causes them to persevere. Pelagius would say: no it isn’t; it is man who perseveres. But Arminius and Wesley would say it is a co-operation between man and God, and that is why the word ‘keep’ appears in two ways in the New Testament. Take the little letter of Jude, grossly ignored, but it is a wonderful letter and it finishes up by saying two things. Number one – *keep yourselves* in the love of God. Two – because *he* is able to keep you from falling. Keep yourselves in the love of God and he is able to keep you. They are the two sides. God keeps, but we have to keep it up – both are needed and the result is that a person is kept.

When Paul came to the end of his ministry and his life,

he said two things: ‘He is able to keep what I’ve committed to him’; and, ‘I have kept the faith’. This twofold emphasis goes all the way through the New Testament. He can keep me – I must keep in his love. Both will result in perseverance. Now the idea that *he is able to keep is all you need for perseverance* is wrong, and the idea that all we need is our determination to keep, to be kept. It is both. It is this double emphasis on the work of God and the work of man in salvation that is so important.

If you listen carefully to the preaching in your church you will find out which of those three views is being taught and I believe if you are going to be true to the whole Bible, you will teach both – that God can keep you and that you need to keep yourself. Both go together. I believe that to say it is all of God and he will do it all is an insult to human beings. We are made in the image of God. We are made capable of resisting him, of saying no to him. To me that is probably the crucial one of the five Calvinist beliefs that I find objectionable – the irresistibility of grace. I believe in grace; I believe in the initiative of grace; I believe that without grace I cannot be saved. But I also believe I can say no to God’s grace and resist it and go on resisting it for the rest of my life.

We have been dealing here with a major theological discussion which people have been discussing for centuries and will go on discussing. There is a real revival of Calvinism today, particularly in America, and a swing back from the over-emphasis on human activity to an over-emphasis on the divine, but if we preach the *whole Bible* we will find ourselves in a balance between the two.

Now think back to our four divisions – R-B-B-R – Repent, Believe, Be baptised and Receive the Holy Spirit. Think of this expressed as a diagram – the upper half as God’s work in the four steps and the bottom half as man’s work. Now the

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interesting thing is that in sheer number of texts on these four steps, there are only a few which say God *grants* repentance. There are many texts that say he *commands* repentance. So which is it – does he grant it or does he command it of us? Well the answer is that, as far as Repentance goes, the emphasis is on *us* in terms of number of texts. When you get to Believe, there are texts which say that God gives faith, but equally there are a majority that say he *commands* faith, and we are told that we must produce it. When we get to Baptism, there is more about what God does in baptism and less about what we are doing. Finally, when it comes to Receiving the Holy Spirit, God is doing most of it and yet we are commanded to receive – but they are a minority of texts. So there is a kind of growing emphasis on God doing the saving and a declining emphasis on man doing it. Does that make sense to you? That is purely the number of texts (verses) that talk about each of the four steps. So there is a gradual emphasis away from what man does and more and more emphasis on what God does as we go through the four steps.

Which brings me to the second major theological issue and this I call the *inevitability* of the four steps. In other words, once you have started on the way of salvation, is it inevitable that you will finish? Or could something go wrong? To put it another way: at what point are we safe from hell? One question I am asked is: At what point in the four steps has something happened that can't be undone? Are we guaranteed a place in heaven? Or can we lose our salvation? That is a huge issue.

Now for the people who believe it is all of God, there is no issue. They believe that if God has chosen us he will see it through and will get us into heaven; that once you have started being saved you will inevitably go on until it is all complete. Remember John Bunyan was not of that view

and in *The Pilgrim's Progress* he has Pilgrim and his friend on the shores of the River Jordan beyond which they can see the Celestial City that they have been making for, and Pilgrim's friend can't face the River Jordan and says, 'I'm going to find another way', and he turns off to the side and goes down a path along the river bank. Bunyan writes, 'and so I saw in my dream that there is a road to hell even from the gates of heaven.' Very few people have noticed that in his book. It is a profound thought that you can get to the gates of heaven and still find another way off the road that leads you there.

Why do I believe, therefore, that you can lose your salvation – you can lose what you have got? Mind you, if you have understood what I have explained so far, you haven't even got to the door yet. But can you lose what you have got? My answer is, clearly: yes you can! I wish that more Christians were told this, and warned that you can get off the way. You can turn off the road that leads to heaven. Now why do I believe that? Well, first, because there are 80 passages in the New Testament which warn you not to lose what you have got and warn you about the other possibilities – by every writer of the New Testament in different places. Let us go through some of them.

First of all, on the lips of Jesus – the parable of the sower in Mark 4, and there he says that some seed fell on the pathway and never germinated – never got started, but other seed fell on shallow ground and it sprang up and began to grow. Now that to me is a clear statement that the gospel has been received but it could not go on growing because the soil was too shallow. Others failed to grow up for other reasons, choked by weeds, by the cares of this world, said Jesus, and the concerns that people should not have. That can crush the new life of the kingdom. Only that which fell on good ground, which germinates and grows up and

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becomes 30-, 60- and 100-fold, is ensuring a good harvest. That is one thing Jesus said. Then the seed which we sow, the word of the kingdom, is not all going to grow, and it will depend on the kind of soil in people's hearts whether it does. It can even grow for a time and then fail.

But let us look at something more direct – in John 15 where Jesus says, 'Abide in me' – stay in me, reside in me. He said branches don't have life in themselves; they only have life as they stay in the Vine. Therefore, when we come to Christ we don't have eternal life in a package – to say, I've got eternal life; but I have life as I stay in Christ. He is the Source of eternal life and as I abide in him, that life flows into mine. He said: if you don't abide in me, you will be cut off, you will become fruitless and you will be burned in the fire. That is as strong as I remember Jesus speaking on this issue. Cut off, burned in the fire? And that is a branch in the Vine that that happened to.

Let us move on to Romans 11 which is the key chapter to the whole letter, and there Paul talks about Jews who fail to go on believing. They got out of Egypt believing in God and then they faced the wilderness and they stopped believing in God. They could have been in the Promised Land in less than a fortnight but they were forty years wandering around the desert because they did not believe that God could get them in. So, the New Testament says, learn from them. They all set out from Egypt, only two of them got into the Promised Land – through lack of faith. They believed to get out but they didn't believe to get in. He says that is a lesson to believers today – not all who start off the journey make it to the end. Indeed it could only be a minority that make it to the end. It is a hard road, it is a narrow road and few stay with it. There is a broad road that the world wants you to travel and it is easy to find it, easy to drift into it. So there comes a bit of very straight talk. Paul says: just as the Jews

were cut off when they stopped believing, you too will be cut off if you do not continue in God's kindness. Now that is as clear a passage but I have never heard it read in church, I have never heard it preached from, and yet it is in Paul's letter to the Romans which is supposed to be so popular.

Let us move on. 1 Corinthians 15 – Paul says he gave a gospel: that Jesus died for our sins, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. He says: that is what I taught you; that is what you received; that is what you believe, and it will save you and get you there *if* you go on believing it. If you hold on to the truth I gave you, you will get there. The little word 'if' there is all important. If you hold on to the truth. It is not a matter of grasping the truth, it is hanging in there, holding on to it, and then you will arrive.

Galatians 4 talks about falling from grace. Grace saves you, yes; but it's not irresistible. You can fall from grace and it is no longer part of your life. In Hebrews 6 the writer says: if you turn away from Christ there is no repentance possible; you can't come back – a very strong word. Hebrews chapter 10 is even stronger. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left but only a fearful expectation of judgment that will consume the enemies of God. It talks about those who trample the Son of God underfoot. Read the passage for yourself. Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 are clear.

I am only picking up one or two of the 80 I could have picked up. 2 Peter 2 is one of the strongest. 'If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and to turn their backs on the sacred commandment that

was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true, ‘a dog returns to his vomit and a sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’ Strong language! Again, I hope you have heard that preached because it is part of the Word of God – that once you have escaped the corruption of the world through knowing the Saviour and then find yourself entangled back in it, it is like a dog going back to its vomit or a pig going back to the mud. These are real possibilities.

The first letter of John teaches: if a brother sins, pray for him; but John then adds: there is a sin that leads to death. Do not pray for *him*.

So there are some sins you can pray about and there are some other sins that you cannot pray about. Finally, in the book of Revelation, there is the Book of Life, and the letter to Sardis talks about having your name ‘scrubbed out’ of the Book of Life. Now we say ‘blotted out’ because we write in ink. They wrote on velum or parchment with a scratchy pen that made a mark on the paper and the ink fell into the mark. The way of erasing that was to take a penknife and scrape that bit of the parchment clean, and the literal word there is that your name will not be scraped off the Book of Life. Now the Book of Life is mentioned four times in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, and of those four times, three are talking about the possibility of your name being blotted out or scraped off. Three-quarters of the texts mentioning the Book of Life are warning that your name can be removed from it. When we get to the day when books are opened, the day of final judgment, we want our name in that Book. It must still be there. Yet Jesus threatens with the removal of that name.

Now the word ‘confident’ is important here because a number of texts in the New Testament have been quoted as promises that you will make it. Take one text – ‘He who began a good work in you will continue and complete it

against that day.’ Have you heard that text? But I haven’t quoted the whole text. The first part of the text says – Paul is writing: ‘I am confident that he who began a good work in you will continue and complete it against that day.’ He says ‘I am confident’. Or take Hebrews 6. Having described that people who fall from Christ cannot repent and find their way back, the writer says: I am confident that this will not happen to you. Now when Paul or the writer to the Hebrews says ‘I am confident’, he is not saying, ‘I am absolutely sure’. He is saying: in *your* case, I am confident this will not happen to you – because it did happen to many. Some made shipwreck of their faith, others backslid, and so when Paul says, ‘I’m confident’ (that in your case this won’t happen, he will complete what he’s begun), and when Hebrews says, ‘I am confident in your case that you will not fall away from Christ, and deny him publicly’ they are expressing confidence of the kind that a teacher in a school parents’ meeting would say – I am confident your son is going to pass the exam. It is not saying ‘I’m certain’; it is saying: knowing your son, I am confident that he will make it.

So these texts – and there are many others – which express confidence that someone will make it, are based on the knowledge of the person, not on the knowledge of God. I am confident in your case you are going to make it; you are travelling so well. You are doing so well, I am confident you will get there. So don’t turn those ‘confident’ texts into promises that apply to every Christian. They don’t.

The last point I want to make is this. The four steps are not one-off. We need to continue repentance, and 1 John says if we go on confessing our sins he is righteous and will forgive and will go on forgiving our sins and the blood of Christ will go on cleansing us from all unrighteousness. We need to *go on* believing, not just believing once. It is a life of faith that saves. Says Paul, the life I *now* live I live by

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faith in the Son of God, and it is not me who is living now, it is Christ who is living in me. Baptism in water is never repeated; that does not need to go on. I know that many people would love to go on being baptised. They feel so clean, and when they get dirty again they want to get clean again and they want to keep on being bathed and buried – but no, that is a one-off. Likewise, Baptism in the Spirit is never repeated, but *being filled with the Spirit* is. So all these things have a continuing effect on the Christian life and if we stay faithful to these four things we are going to make it to heaven. I look forward to meeting you there.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Let us pursue this familiar question: at what point in the salvation process does a person become a Christian (disciple)? Is it at baptism in water or baptism in Spirit, or before, at repentance and believing? Then: at what point does a person's salvation begin? And at what point is a person adopted by God, and becomes a son or daughter? At what point does a person join the royal priesthood? At what point does a person cease to become *homo sapiens* and become *homo novus*?

It worries me that people want a point. I went to our local midwife when I was writing my book *The Normal Christian Birth*, and I said: tell me at what point is a baby born; is it when they come out of their mother's body; when you cut the umbilical cord; when they first breathe; when they first cry out – often with the laying on of hands?

She replied: nobody knows. We cannot say exactly when a baby is born, it is a process. That gave me a clue for my book on spiritual birth. You see, the important thing is not at what point you can say this, that or the other, it is the

completion of the process in a proper way. The midwife's job was to see that the baby was properly born, and all the things she mentioned were part of the birth. You *can* say, when does salvation *begin*? It starts with repentance. That is the very first step, but it is not the complete step. So that is when it begins. At what point can you say a person is a 'Christian'? I am not happy about the word Christian. It was originally a nickname given to believers because they talked about Christ. It was not used by the apostles. There is nothing in the New Testament about how to become a *Christian*. But a questioner has also asked: at what point in the salvation process does a person become a disciple? I like that word; that is a biblical word, and you are a disciple as soon as you begin to learn the right way and as soon as you take the first step. You are a disciple, a learner. Christ told us to go and make disciples; not go and get decisions, but go and make disciples – learners who will go on learning. So I think behind the constant question 'at what point' is a desire to feel safe, and frankly you are not safe until you get to heaven. One day I am going to shout out loud, 'Once saved, always saved! At last it's true.' I am not going to say that now. However, you can be sure of salvation in *this* sense: while I am travelling the road of salvation, I know that road will lead me to heaven – as long as I stay on the road. That is the important thing. You can be sure you are on the way to heaven and that assurance comes from the Holy Spirit, and as soon as you have received the Spirit you are sure. I don't think my wife will mind my telling you – up until the week when we were both filled with the Spirit she had doubts, uncertainties about her faith but I have never known any of those doubts since that moment. She has always been sure ever since that.

Your assurance is not a deduction from some promise in scripture. Assurance is a gift of the Spirit, and as long as

you are walking in the Spirit you will be sure you are going to heaven. If you depart from that and get off the way of salvation the first thing to go will be your assurance and that will tell you that you have got off the road. As long as you are walking in the Spirit, the Spirit himself bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, and one of the words I forgot to mention is 'Abba'. The Spirit gives you that word when you speak to your Father in heaven. I remember a great big fisherman up in the Shetland Islands – Dordy Pottinger was his name – a great big chap and he would come from his herring fishing boat of which he was captain, straight to the prayer meeting in church, and he came in his roll neck jersey and his fisherman's cap, and he was filled with the Spirit one night. I will never forget this great big fisherman, like a little child, just kept saying 'Abba. Abba. Abba.' And it was the Holy Spirit in him teaching him a new word.

Question

I was baptised in water eight months ago and do not think that I have been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

You are probably not because it is such a definite experience that people who have been baptised in Spirit don't doubt it. One scholar, William Barclay, has said: when people received the Spirit in the New Testament it was as definite as catching a dose of flu, and you know when you've caught a dose of flu. I would underline what I said: the Spirit may have been *with* you but he wants to be *in* you, and there is a difference. You can't repent without the Spirit touching you. You can't believe without the Spirit helping you, but that is not the same as receiving him in.

Question

Does Jesus give Christians (disciples) a specific mandate before his return? Should I be doing more than working at my day job, taking care of my family and being part of a local fellowship of believers? I feel that more may be required.

Yes, you are required to be a witness and that is why the Holy Spirit comes in baptism – not in water baptism, but baptism of the Spirit helps you to be a witness for Jesus. We are not all called to be evangelists but we are called to be a witness and the Holy Spirit will help with that more than anything.

There are a number of questions people have asked me about repentance and forgiveness. Forgiveness really does include reconciliation with God. If we are not repenting of sins, reconciliation is not going to be possible. Reconciliation is the fruit of forgiveness. I am responsible for not feeling bitter or resentful toward someone who has wronged me. That is one thing. But it is not true forgiveness because that would lead to reconciliation. Do you remember when Pope John Paul II was shot outside the Vatican? Later, the man was caught, put in prison and John Paul II went to visit him in prison – to be reconciled to him and to forgive him. Now I am quite sure that up to that point, the Pope had had no resentment or bitterness about being shot, but he couldn't forgive the man until he heard repentance from him, which he did in prison. So the relationship was restored and the object of forgiveness is the restoration of relationship. They are too much bound up with each other to separate.

Question

We are to love our enemies. How is that different to forgiving them?

First it means you are prepared to pray for them and to bless them even if they curse you. Love can go out to people. God's love is helpless until we repent. Only then can he begin to act and reconcile us and restore us and adopt us.

Question

Is repentance the most serious omission from evangelism today?

I believe it is. It is not preached. 'Jesus loves you, accept him' is preached.

Question

John 1:12 relates believing with being given the right to become the children of God. Is that different from actually becoming children of God?

No. John 1:12 should not be used about conversion today. It says Jesus came to his own place and his own people received him not. But those who did receive him, to them he gave authority [not power – authority] to become sons of God who were born, not of the flesh but of the Spirit. When Jesus was here on earth, people could receive him; they could welcome him in. They could say 'come to my house for lunch' as Zacchaeus said. They could receive him literally, physically. But after he ascended and the heavens received him out of their sight, they never again talked about *receiving* Jesus and they never used that phrase in evangelism. Now it is used everywhere and this has so confused people that they think that believing in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit must be one and the same thing, but they are not. You can have one without the other. 'Receiving' – the

word – has been exclusively transferred to the Holy Spirit, and the crucial question now is: did you receive Holy Spirit when you believed? That is what Paul asked. Receiving is something you cannot do now with Jesus because he is not here; he is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. But you can and should receive the person who has taken his place on earth, and it is the Holy Spirit who is now here and to be received by us.

Question

Is God the Creator really and genuinely giving us freewill?

I do not see that I *have* freewill. If I do something, I get lots of barriers and problems in my life. How to get freedom of freewill? No, what we mean by freewill is the freedom to say ‘no’, the freedom to resist, the freedom to reject. That is not absolute freewill but it is the freewill we have been given – the freedom to say no to God and the freedom to say yes; the freedom to reject the gospel and the freedom to accept it. But the freewill in both cases is ours.

Question

If someone is speaking in tongues for corporate worship and no-one understands it, what should we do?

Stop it! I don’t believe tongues are given to us to use publicly. Paul says: I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all. But he said: I don’t do it in public. If there is likelihood of anybody present not understanding it, I don’t do it. If you want to know the secret of how Paul could be whipped, shipwrecked, all sorts of things, the answer is that he spoke in tongues more than anybody. You never hear that, do you? But he said: I don’t do it in public. He is saying that because they had never heard him and he wouldn’t, and if there’s anybody there who is not able to understand it, he

says, don't do it. It is a very private gift. It is a gift given to you for yourself – to build yourself up. You can't use it to help anybody else unless it is interpreted, and so if there isn't someone there who has got a gift of interpretation, you don't use tongues. If you know there is somebody who can translate it, then use it because then it will edify them. All the other gifts are given to use for other people. That is the one gift the Spirit gives to help you. Maybe that is why it is often the first one. Learn to help yourself first.

Question

A gentleman asked about a situation where someone has been speaking in tongues and there was no interpretation and they carry on speaking in tongues, but there is never a request: could someone interpret it. What do you do in these circumstances?

The elders should forbid it if they know their job. This isn't exactly a situation you have in mind, but I was preaching in a fellowship in the West of England and a lady got up and she didn't use a tongue but she gave a word of prophecy, a word from the Lord – or claimed that it was. My spirit inside immediately said: that was not of God. It wasn't in tune with where the Lord was leading us; it didn't have the stamp of the Spirit on it. I looked at the other elders who were sitting at the front with me. I thought: are they going to challenge this? They didn't, and so the worship leader got up and said: let's sing this chorus. After the chorus, I jumped to my feet and said: listen, the lady gave us a word which she thought was of God. We took no notice. We just went on singing. I said: that's an insult to God. If God took the trouble to talk to us, we should be asking, what do we do about that? But I said, for what it's worth, I don't think she'd got the word from the Lord. I think it was a word from

her own thinking. And we got back on track.

At the end of the service, this lady made a beeline for me. I thought, I'm going to get my head bitten off; and she came up to me and she said: 'Thank you Mr Pawson for what you said.'

'But I rebuked you,' I replied.

She said, 'I know. That's the first time I have dared to take part in the worship.' I thought: Oh help, I've discouraged her from the beginning. She continued: 'No, the reason I have never taken part is that I was so scared that it wasn't of God, but now you have given me the security of knowing that someone will correct me if I try. So I'm going to try again.'

I said, 'You dear soul; that's a beautiful attitude you have.'

Elders should learn how to rebuke, otherwise they let anything through and I have been in some meetings where we had a series of visions of bicycles without chains and I don't know what else. I got up, went to a microphone and managed to say: 'Please go home.' We had had seven visions, none of them interpreted, just a series of funny little pictures. A lot of what is presented as prophecy is not. They are nice thoughts and someone with discernment should say so. Every prophecy should be weighed and judged, and if tongues are used and not interpreted, that should be rebuked. It is not edifying. If people don't know what has been said, how can they say 'amen'? How can they respond? So, Paul said – rightly so – if tongues are used in a church service, they must be interpreted or they should not have been given.



ABOUT DAVID PAWSON

A speaker and author with uncompromising faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures, David brings clarity and a message of urgency to Christians to uncover hidden treasures in God's Word.

Born in England in 1930, David began his career with a degree in Agriculture from Durham University. When God intervened and called him to become a Minister, he completed an MA in Theology at Cambridge University and served as a Chaplain in the Royal Air Force for three years. He moved on to pastor several churches, including the Millmead Centre in Guildford, which became a model for many UK church leaders. In 1979, the Lord led him into an international ministry. His current itinerant ministry is predominantly to church leaders. David and his wife Enid currently reside in the county of Hampshire in the UK.

Over the years, he has written a large number of books, booklets, and daily reading notes. His extensive and very accessible overviews of the books of the Bible have been published and recorded in *Unlocking the Bible*. Millions of copies of his teachings have been distributed in more than 120 countries, providing a solid biblical foundation.

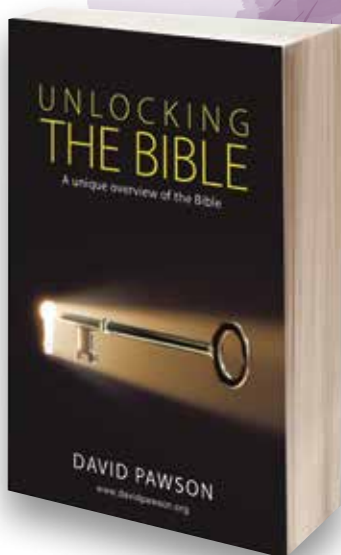
He is reputed to be the "most influential Western preacher in China" through the broadcast of his best-selling *Unlocking the Bible* series into every Chinese province by Good TV. In the UK, David's teachings are often broadcast on Revelation TV.

Countless believers worldwide have also benefited from his generous decision in 2011 to make available his extensive audio video teaching library free of charge at **www.davidpawson.org** and we have recently uploaded all of David's video to a dedicated channel on **www.youtube.com**



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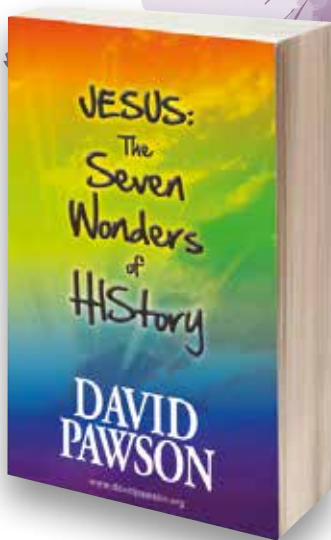
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SUPPORTING THE DAVID PAWSON TEACHING TRUST

The David Pawson Teaching Trust was set up and established by David Pawson as non-profit, designed to protect and promote his teaching for future years. Neither David nor his Trustees receive any financial compensation from the activities of his Trust and all donations are used expressly for the work of the Trust.

David Pawson's vision is that his teaching library should be made available to as many people groups as possible around the world, in their own languages, for the lowest possible cost whilst maintaining the highest possible quality.

In 2011 the Trust started the work of transcribing and translating David's Teaching Library into other languages. Including Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian as well as many other international languages most recently we have started translating into Arabic, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesian, Tamil, German and Polish and there is much more to do.

The aim of the Trust is to provide free Bible teaching to the global church. David and the Trust have chosen not to build and invest in an organisation, nor to continually make requests to the general public or other sponsors for financial support. The Trust has no full-time workers and all of the Trustees support the work on a voluntary basis whilst performing professional roles in the marketplace.

Every time we meet we seek earnestly to pray that God will direct us and supply our needs and the resources required to faithfully spread His Word.

If you have been personally blessed by David's teachings and wish to support the ongoing work of his ministry we would very much appreciate both your prayer support and any donations, no matter how large or small. Please only give if you can afford to do so. Any support will be received with genuine gratitude and will be used only for the work of distributing David's teachings.

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THE EXPLAINING SERIES



- David Pawson has a worldwide teaching ministry, particularly for church leaders. He is known to many through Christian broadcasting and is the author of numerous books.

Each book in the *Explaining* series examines an important aspect of the Christian faith and is written in a way that presents the message of the Bible clearly and simply. In this book David Pawson teaches about becoming a Christian.