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Our guest in the following five interviews is David Torrance, a retired Church of Scotland pastor, an active minister of the gospel, and the younger brother of Thomas and James Torrance. David and his brother Thomas translated into English the 12 volumes of *Calvin's Commentary on the New Testament*. He contributed to and edited *The Witness of the Jews to God*, and together with George Taylor, authored *Israel, God's Servant*. He also contributed to and edited *God, Family and Sexuality* and wrote *A Passion for Christ* with brothers Thomas and James.

The Grace of the Finished Work of Christ (YI104)

Mike Morrison: David, it's a pleasure to have you here.

David Torrance: Thank you. It's a privilege to be here.

MM: I'd like to begin a little bit by finding out who you are. I associate the name Torrance with Thomas and James, and you're the third brother?

DT: The third brother. Yes. The youngest.

MM: Right. And you have all studied theology and written on theology.

DT: Well, my brothers have. I...rather more modestly, I'll put it that way.

MM: You've helped in writing some of the books, haven't you?

DT: Tom and I edited 12 volumes of John Calvin's *New Testament Commentaries* from Latin to English. That was quite a big effort. That's still in print. That was quite a while ago. Various other articles and so on and various journals.

MM: But you didn't go into an academic teaching role like your two brothers did.

DT: No. I embarked on the same course at university...went through classics... honors philosophy...Bachelor of Divinity, specialized in Dogmatics and Christology, as they did. I also went on and studied on under Karl Barth and Oscar Cullman as they did. Then I began to question what I called an academic career, to the parish ministry. I thought I was called to parish ministry, and I believe that's so. I've enjoyed it immensely.

The joy of parish ministry

MM: Your experience in the parish ministry...you've enjoyed it. What's been the most enjoyable part of your work with the parishes?

DT: When you find people have been converted, they discover the reality of salvation and new life in Christ—it's a tremendous joy. It's a tremendous privilege to be allowed to be present when someone comes to Christ, or again, when people's faith is deepened and they come to a new sense of freedom in Christ. I don't think there's any job that's more satisfying than ministry. I didn't believe that at one time. It was quite a struggle for me to enter the ministry, but having entered it now, it was a marvelous calling.

MM: A lot of pastors, in the U.S. at least, drop out. There's a high turnover rate because of the demands of the job. You've obviously had a different experience as a parish minister. What's the key to your role in leading a parish? Why do you see so much joy in it, whereas they might see a burden?

DT: I think the key to the ministry is to keep your eye on Jesus Christ—Jesus the Son of God, Jesus who became man, who lived, who died, who rose again, ascended. If Christ the living God...and here we are face to face with God the Father, God the mighty Creator and our Redeemer. If he is central in our ministry, then our ministry should grow more exciting and fresher as the years go by. Take your eyes off that, and we could try and carry through the responsibilities of ministry on our own strength, and people fail.

Put it a different way: I feel quite strongly that (I think this to myself) if you look at ministry today, probably 90 percent of all our preaching is telling people what to do. We lay tremendous burdens on the congregation. Our congregations get weary and tired, and many slip away. The ministers themselves, they get frustrated and they leave. They're trying to go ahead in ministry, but under their own steam, using their own efforts, their own resources.

I believe quite strongly that in the ministry we are called here to proclaim Christ, the person of Christ. We can't separate the person of Christ from his work and the atonement. That's what we are here to proclaim, so that predominately, I think, our preaching should be the person of Christ and the atonement. If we keep our eye on Christ and seek to present Christ to the world...this is something very exciting, something very living and alive...we see people coming face-to-face with God in Jesus Christ. That is a very exciting thing. I thoroughly enjoyed the ministry. I still do.

MM: The lights go on and they suddenly come to a new understanding of...

DT: That's right.

Christ has done everything for us

MM: In a word, how would you describe what Christ has done for us? I mean, why are people so excited about it? I could have my word for it, what's yours?

DT: He's done *everything* for us. When Christ came into the world, we read in John's Gospel, he said, "I have come that you may have life, life more abundant, life to the absolute full." When we come to Christ, we are coming face-to-face with God, we're entering into the family of God, but we're discovering life itself, and that's a good thing.

MM: Does that mean I don't need to do anything?

DT: No. I wouldn't say that. God has done everything for us in Christ. Christ has come, Christ has redeemed us. When Christ on the cross said, "It is finished," that was a triumphant call, the triumphant shout of a victor. He's done everything for our salvation. All we can do is accept it.

Many years ago (I mentioned that I was involved in mission) when Billy Graham carried out an "All Scotland Crusade" a long time ago in Edinburgh in 1955, some 2000 people went forward in his crusade in Edinburgh district. I was very heavily involved in the follow-up. We had classes for them for 12 weeks. We took away, we think, 800 or 900 in three residential conferences.

I became involved in conversation with a man who was an office-bearing elder in the church, a very fine man. He said, "I've done everything that Billy Graham has asked. I came forward, repented, prayed, asked Christ into my life." In his own words, he said, "I never seemed to have got there." As I listened to him, I said, "You know what you've got to learn? Nothing at all."

He was very startled. I said, "You've got to learn to do absolutely nothing, because when Christ said on the cross, 'It is finished,' he's done everything for your salvation, and there's nothing left for you to do except to say *thank you*, and to go on and on and on saying *thank you*. Your thanksgiving is your acceptance." I still see that man in my mind's eye as it broke home to him. You could see his face relax, and he laughed. The whole burden had departed. He was set free to live. He was set free to share the gospel with other people.

MM: He had been trying too hard.

DT: I think one of the disasters of the Christian church today...I love the church, I grew up in it...is that we tend to say, God has done his part in Jesus Christ. Christ has come, he's died, he's redeemed—now it's over to us. And we call on our people to do their part. We say come, repent, believe, pray, worship, read the Bible. But we're really throwing a tremendous responsibility back on the people.

MM: You do this, you do that.

DT: ...so that their salvation, to put it rather crudely, we're really saying that salvation is partly what God does and partly what you do. That's totally wrong. It's entirely of God, and all we've got to do is simply to thank him, and that must be a wholehearted thanksgiving. It's a total letting go. A total surrender.

MM: If we really realize what a gift it is, then we are thankful.

DT: Absolutely. But it is a total thanksgiving where we thank God with our whole being. The Psalmist said that in Psalm 103: "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless, praise, his holy name." It's that thanksgiving where we're letting go...that we accept the whole wonder of what God has done in Christ. We're receiving new life. In that freedom, there's joy.

MM: If he's done everything and he gives that to us, theologically, that's grace. People misunderstand grace, though.

DT: Grace is a tremendous outpouring of the love of God in Jesus Christ. God, our Creator, came in incredible love to give himself to us in Jesus Christ—to give himself in his love, in his forgiveness, in his continuing redemption. If we were to stand under a waterfall, now, we'd be drenched, we'd be soaked. You and I stand under the waterfall, as it were, the outpouring of God's love and grace, of his forgiveness, of his redemption. And that's grace, the sheer outpouring of the love of God, because we don't deserve anything.

We deserve nothing. But God as love comes, gives himself to us, forgives us, redeems us, gives us life, through the Holy Spirit brings us in, we are adopted into the family of God, able to call God Father. Know that we are in Christ, sons and

daughters of God, heirs of the everlasting kingdom. That all is a free, an abundant gift. That's grace.

MM: I noticed earlier that you said not just that he gives us forgiveness, but he gives us *himself*.

DT: We can never separate the grace of God from the person of Christ. One of the great, dare I say, sins of the church through the ages is to separate the person of Christ and the work of Christ and separate Christ from grace. The medieval church was tempted to believe that grace is something that the church possesses, something that the church can dispense. That's nonsense. We can be possessed by Christ, but we can't possess Christ. Grace is wrapped up with the person of Christ and across the work of Christ, because we can't separate them.

The covenant of grace

MM: You talk about grace as God giving himself to us. But he also gives us forgiveness, and he gives us a kind of a promise of what he's done, of what he will be for us. That's kind of a covenant that he makes with us, this covenant of grace. In Reformed traditions, a covenant of grace is a key term. Maybe you could explain a little more about what it means.

DT: Covenant grace is exceedingly important. Ultimately God made a covenant of grace with all mankind, and that covenant embraced all creation. But within that covenant, God made an inner covenant with Israel when he called his people of Israel into partnership with himself for the redemption of the world.

In Jeremiah 13, we have this astonishing statement where God says that as a man would bind a belt around his waist, I have taken my people Israel and bound them onto me around my waist. He will never let them go for the working out of his salvation. In a wider sense, God has come and made a covenant of grace with all humankind in order that he might redeem humankind, in order that he might work out his salvation. That covenant of grace is where God, who is absolutely holy, comes in love in tremendous condescension and binds to himself a sinful people. Israel was a sinful people, a representative people of all of us.

In a wider sense, God has bound all of us to himself—an eternal bond of grace so that we can't escape the grace of God. We can't escape the embrace of God. This is a great mystery. The fact that God in all his holiness bound a sinful people to himself meant that Israel suffered, because in their sin they rebelled, and yet God in his love would not let them go, because he's determined to strip away their sin and redeem them. In that extraordinary painful situation, Israel passed through a situation when she had shattered herself on the rock of God's love.

Ultimately, that's what we're faced with on the cross because that is gathered up in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has bound the whole world to himself so that when Jesus is a particular man, he's a representative man linked to all creation in an everlasting bond. He's taken hold of all humankind so that when Jesus died, we all died. It's one of the things I've often pondered.

In 2 Corinthians 5, when Christ died, we died. What does that really mean? It surely means that our natural death...well, there's no such thing as a natural death. We die because Christ died. We're joined to Christ in his incredible bond of grace. The fact that Christ rose again means that all of us will rise again in the resurrection.

Here's the mystery—that sin has interposed between us and God so that, as Jesus says in John 5, whereas we are all resurrected, "some will be resurrected unto righteousness, some unto condemnation." Grace is where God comes in love giving himself to us. Not only giving himself to us, but becoming us and remaining himself holy and yet at one and the same time becoming *us* in order to redeem us, to cleanse away our sin, and to give us new life, that we might enter into the fellowship of God in Jesus Christ.

There are many, many aspects of creation, of grace. For us to accept us it, it must be whole-hearted...it's an all or nothing. It's a letting go in thankfulness, and then we accept all that God has done, all his love, we accept life, and joy, and salvation.

The importance of forgiveness

It equally means that our lives must be transformed, if we forgive one another. If we don't forgive one another, we're not able to receive the grace of God. That I

find very important, because in the ordinary practical ministry, you meet that again, and again, and again. There are divisions in the church. Church people, Christian people, find that they cannot forgive their neighbor. That lack of forgiveness means that there is a barrier between them and God. It will hinder their faith. It's the spirit of evil. So the grace means that we receive the love, the forgiveness of God, but in receiving it, we must allow the grace of God to flow through us, and we forgive one another.

An interesting case of that: Some years ago I had a meeting in our headquarters of our church in Central Edinburgh. It was a morning meeting, and I agreed to meet my wife afterwards for lunch. Our meeting ended early, and I was standing on the pavement [sidewalk] just outside the church offices waiting for my wife. I suppose I was idly dreaming, my mind was far away, and I suddenly heard a voice accosting me and saying, "Are you a holy man?"

I had never been called a holy man before, and my first attempt was to laugh. But he was a man, an Indian, looking at me, very serious. Instead of laughing, I said, "Well, I try to be a holy man." He told me a story. He had come over to study engineering. He had come from a strong Hindu background; I think he had been Brahman. He had been converted in Scotland, and he said for a while he was absolutely full of the joy of the Lord, and in a week's time was due to be baptized. But something had happened, and all the joy had departed. He said to me, "What's wrong with me?" Quite a challenge.

I said, "Well, only God knows. I can make a few suggestions. You alone will know whether any of these suggestions ring a bell and are true for you. Maybe you stopped praying, maybe you stopped reading the Bible, stopped going to church, perhaps you've been disobedient to God and done some things wrong, perhaps you can't forgive someone who you feel has hurt you."

He suddenly said, "That's it. That's it." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "That's it. Forgiveness." Someone had done something or said something or just hurt him very badly, and he couldn't forgive.

I didn't ask him what the situation was, but I said to him, "Well, if that's the case, you can forgive. That has come in between you and the Lord, and you've got to allow God to work through you and give you the grace to forgive. Forgiveness is not a human quality. You can't, out of your own resources, forgive someone who's hurt you. Forgiveness is a gift of God. All you can do is to tell the Lord the situation and ask God to give you the gift to forgive. But if you do that, you'll find peace with God."

So I said, "Shall we pray?" We stood there on the pavement and we prayed together, and off he went. About three days later I got a lovely letter from him. He said he'd gone off, found this person, and been reconciled. He said all the joy of the Lord was back, and that's very important.

MM: It reminds me of the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus said if you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven.

DT: Absolutely.

MM: You're saying that our relationship with other people...even though God does everything for us, our relationship with others somehow is clogging the pipeline or something or God's gifts don't reach us...

DT: Very much so. That is a very common factor in the ordinary parish ministry. I remember standing in my last parish talking to one of my people out on the pavement, and she told me that she had never talked to her daughter for 12 years. I said, "You know, you can't say the Lord's prayer, you know?" "Oh, but you don't know my daughter." I said, "No." She lives in a different part of the country. I said, "No. I don't. But at the end of the day, I don't really know you, do I?"

I said, "Whatever the situation, God has forgiven us for everything, and we don't deserve it. It's a free gift. He loves us. He's forgiven us. That means that he's asking you to show that forgiveness to your daughter, whatever the situation. You're commanded by God to go and phone your daughter and to tell her you love her and forgive her." I said that rather frank. Two days later she called me over and told me, "I talked to my daughter the first time in 12 years, and things

are put right.” Yes, it lies at the very heart of the Lord’s Prayer and is very basic... It’s a practical thing in the ministry.

The other very important thing about grace, forgiveness, is that forgiveness is prior to repentance. God forgives, and we are called to receive that forgiveness, but he doesn’t forgive on condition that we repent. Conditional repentance has crept into, I suppose, all the churches. Sadly, it’s crept into my own church in Scotland.

Very clearly the Reformation...we have Calvin, we have Knox, our Scottish reformer. They followed the teaching in Scripture that God comes, and he’s forgiven us in Christ, and we are summoned to repent. We are summoned to receive.

But because of sinful human nature, we have turned it around that God forgives *if* we repent—on condition. So in the church in Scotland we have what we call a *Book of Common Order*, and that is an outline of suggested services for various usages and forms of worship. We have another *Book of Common Order* for use in what we call the courts of the church. The minister is ordained, inducted to a parish, and so forth. In those services, say for an ordination of a minister or induction to a charge, there is what we call a preamble, a statement of what’s happening, and we have the words that “God offers forgiveness upon repentance.” Every time I hear that, I squirm. Forgiveness upon repentance. Forgiveness if you repent. It’s conditional. No.

In my own personal experience, I joined up as a soldier in 1942, a long time ago. Before going abroad, I served for a period in England and used to join a small group, about 12 or 15 other soldiers, simply for friendship, for Bible study, for prayer, and despite my Reformed upbringing, I was somewhat influenced at the time by this presentation of the gospel, which is conditional repentance. If you repent, God will forgive you.

That troubled me, so I found myself praying and trying to confess all the sins that I could remember, to receive forgiveness of God. In this process, I was quite aware that my prayers got longer and longer as I tried to remember and confess all the

sins. I found myself probably confessing sins I hadn't really committed because otherwise if I don't repent, how do I get forgiveness? Then the question came, but what about the sins you don't remember? I tried to answer that by saying, "All right. Lord, have mercy on me. I am a sinner." That covers a lot.

But then the question: How do you know you're repenting? I had no answer to that, and that really troubled me, because if I didn't repent, I would have no forgiveness. How can I be sure? Sometime after that I was reading Romans 6 in Greek (I studied Greek in school) and it hit me very powerfully. If you take verses 2-6, the aorist tense, that's a past tense, that when Christ died, something very decisive in repentance happened: I died with him. And when he rose, I rose with him. That happened a long time ago, before I was born, 2000 years ago.

It hit me then so powerfully that Christ had died, he had risen, he had forgiven me before I sinned, before I was born. It was all done and completed. All I was asked to do was to receive it in thanksgiving. If I didn't receive it, I was lost. We're not compelled to receive it. Hell can be very real and is real. But the fact that all I was called to do was the thanksgiving, was a tremendous relief to me. You are just full of joy, the assurance, and never again did I doubt it.

MM: You accepted that *you* had come to the point where you see in parishioners that was so exciting, whenever they come to that realization that God has done it for them, for all of us...already.

DT: That's right. Last April I was preaching on the subject of grace and the fact that God has done everything for us and all we have to do is thanksgiving. I was preaching in the morning with a lay preacher, what we call a reader, taking the evening service. Shaking hands at the door after the service, this man, all he could do was laugh. He said, "You know, I've been set free. I've been set free. I've been set free." He just kept repeating it. He said, "Set free after 30 years." He didn't explain, there wasn't time to explain, people were going out shaking hands with him.

We had a coffee after the service, and I went into the church hall and again he said, "I've been set free." He said for 30 years he had had with him the fact of a

lack of assurance. He said, "I came to the point that I felt I had to give up. How could I preach? How could I try and help other people when I'm not certain myself?" But he said, "I've been set free." He was full of joy. He said, "This woman, you speak to her, she's been set free as well." I find that moving. It's where we in the church have failed to present Christ and the finished work of Christ. I feel it very strongly... I found it in my own life, and I try to preach it.

MM: We're out of time now, but it's been a pleasure talking with you and hearing the good news of what God does with us and for us.

DT: Thank you.

Not I, But Christ (YI105)

The faith of Christ

Mike Morrison: David, it's a pleasure to have you here.

David Torrance: It's a privilege to be invited.

MM: You've been a parish minister for many years, and you've seen God's grace being given to people in the parish, and you see how people respond to that with faith. And I'd like to ask you a little bit about what faith is?

DT: Faith is very important. I hesitate to use the word, a theological term – faith is really bipolar. Are we justified by Christ's faith or by my faith? Clearly we're not justified, I'm not justified by my faith. My faith can go up and down and sometimes be sometimes be almost nonexistent, sadly. I'm justified by Christ's faith, the faith of Christ. My faith is very important, but my faith is really a response to the faith of Christ. The primary thing is Christ's faith. I find that a very important thing.

When we look at the New Testament, Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ, but the life that I now live I live by the faith *of* Jesus Christ...*of* the Son of God. I don't know of any modern translation of Scripture that uses that translation.

Every modern translation of Scripture that I know of says “faith *in* Christ.” That means to me that the translators have altered the Greek to make faith *in* Christ. If it’s faith *in* Christ in Greek, you’d have a preposition, *de*, and then the dative, *de Cristo*, in Christ. But the Greek is not that at all. It’s the genitive: *of* Christ. So...the life I live, I live by the faith *of* the Son of God.

That comes out many times in the New Testament. In Romans 3, Paul has been talking about the righteousness of God apart from the law, which is by the faith *of* Jesus Christ. Modern translations say faith *in* Jesus Christ. But am I justified by *my* faith in Christ? Never. I’m justified by Christ’s faith. My faith is a response to that. So if you say “the faith of Christ,” that’s the Authorized Version, we’re laying the whole weight of our salvation upon Jesus Christ.

If you think back to the Old Testament, the great lesson of the Old Testament, which Israel found so hard to learn, was that salvation is entirely an act of God. God delivered Israel out of Egypt. They couldn’t deliver themselves out of Egypt. That was entirely an act of God.

Such is human sin that very shortly after that, Moses went up on the Mt. Sinai, he was away for 40 days...they prevailed on Aaron to make them a golden calf. We have these words, “Here are the gods which brought you out of Egypt.” That golden calf, you might say, they were paying lip service to the fact that their deliverance was an act of God, but it was an act of their own human ingenuity and strength. That’s a great sin — that by their own strength they could deliver themselves. The great lesson they had to learn was no, they’d been saved entirely by an act of God.

When God gave his word that was revealed through Moses, he gave them the laws of worship. All those laws of worship which accompanied the word were to teach Israel they could only worship God in God’s way, and therefore these laws of worship are given quite meticulously. The tent, in every detail, the furniture of the building, every detail of worship, in the sacrifices and the great feasts were given to them. They could not worship in their own way, they had to worship only in God’s way because each of these forms of worship and sacrifices are symbolic, representing God breaking through to make atonement for the people.

They are given circumcision. They were a sinful people, and yet a reminder that despite their sin, God, the Holy God, had entered into a covenant of grace binding them to himself. That circumcision, that perpetual reminder that they were sinful, a perpetual reminder that despite their sin God had bound himself to them in a bond of love, and it was a symbol anticipating the day when God would, himself, come and break through himself, be cut off, circumcised for his people.

The great lesson all through the Old Testament was: salvation is entirely of God, and not of us. That's the great lesson that's picked up in the New Testament, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, encapsulated, if you like, in that phrase, "The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Take the two parables in Luke 15 — the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. If we ask ourselves who suffers by the loss...there's no indication the sheep was the least bothered by being lost, and certainly the coin wasn't bothered because it couldn't feel a thing. It was the owner who felt the loss. It was the owner who suffered. It was the owner who took the initiative, who came in search of the lost, and who searched and went on searching until he finds, and then rejoices.

We have in those two parables, you might say, a gathering up of the whole story of the gospel. It is encapsulated in those two parables. Here is God who feels the loss of this world, of humankind who are lost to God — not lost in the geographical sense, but lost in the sense that men and women are no longer living in fellowship with God. God feels that loss. He suffers. God takes initiative. God comes and he searches and searches and searches, and that search takes him to the cross and to the resurrection, and God rejoices. So those two parables, to me, set up the whole story of the gospel.

Equally, it shows that the gospel is totally different from every other religion in the world. Every other religion in the world is concerned with man, and with man seeking to obey certain rules and certain regulations in order to achieve salvation. It's a man — what man can do, how man can work out his salvation. The gospel is entirely different. It's a joyful announcement that God has come in Jesus Christ.

God has searched, in the cross and resurrection, here God finds and restores and God rejoices. That's a glorious thing.

So that little phrase in Galatians 2:20 rounds out several...I could pick out quite a number of passages in the New Testament. We are saved by Christ, by Christ's faithfulness. And yet we've got to respond, we've got to receive. And that is a wholehearted receiving. It's a wholehearted surrender.

MM: And that's our faith that comes in?

DT: That's our faith, but our faith is a response to his faith. Jesus' faith is prior.

MM: But if we are saved by his faith, don't we have to do anything, or has he done it all for us?

DT: He's done it all for us. Absolutely everything. There's nothing left for us to do but simply to accept in thanks. If you could come and give me a present, a gift, what can I do? I can answer, "No, I don't want that" and turn away, or I could say, "Thank you" and simply accept. God comes to us and he offers himself to us, he offers his forgiveness, his gift of life. All we can do is accept it or reject it. As we say thank you, that's our acceptance.

MM: Doesn't the New Testament say that we *should* have faith in Christ?

DT: Yes indeed. We are called to believe. But what does that mean? Faith isn't something that we produce out of ourselves out of our own resources. It's a response to his faith, and it's the gift of God.

MM: So I can't take credit for it.

DT: Paul says that "by grace are you saved through faith, and not in yourselves, it is a gift in God so that no one can boast." I don't believe that as a church, and again I take this personally as a minister, that we have really clearly got that across in our preaching and proclamation. Far too often we present what Christ has done, we say Christ has died for you, forgiven you, now it's over to you to accept. You pray, you repent, you read the Bible, you pray, and so on. And we're laying a burden on man to do something. Salvation in that context is partly what

God does and partly what we do. We cooperate — and that is totally wrong. No, we can do nothing at all except accept it in thanksgiving.

MM: If Jesus has done it all for us, would we say that he has prayed for us? Has he done our response for us?

DT: Everything for us. Absolutely everything. Many evangelicals limit Christ's salvation to the death of Christ. They say that Christ died for us and that is something apart from us and because of his death, we can be forgiven and receive salvation. As my brother James used to say, that if you're sick a doctor can come, he can diagnose your problem, this is your illness, write out a prescription, give it to you, go away. You take that medicine, you get well. Far too often, that's the kind of gospel that we preach. Christ has died, Christ has risen, and there you are, you get on with it.

MM: Like the forgiveness is some commodity that's handed over to us.

DT: It's not like that. Christ has done absolutely everything — he's given himself, and his very life for us. That's what we're asked to receive. We can't separate the work of Christ, the death of Christ on the cross, for the whole ministry or for the resurrection, but sadly, many Christians do. And in a great deal of preaching we often do.

The life of Christ

MM: It just occurred to me that the Gospels have a lot more information in them than just a story of the death of Christ — they've got a lot about his life as well. What are those stories there for us? What are they showing us about Jesus' life for us?

DT: We can't separate the person of Christ from his teaching and from his work. The whole thing belongs together. Calvin used to use a phrase that we're not presented with a naked Christ. He comes to us clothed in his life and his death and resurrection. It's all important. He lived out his life for us, and we're asked to receive him in all his fullness.

Put it this way — that when God became man, we're faced with an incredible miracle where God broke into this world. It's a staggering fact that he came right down to our level in Jesus Christ, and he took our flesh and blood. He remained God and at one and the same time, he became man. Not only an individual man, which he was, but a representative man, where he identified himself with each one of us — with you, with me, with all of us.

And in identifying himself with us, you might like to say he did two things — that he took our sinful life with all its faults, with all its failings, with all its sins and all its sicknesses, and he brought on the condemnation, died, and took it all away. But at one and the same time, in becoming man, he sanctified our human life and he turned our human life around, living out a life of perfect obedience or righteousness. In the resurrection, he gives us himself, he gives us that new life, his life and our life. It's a total thing. We are totally letting go of our old life with a total receiving of this new life. There's no half measures. Paul says, "Be clothed with Christ in his righteousness."

MM: And it's not just his life before the crucifixion and resurrection but his life afterwards as well.

DT: He rose as man, and he ascended as man, and he reigns as man, and he's our high priest as man, and that's very important. The whole of our life, it is not I, but Christ. In every situation, in every area of life, we've got to learn to live that out in such a way that in every situation, it's not I but Christ.

New life in Christ

MM: Once we realize that and we respond to that, how does life change for us? What difference is it going to make in our life? Can we just live a rotten life until we die and just before we die then say oh yes, I'd like to sign onto the program?

DT: Three times in the epistle to the Romans, Paul is answering questions obviously that were put to him — can I sin that grace may abound? He goes on and says this type of question you raise. He says no, that's impossible. To receive Christ means that we've shared in his death — death to our own life, death to all our sins, that we might share in the resurrection. We can only enter the kingdom

of God through death and resurrection, and that's a total thing. It's a death to our old way of life, it's a death to our sin.

If we have received Christ, sadly, we'll go on sinning, but death is no longer the power that reigns over us. We can't go on sinning. John brings that out in his epistles, "We can't go on sinning and yet believe in Christ," in other words, we don't really, in a deeper sense, believe in Christ. We're not really followers of Christ.

MM: Is that what the Bible is talking about when it uses the word *salvation* — that it's not just a ticket into heaven but it's this entire package of taking on Christ, of dying, of rising — is all that encapsulated?

DT: Yes. It's a receiving of a totally new life in Christ. We receive Christ once and for all, and we go on and on receiving Christ as a continuous process. It is a total thing. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. You can only serve one or the other." If we seek to receive Christ as our Lord, he is the one we serve. There's no half measures. As I said, sadly, we will go on sinning. As long as we are here on this earth, none of us are perfect, we go on sinning. But the Lord is our Lord and king. He is dominant. So he picks us up, cleanses us, renews us — day by day we start afresh.

MM: Some days I just don't feel very fresh or new. It just feels like the old person is still there. How do these go side by side?

DT: Well, that's true. But we don't go by our feelings. We go by what is real. When Christ gave himself to us, he gives himself to us. That's something very real. We've got to keep looking away from ourselves to Christ. If I look inward upon myself, it's only darkness. There's no certainty. We're full of doubt. It's when I look away to Christ and say yes, he is life, he is light, he is salvation, there is joy, there is assurance. Life is a constantly looking unto Christ. It has to be. As long as we look onto Christ we are able to share in the victory of the cross and the resurrection. As we look onto Christ we are able to manifest something of the real life and the power of the Holy Spirit.

MM: You talked about the resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in us. Is that the way in which we are sharing in the resurrection of Jesus now?

DT: Yes, it's through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, you might say, is Jesus' other self, although the Holy Spirit is distinct from Jesus, and yet the Holy Spirit is Jesus' other person. The Holy Spirit comes to live within us, to reign over us. That's Christ living in us. As the Holy Spirit comes, he seals within us the finished work of Christ, the new life of Christ, so that Christ is there, and Paul says, "It's not I who live, it's Christ who lives within me." He lives within...by God, the Holy Spirit.

Forgiveness

MM: When you say that the forgiveness that we give others, it is really the forgiveness of Jesus working through us.

DT: Absolutely. It has to be. If we're not forgiving other people, then there's a blockage. The Holy Spirit isn't able, isn't working, isn't flowing through us. He demands it, to receive that love and forgiveness that we show Christ's forgiveness one to another and forgive one another.

I remember that question of forgiveness. I was chaplain to a fairly large hospital in my last parish, and they had a certain wing when people had a nervous breakdown ...and I would go in and chat to them all. I went in this day, into the sitting room, and doctors and nurses used to sit together with patients. There was a woman, maybe about mid-30s, sitting on a couch looking at family photographs. I sat down and she showed me her photographs — son and daughter about 12 and 14.

I kept wondering why she was in the hospital, and I looked at these photographs, and I said, "You love them." She said, "Oh, very much so," absolutely she loved her son and daughter. She showed me a photograph of her husband, and I looked at them and gently said, "You love your husband." She said, "Oh, very much. He's a marvelous man and it's a great privilege to be married to him."

When we were finished, I looked at her, and I said, "Why are you here in hospital?" She said, "I don't want to live." I said, "You don't want to live? You've

just shown me the family photographs, your son and daughter and husband, you tell me you love them.” She said, “Yes, I certainly do. I have a marvelous husband.” “Why don’t you want to live?” She said, “I have no idea, but I’m terrified to be alone. If I’m alone, I’m going to do something violent, and that’s why I’m here in hospital.”

I asked her the question which I often ask as a minister, “Have you had a happy childhood?” She said, “No, not at all.” She told me one of these sad, very dreadful stories, that her parents were both alcoholic and separated when she was 5. Her mother had married an alcoholic who physically and sexually abused her. Out came this terrible, ghastly story, so I felt pain as this woman told me this story. I said, “I’m terribly sorry.”

I said, “Could you ever forgive your parents?” She said, “No, never.” And I said, “Have you ever thought that there is a relationship between the fact that you can’t forgive your parents and you don’t want to live?” She said, “No, I’ve never thought. No one has ever suggested it and no doctor has ever suggested it.” I said, “Well, I’m suggesting there’s a very real relationship.” I said, “You’ve been sinned against. I’m pained by your story, you’ve suffered, you’ve been wronged, and what can I say? I’m horrified and sad. But God has forgiven us everything, and we deserve nothing. But to receive God’s forgiveness, it does mean that we have to share God’s forgiveness with other people and forgive them.”

Now I said, “You can’t forgive them. You’ve been sinned against, you’ve been hurt dreadfully. All you can do is to ask God to give you a gift which you haven’t got, and none of us have, but a gift to forgive these parents of yours.” So we talked away — she was a nominal member of the church, not in my parish but in another parish. At the end of the day I said, “Would you like to pray?” She said yes. So I prayed with her, committed her to the Lord, and this sad story, and asked God to give her the gift that she might forgive her parents. The result was quite dramatic, and the hospital discharged her within the week. To forgive is healing. It allows the Holy Spirit to flow through us, giving us life, the very life of Christ. That’s the important thing.

MM: And the forgiveness doesn’t mean that the initial act was somehow okay.

DT: No — it was an evil thing, a ghastly thing for the parents – their whole behavior, the treatment of this daughter, for her to be sexually abused. It was wrong, totally wrong. But from her point of view, it was a real grace to be able to give in that situation. That’s what God demands.

MM: The gift wasn’t so much for her parents as it was for her.

DT: It had a profound effect on her, in healing. But she had to forgive her parents. Hopefully, that will bring a sense of healing to them where they might be able to turn to God.

MM: It would have an effect on them as well. It’s been a pleasure talking with you. Our time has come to an end.

DT: Thank you.

Not My Will, But Yours (YI106)

J. Michael Fezell: It’s such a special treat to have you with us, Reverend Torrance.

David Torrance: It’s a privilege to be asked.

Missionary life in China

JMF: I wanted to ask you about your childhood, your story, how you came to be interested in ministry, how that came about, and what it was like to be in the Torrance household.

DT: I was born into a very privileged home in the sense it was a very committed Christian home; both parents that were missionaries. My grandfather was a farmer, small-dairy farmer. But father, as it were, broke away. He went into the ministry. He went out to China, and he there was a minister evangelist for 40 years. Mother went out also as a young missionary, and they met in China and they married in China. So my family, six of us, were all born in China. I’m the youngest of six.

On the one hand, it was very turbulent days in China. West China was really ruled by warlords. One might also almost call them brigand chiefs, because each had their own army, they fought, they plundered, they killed. Life was rather turbulent. But in that context of missionary serving, father served, his base was Chengdu, 1500 miles upriver from Shanghai, and from there he worked right up into the mountains toward Tibet.

It was very much a life of faith, tremendous commitment to Christ, and we always had family worship. I never remembered a time in my life when we didn't have family worship — when the family came together, they were reading from the Bible, they prayed, and that carried us on right through our childhood, right through our student days, until finally we married and went our separate ways. And...which we still continue, when we come together, but there's only two of us left in my family now. We still would meet and pray together.

Prayer was a very important thing in our household. We always had it. I don't suppose our family would have survived, literally, without prayer, because, as I mentioned, these were very turbulent years when the family was in China. When the family left, there was severe rioting. A missionary friend of my mother was beheaded in the street very near the home...they rioted, wanting to break into our home. But we were wonderfully protected...there was a tremendous faith in God.

The Bible was very central in our family life. I remember as a boy when I had reached my sixth birthday, Mother showed me the calendar and said there's seven days a week, there's 52 weeks in the year. If you read three chapters of the Bible every day, five on Sunday, you'll read it through in a year short of a week, you'll read it by Christmas. She said that when you take the Bible, always pray and ask God to speak to you through it. When you hear God speaking to you through it, you'll know that this is the word of God.

She said, form that habit, because when you grow up you'll find that many people will say all sorts of things and terrible things about the Bible and dismiss it, but when you have heard God speaking to you through the Bible, you'll know that that is God's word. Nothing will shake it. So the Bible played a very important

party in our whole upbringing. I was never given any doctrine of Scripture, I was simply told it was the word of God, and if we prayed and asked God to speak, he would speak.

In addition to our family prayers, books played a very big part of our family life. My youngest brother, Tom, always called my father the evangelist of the family, and he called my mother the theologian of the family. They guided us in our reading so that they introduced us to a lot of Christian works in our school days and discussed the Scripture, discussed, if you like, doctrine, theology, in a simple way. It was very much part of our whole upbringing and family life.

JMF: What was it like for you as a child and with your siblings living in China? Under the circumstances of the dangerous conditions politically, what sort of freedom did you have to go far from the house or just to be in the city alone, or what was it like?

DT: I was too young when I came home from China, I was three. The older members of the family, they remember it very vividly because they went to school there. Apart from all the turbulence, it was really a marvelous country in which to grow up. There was a freedom which people didn't enjoy here. Father had a mule and also a horse, and that was part of the family, so that the family went to school on horseback. Father used to complain. He said that once Tom got on that mule, he would no longer walk – that mule insisted on galloping. Now, not many children go to school on the back of a mule and a horse.

JMF: Especially a galloping mule.

DT: Tom was very mischievous. He actually was called by the Chinese a mischief. It had its dangers, but it had its freedom and its excitement.

JMF: There must have been a number of people who were glad you were there ... You mentioned that there were riots later on. Where did the animosity come from?

DT: They made, on the one hand, as people came to Christ...They were very friendly and very loyal. Dad, for the last 25 years of his ministry, he was joint

agent for the American and British Bible Society. Not that he looked after printing or anything of that sort — the Chinese did it, but he was superintendant (when he retired there were many tributes to father...written in Chinese...I have some at home on the wall) ...and one of the things that means a lot to me is that in his last year, he and his co-laborers distributed over a million portions of Scripture in West China. When he retired, the church said that no one had done more to forward the gospel in West China, which means a lot to me.

On the other hand, what happened...you had these brigand chiefs, and they were there for, I don't know, it was indigenous, their way of life. But after 1917, the Communist revolution on China, the Communists began pouring in rifles, weapons, and communistic, atheistic literature. The weapons came into the hands of these brigand armies, and also the literature. That certainly aroused a tremendous or increased an antipathy to foreigners and to the Christian faith. That's what led up to the final rise when the family came home.

They took a very difficult decision. Father was very fluent in Chinese. He had quite a knowledge. After he came home, Father and I were invited by a Chinese tutor [?], an emperor, if we would have a meal at his home. His parents had come over and fled from Communist China. The mother had no interest, and the father very little, so this tutor wanted them to meet my father. He said to me he could not get over my father. He said when his back was turned you would not know that he was not Chinese. He had quite a remarkable knowledge.

He went back alone, for seven years, that was quite a sacrifice for the family. We remembered him and he kept very much in touch...we wrote every week. Mother insisted that each one of us write to him, and he wrote to us, so that despite the gap, it was still, you might say a remarkably close family, and once again great answers to prayer.

For example, just after father went back, the family settled for a short period near Glasgow in the west of Scotland and then moved to Edinburgh. Mother went to the local church, attended a local prayer meeting of about 27 led by one of the elders. She said she didn't know anyone there, but the elder said, are there any subjects for prayer tonight, any people you would like us to pray for? Mother said

yes, her husband was a missionary in West China and she just had a deep feeling that he needed prayer at that moment. She said it was very lovely that one after another in that room prayed for my father though they didn't know him.

Mother wrote to father and told him, and he wrote back and said could you tell me the day of that prayer meeting and the time of day? It so happened on that particular day and the very time of day, his life was spared, in the sense that a communist army...(I say Communist; I don't know how much communism they really do, but they were influenced by their atheistic literature and nationalism)...came up to this mountain village to search for my father and a fellow missionary, and they searched every house in that village bar one. They walked past the door at the same time as that prayer meeting by Glasgow. I think remarkable answers to prayer. The family saw many answers to prayer like that. Prayer was very much part of the family life of all of us.

JMF: How long was he separated from the family during that period?

DT: Seven years. It was difficult because... Father opened up the Christian work in West China up among the tributaries of the Yangtze River, the Min was one of the main ones, and among people called the Qiang [Sichuan province, west of Chengdu]. I suppose he would be the first Western missionary ever to enter those parts. He had the language, he had the dialect, there was no one else to take over. He felt that God wanted him to continue this work and to establish it, so he went back. The church there was smaller perhaps than in other parts of China, but it nonetheless became deep-rooted.

Shortly after he came back, I remember him receiving a parcel. He opened it, and I was there in the room with him, and he was a bit astonished at first. It was a Chinese Bible, but he had several Chinese Bibles. When he opened it and he looked at what we would say the back cover...but that is the beginning — they start in what we would say is the back and work forward — there was a story of that Bible. What had happened was that this Communist had come up to this mountain village, it was a Christian village, they would take the grain, the food, and they'd burn it, you know? Tragic things...which to try and wipe them out. They would burn every Bible. So they had forewarning, the Christians, and they

took the Bibles and they buried them in a cave, and when the Communists passed over, they dug it up again and sent one of the Bibles to my father, and the story was inside the cover with the words that just as this Bible has been resurrected, the church in China will be resurrected, which I found rather moving.

I had that Bible in my possession for a number of years, but when my brother Tom went back on one of his visits to West China and up to those villages where my father worked, he took it with him because of the shortage of Bibles, and he gave it to the son of the man who sent it to my father. I was sorry to part with the Bible, but they needed the Bibles and that was the right thing to happen.

Moving into ministry

JMF: How did you then begin to or become oriented toward ministry after your father came back?

DT: I believed in the Lord all the days of my life. A living presence of Christ was very real to all of us in the family. Prayer was very real. Yes, I read the Bible. I read the Bible every year, but nowadays I read it three times a year. I grew up, the faith was very real to all of us. The Christian life was very real. The turning point for me was the army. I did a year at university, did classics for a year, and then went off to the army and joined the army in the end of 1942. I felt I would say yes, I would enter the ministry, but I didn't want to be a minister.

I moved through different units in the army, being transferred. In wartime you're shifted around according to where you were needed. So I was sent here, to one unit.... I went down and was part of special assault troops doing beach landings. We did a lot of rock climbing, explosives, and on and off boats. It was Americans. We were the British Army and they were American. We were due at that point to go to the Channel Islands, because that was the only part of Britain that was occupied by Germany. I remember saying to myself... we were on standby so either we knew that it tomorrow, next week...we may be sent over...

I remember saying to myself, many people were not going to come back, and I hope I don't come back, because if I come back, God will put me in the ministry. Quite mad, absolutely mad when I was young, and I felt no, I'd rather not come

back than be put to the ministry. I had a deep feeling underneath that by hook, by crook, God would make sure I came back, because he was determined to put me in the ministry. That hung over me as a tremendous cloud.

JMF: Why did you not want to go into ministry?

DT: I suppose it was an anomalous situation, because the Lord meant a lot to me. I continued to read the Bible; I carried a Bible in my pocket in my army uniform and had it with me all through the army life. A passage which really troubled me was Acts 2, that here the disciples, Peter and the others, were preaching, and some in the multitude thought they were drunk and laughed and scorned at them. Somehow or other that horrified me. I didn't want to be up there on a platform and be mocked. Perhaps I was strange. I lived in this anomalous situation where I read the Bible, I prayed every day, the Lord meant a lot to me, but I was afraid to let go.

There was a number of incidents that happened that spoke very powerfully to me...we were in a training scheme up in the hills north of England. I was in a tent with another three lads. In that type of army exercise, you don't get into pajamas, you lay down in your uniform, your coat, you're allowed to take off your pack. When I thought they were asleep, I pulled out my Bible and started reading it, and one of the lads who wasn't asleep he said, "Dave, are you reading a Bible?" I said yes. "Why not read it to us all?"

I knew God was speaking to me. They weren't Christian folk, they didn't go to church, one of them was a hard swearer, if I could put. They listened very attentively, and I felt very humble. I felt God saying, you are called to speak the gospel.

In this assault brigade where I had said I'd rather not come back than go into ministry, there was a church three miles away. I walked down there, came back, and I had a letter to my parents, and I hunted around for a postbox. I asked another soldier where there was a postbox. He said, "I'll show you." He took me off, and we got chatting, and he asked, "You want a cup of tea?" So we had a cup of tea. He said, "What have you been doing?" I said, "I've been to church." I didn't

say anything more. We were in the same assault brigade but in a different unit. He had done about two years at university and we got chatting away. We finally agreed that we both had a Saturday afternoon off, next Saturday, so we would meet and we went out sailing.

When we came in, he said to me, "When I saw you last week you had been to church. Are you going to church tomorrow?" I said yes. He said, "Can I come with you?" That happened for three weeks. We went out on Saturday afternoon sailing, went to church, and when we were coming back the three miles, he suddenly turned to me, he said, "Dave, you're a Christian." I said yes. He said, "You've never talked to me about Christ."

That really shook me. I felt God was saying I put you here, this is what you've got to do. That spoke very heavily to me. He was one of those remarkable men who you shared the faith and he simply accepted...he believed. Yes he was a university man. I had to give him a Bible. I don't think he had ever in his life been to church before. Yet he just, you shared the faith and he believed, and he entered the Christian faith in the mildest way. I felt very much the hand of God in me.

There was a third incident...I went out to India and met on the boat a man I was very attracted to. He had been at university for four years. He was an atheist, or I should say an agnostic. We had many vigorous discussions on his humanism, which I felt was wrong. Apart from his humanism, we got on well together and we actually shared a tent together when we arrived in India. In the tropics it's very noisy — all sorts of insects and creatures, and I was lying in my bunk in the tent and he came in. He saw me, and I knew he took a swipe at me and he said, "Oh this marvelous world we're in."

I was a bit, to use an army term, browned off. He disturbed the peace of my evening, and I said, "Shut up." I said, "You're talking dunces and you know it. And you sit down." Very blunt, very rude. So he sat down and was quiet. Then he suddenly said, "I'd like to become a Christian." That absolutely shook me. For weeks we had discussed and not a single suggestion that he wanted to, was open to the faith. We knelt down and we prayed. He committed his life to Christ.

I felt that God's hand was on my shoulder and said this is what you're called to do, and you'll do it. It should have filled me with joy. It troubled me. There were other experiences. At the end of the war I had a marvelous leave climbing up in the Himalayas, came back, picked up smallpox, which wasn't very helpful.

JMF: In the Himalayas?

DT: On the way back. I survived, most people don't survive. In smallpox, your temperature goes up, it dips down, and it goes up a second time. The second time is mostly fatal. It's a rather interesting experience. I was in the jungle division, and so I was put in a little hut by myself, so it made you feel like a leper, you're all isolated, no one came to you. It didn't bother me in the slightest, and I wasn't downhearted in the slightest. I never thought I would die, although I knew I was pretty ill. I had the most incredible experience of the presence of Christ — the sheer joy and thanksgiving. Maybe I was delirious, but I knew the closeness of Christ. I was filled with a sense of thanksgiving that I'd never had before.

I recovered, went back to my unit, because although the war was over, this was maybe October '45, the east was in a very turbulent state so the armistice, if you call it that, didn't mean a great deal to some of us. India was in uproar after...to split India/Pakistan, two million people perished in those riots, never reported. Malaysia, Indonesia, the east was very much in turmoil.

I began to think, by the end of the year, the time is going to come down when I'll leave the army. What am I going to do? I knew God was saying the ministry, and I said no. I'll be a medical missionary. Didn't want to be a doctor — anything rather than a minister. I was quite happy to go out. I'd seen enough of the poor and the destitute to spend my life with the poor and the destitute. For three days I was in total turmoil. I don't think I could talk civilly to someone. I might punch someone in the nose, which I didn't do, you'd be court-marshaled in the army if you tried that.

I had a tent to myself. I approached that tent, I can't put it into words, I knew God was there physically. As I entered that tent, I knew God was saying the ministry, and I said no. Hard to put into words, I felt physically that God had caught me by

the scruff of the neck and said all right, you'll never again have any peace of mind, and no joy. I knelt down on the ground and said, "All right Lord, I'll be a minister, it's your look out." That was my words. The most disgruntled prayer I've ever prayed.

Something incredible happened. That whole cloud that hung over me vanished. It was like the birds were singing and the ministry, I couldn't get over this, became very attractive. I can still look back on those days, I was staggered that whereas I had hated the thought of the ministry, I now really looked forward to ministry and wanted to be a minister.

When I left the army I came back to university. I did four years of philosophy degree then on to theology. I just felt that God was with me in the ministry. I've often looked back to that because there are times in the ministry I don't think there's anything more rewarding than the life in the ministry. What could be more rewarding than to see people come to faith in Christ and be converted, to see people helped, comforted, filled with the joy and the freedom of the Lord? It's been a marvelous life, a marvelous calling. It's a tremendous privilege, but at times difficult. Many a time I've said to the Lord, you made me a minister, and it's up to you to do something about it.

JMF: Thanks for sharing that with us, and I hope we can get together again soon.

The Importance of Prayer in Pastoral Work (YI107)

J. Michael Fezell: It's a real pleasure to have you back.

David Torrance: Thank you.

JMF: I'd like to get into some interesting things about your early ministry. When you first became a pastor and then through the course of your ministry, what are some of the experiences that stand out? What kinds of things did you find that churches need, that individuals need, and what did you have to have, and be as a pastor to serve in that day?

DT: In the Bible, in Acts chapter 6, when a dispute arose about the expressing of some of the supplies to the poor, the needy, of the church, the apostles said, well, it's not right for us simply to give ourselves over to the practical affairs of distributing the poor, and they appointed seven deacons and he said (which I think is very important), we will give ourselves to prayer and ministry of the word, to prayer and the ministry of the word...

Looking back at my college days, although I had a very fine teacher, in college days we were each divided up. We each had a pastor. About 12 of us were given to Professor James S. Stewart, who is well known, a very godly man, professor of the New Testament...and we had a Bible study. He met with us individually, he met with us in a group, and meeting with me individually, he said, "Well David..." he was a very, very shy man, but he got there, he said, "What did you read from the Bible before you came to college today?" I can still remember, I was reading Exodus, I told him. He asked us, if you like, did we say our prayers? I don't think that's done today. I admired the man immensely.

We are called, as ministers, to be ministers of the word in a ministry of prayer. Sadly, in the ministry, we pass over that question of prayer, but it's there. The apostles, they said, we appoint the deacons to look after the ministerial side so that we can devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. I find that very important. I had three parish churches. I had a period of evangelism, and then three parish churches...certainly my second parish, although there were great rewards — I saw people converted — nonetheless there were very great difficulties in that parish, and I found myself having to pray an hour every morning before breakfast for that parish. When our prayer life flags, our ministry flags. We can do all the right things...

I came home to it very early in the ministry. I remember preaching a sermon on the atonement. People were moved and stirred. I was what called a probational minister at that time. I didn't have my own parish and I was called to preach in another church...and went entirely in the wrong way, and I preached the sermon without prayer, and it fell flat. I felt very rebuked, that this is God's word, there's

nothing automatic about it. It's so important that at each fresh occasion that we give ourselves to the Lord and we pray for the Holy Spirit to work.

That came home to me very powerfully when I was still probationary, I was a post-graduate student and I was invited to preach in July in a glorious summer weekend over in the west of Scotland, the west Highlands. They said they'd put me up in a hotel, and I'd do services. I went entirely in the wrong way, a lesson I never forgot. I put six sermons in my bag and went off. I thought well, I'll get in...I went early after lunch, I arrived at the hotel, and I thought I'll have a quick look at my sermon and go for a long, five, eight mile walk in the sunshine in the west highlands — it's a lovely country. So I prayed, opened my bag, pulled out six sermons, read them, and I couldn't preach them at all. I felt very frustrated, so I knelt down again — my parents always knelt when they said their prayers at home — I knelt down and prayed and asked what God wanted to say. It came to me very clearly — the resurrection. That bothered me.

I read through my six sermons again, and they were further away than ever. So I knelt down a third time and prayed, and this time it was absolutely clear — the resurrection. I thought no, no, I've got to have one of these sermons. I read through these six sermons, and I couldn't preach them at all. The one thing that really kept, the resurrection...so I said, all right then, it will have to be resurrection. I felt very frustrated, because now I would have to sit down on a glorious sunny afternoon and write a brand new sermon on the resurrection.

But in my state of frustration, nothing would come. I sat there in my frustration thinking of this sunshine, the warmth, the west Highlands vanishing away. Here I was, how would I prepare this sermon? At 10:00 at night, I had one sentence on the paper, and I said, "All right Lord, if it's the resurrection, you have to speak to these people. I have nothing to say." I went to bed, slept, got up in the morning, my mind was still a blank. I said to the Lord, "Lord, if it's the resurrection, you have to do something about it." I went off to church early and met the session clerk, who greeted me and said, "Could you make the intonations?" Because last night, their very beloved senior elder died, and he wanted to break the news to

the congregation. In some astonishing way, that sermon just flowed. I felt very, very rebuked.

A few years later, I happened to be up in Oban, again this time in the west Highlands. I was sitting in the car in Oban. We were going to go over to an island, Lismore, but my wife was shopping. As I was waiting, the session clerk came out on the pavement and so I rolled down the window and said hello, and we greeted one another. He said, "Yes, I remember you. You're the minister who came all prepared on the occasion that our senior elder died."

I said, "Would you like a coffee?" So he and I went for a coffee. I said, "Could I correct... I'm afraid I went to your church entirely in the wrong way. I did not go prepared. But by the miraculous hand of God, he took over that situation because I did not go the right way." I've never forgot that lesson. We cannot, in the ministry...it's not like a normal job. We can't just write a sermon. It may be doctrinally, theologically, correct, a good sermon. But we have to go with the Spirit of the Lord, and we have to pray. I take very seriously those words that the apostles said, "We will not handle the administration. We will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word."

I believe that the key to the ministry, well, the focal point of the ministry which I've always tried to keep before me, is preaching, the proclaiming of the word, teaching of the word, and the pastoral work — meeting people face-to-face. I'm not very good at the administration. I'll do it, but I don't particularly enjoy it, and often I have let it go, because people are what matters. Your preaching and your pastoral work go hand-in-hand. When you're meeting people... I always, as a minister, had a reading and prayer. I'd visit the homes, visit people in hospital...I always felt it was right to read something of the word of God and to pray.

Again and again, I've found that the real pastoral work opened up after you prayed with someone. You can meet a family, you can greet them, you can ask about their welfare and about their children, their holidays, but once you've had a prayer, then they open up and the real pastoral work begins. We are here to share the gospel, to help people come to Jesus Christ. As we meet face-to-face,

we are there to help people to come and to meet the Lord. That's the key of our ministry.

The vicarious humanity of Christ

JMF: Let's shift gears then and get into pastoral ministry a bit. The same principle seems to apply to the Christian life itself. In other words... Let's talk about what we call vicarious humanity of Christ and how that works in a person's life and how it is that God deals with sin and with righteousness in the life of a believer.

DT: You used the word *vicarious*, which is a Latin word and perhaps a word used by theologians...it's a word that simply means, in the Latin, someone acting, speaking on behalf of someone else, for their benefit. This is precisely what God came to do in Jesus Christ — that he came to take our place, to act on our behalf, and to work out a great salvation.

Many Christians, unfortunately, many evangelicals, tend to restrict the atonement to the death of Christ, and therefore interpret it in a legal or judicial way. They're quite correct to do so. There is a real judicial element there, that Christ died for us and he rose again, and the virtue of that...our guilt is removed, we are set free. But if we restrict the atonement to the death of Christ, then many problems arise. We are really saying that the death of Christ is not part of the whole ministry of Christ and is separate from the resurrection. We are also, if we restrict it to the death of Christ, we are throwing people back on themselves, their own resources, and almost inevitably, they become legalistic.

JMF: So for just an average person listening to what you're saying, let me try to recap and you tell me if I'm saying it correctly. It's common for Christians to think, and many times they're taught, that the key element of Christian faith is that "Christ died for your sins, therefore believe in him and your sins will be taken away — now go your way and do the best you can to be a good person." In other words, the focus is so much on the death of Christ paying the penalty for your sins and therefore removing your sins, and then it kind of stops there, as though that's all there is to it, but there's far more to it than that. Is that somewhat what you're saying?

DT: Yes indeed. If we do restrict the atonement to the death of Christ, it creates a multiplicity of problems. Very often the great tendency there is to want the blessings of Christ rather than the person of Christ. That is a problem which we see in the liberal world, like Bultmann. It's equally a problem in the evangelical world — a tendency to want the blessings of Christ and not the person of Christ. A key phrase in the New Testament is the little phrase, "in Christ," the Greek, *en Christou*, in Christ. Now that phrase, "in Christ," in Jesus Christ, in the Lord, occurs something like 132 times in the New Testament. So if you ask me what is salvation, how are we saved? Yes, we are saved by the work of Christ, but by union with Christ. We can't separate union with Christ and the work of Christ any more than we can separate the work of Christ and the person of Christ.

JMF: So you're saying that most of us tend to want to receive the blessing of having our sins forgiven, but what we don't want is for Christ to be there as part of our life, in fact *being* our life, we want, we want the pain of sin taken away, but we'd rather...now that you're done would you please just stay next door?

DT: I'm sure that's very common and runs right through all the churches. That is quite unbiblical. If you were to ask me, "How would you sum up Paul's doctrine in his epistles?" I would have to say that we are saved by grace and union with Christ. We're not simply saved by grace, we're not simply saved by union with Christ, it's the two together — union with Christ and salvation by grace — because God came down — an incredible, staggering fact — that God came down to this earth and took flesh and blood in the man Jesus, although remaining God.

As man, he entered into our humanity. He was a particular man, and yet also a representative man at one and the same time. As he entered into our humanity, yes, he took all our sins, all our weaknesses, all our sufferings, and he died bearing the connotation. But he did more than that. In taking our humanity, your humanity, mine, he became you, he became me. He sanctified our humanity, he turned it roundabout. He perfectly obeyed God on our behalf. He perfectly obeyed the Father on our behalf. He prayed to the Father on our behalf. In the resurrection he offers himself to us. He offers us this new life, his life for our life,

your life, my life, renewed, sanctified, so that to receive salvation is to receive Christ, to receive the new life of Christ. It's a total thing.

So to receive Christ is to receive the fullness of God that Paul talks about — the fullness of the Spirit. It also means on our part a total surrender, a total letting go. There's tremendous joy in that because it means that in so far as Christ has done everything for us — he is for us in every situation in life, on every event in life, in every occasion. There's no situation in life that we face but Christ is there, and it's always "not I but Christ." Not I but Christ when I have a great decision to make, not I but Christ when I worship, because worship means that as Christ is alone the one who worships the Father, he alone enters the presence of the Father...when we are united with Christ, Christ is with us, in us, we are in him. In Christ we enter the Father. So it's in Christ we can worship, in Christ we pray. We don't know how to pray. We try to pray in our own efforts, and prayer is then a frustration. We try to pray and set aside times we pray, we know how we fail. But Christ prays. If we keep our eyes on Christ and remember that all through life, every step of life it's not I but Christ, we're on the victory side.

Many years ago I had a friend, he became a minister, who in turn had a very close friend who was a very keen professional footballer. His friend, a footballer, was a Christian. But he thought of the Christian life in terms of football. He said one day, he said, you know, it was like my trying to play football. Jesus was standing at the touch line watching, and every time I came near the goal, I missed it. It was so frustrating. But something marvelous happened. Jesus and I changed places. I now stand at the touch line. I watch Jesus playing, and he scores the goal every time, and all I can do is stand and cheer.

It may be a simple story of a man who was a professional footballer — that to me is the Christian life. The whole of the Christian life is centered on Christ, it's in Christ, it's a union with Christ where Christ takes over because he's accomplished everything for us — for our forgiveness, for our redemption, for our reconciliation with our Father, our entry to the Father's presence, our entry to the kingdom of heaven.

JMF: So in speaking of faith then, faith is in Christ himself, not in specific things or actions per se, but in him. It isn't even a matter of our faith, we are actually entering into *his* faith.

DT: Absolutely. Faith is a way of being related to Jesus Christ. Faith, our faith is important. Without faith we are lost. You can come and give me a gift, and if I say no, I don't want it, I go without it. God comes to us with his gift, and we can say no, we don't want it, and we're lost.

What means a lot to me is a story of the announcement to Mary of the birth of Christ. Now here was this young maiden, and the Lord came and announced to her God's will for her life. He announced that she would have a child. That child would be born of God and would be the Son of God. Now Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." She responded, saying, "Yes Lord, let it all happen just as you want it." Mary had the freedom to say yes, and she said yes. She had the freedom to say no, in which case God would no doubt have gone away and chosen some other young woman. The marvelous thing is that Mary said yes. But when she said yes, that's all she could do. She couldn't create that child in her womb — that was a miraculous happening from God.

When you and I first come to Christ, God comes, he confronts us, he says, "I love you, I've forgiven you, I'll give you all the fullness of God, I bring you into the fellowship of the Father." All you and I can do, like Mary, is say, "Yes Lord," or "No Lord," "Thank you Lord." Our thanksgiving is our response to God's glorious announcement of his love and forgiveness and salvation. Very important. But what matters is that our faith is a response to Christ, to his faithfulness, but it's not a work. Far, far too often we throw back the responsibility to men and women. That's utterly frustration. And we get weary. Ministers, I'm afraid, approach the same way. They throw themselves into the ministry — I speak as a minister — it could be very easy to let our devotional life, our time with the Lord, slip into the background. We try to go on under our own steam and our own effort and we utterly fail.

JMF: What often is asked is something along this line, "You're telling me that Christ has done everything necessary for my salvation and that everything that I

experience he is doing for me and through me, and that sounds like I don't have to do anything, and Christ does it all. I don't see how that's consistent with the Scripture. It just sounds like some kind of universalism idea." How do we respond to that?

DT: It depends what people mean by the use of that word, universalism. On the one hand it might mean, and rightly mean, that God loves the whole world and that when he came in Jesus Christ and he redeemed the world — the salvation, the offer of salvation, is for the whole world. In that sense, I'm a universalist. It does not mean, however, that all people accept the salvation of Christ, that all people are saved. Sadly, no. The Bible never, ever says that — that we are free to accept or reject. God doesn't, to me, send anyone to hell. He weeps over this world. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He loved the people of Jerusalem and was sad that they were rejecting him. And because they're rejecting him they would suffer, and suffer terribly.

If we reject Christ, we reject his salvation, we reject life, we're lost. And that's the horrors of hell. And so I believe in hell. If we talk about the wrath of God, the wrath of God is really the wrath of the Lamb. God doesn't want us to perish. He doesn't want any sinner to perish. He loves everyone. The glorious thing is to be able to go to anyone and say that God loves you and God has forgiven you and he wants you. But we have to respond, and if we don't, we're lost.

Responding to Christ

JMF: And what is the nature of our response?

DT: Our response is, really, as I have said, a response of thanksgiving. It's an acknowledgement. As a pastor, I have often asked people to read certain portions of Scripture. Very interesting...and when I've asked them to read a passage of Scripture and I've gone back to that home, they told me they read it. There are certain passages I use a great deal — Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is a prayer of confession where David, a man of God, really in a remarkable way, called a friend of God, nonetheless sinned. The Bible doesn't gloss over the fact of his sin and that he

committed adultery and murder in the sense that he was responsible for the death of Uriah the Hittite.

I've talked to people and we've got so far, and I've said, "Look, will you read Psalm 51," and I've found that they're converted on that Psalm — that God has spoken to them through it. I've generally said when I've given them Psalm 51, to read another Psalm, one of the Psalms of thanksgiving, maybe Psalm 103 or like that. I remember being on mission and stopping and speaking to a couple of young people, aged about 21, on the street, inviting them to our meeting. I thought he was very, very aggressive, and if I had mentioned the name of Christ again I think he would have physically assaulted me. So I said, "Well, look. Can I come invite you to a cup of tea?" And she came. Yes, he was a young person that I don't suppose had ever been to church. But I tried to share the faith over the cup of tea, and I said, "Look, can I ask you to read Psalm 51?" She woke me up at 7:00 in the morning. I was still in my pajamas, I confess. She was on her way to work. And she asked me about this Psalm, and that was her conversion. She was given words to pray. People come in different ways — some impressed by the love of Christ, a great deal by an acceptance of the reality of sin.

Many years ago I met a very brilliant student. He'd been done with school and was embarked on an honors course at university and said that after that, he hoped to go on to ministry and added the words, "But I'd like to go to a liberal college." That bothered me. Something didn't quite ring true. I felt compelled to pray for him. The more I prayed for him, the more I felt an extraordinary compulsion to pray for him. I found myself praying continually for this chap. Finally it came to the point that for a fortnight I saw him every day either for a coffee, an occasional meal.

Then I asked him to read 1 John chapter 1, and he told me he read it and as a result he could no longer pray. That really bothered me. I prayed a lot of about that. Then I phoned him up, and I said, "I asked you to read 1 John chapter 1, and you told me you did it. Having read it, you told me you could no longer pray." He said, "Yes." Now I don't find it easy to talk to a person — absolutely frankly, my knees shook. I felt I had to. I said, "You know the reason why, is because you're a

sinner, and you won't acknowledge it. You want to gloss over it. It says quite clearly if we say that we have no sin, we're a liar. The truth is not in us. It equally says that if we confess our sins, he is just and willing to forgive us our sins." So I said, "Your problem is that you're a sinner, and you have to confess it."

I thought we parted company. The next three days if he saw me he'd cross the street. He wouldn't come near me. I thought, "Oh dear, that's the end of that relationship." Then he phoned me up, and he said, "Who's been talking about me?" "No one's been talking about you." And he said, "Yes, why did you say what you did? You've been talking." I said, "I haven't mentioned you to a single mortal soul. I never mentioned you to a member of the family." He said, "Then why did you say that?" I said, "I'd been praying for you. I felt God wanted me to say it."

He said, "Can I come round and see you?" So he came around and he told me his story. He had got into bad company and asked if I would pray for him. I said, "No, not unless you're prepared to confess your sins." He says, "Yes I am." So we prayed, I prayed, he prayed. I can still see his face — the sheer joy of the Lord. He said, "You know, I feel all the joy of my childhood is back."

Some people come that way. Others come in a different way — they've had problems, they feel the love of God has helped them, very often an illness. They've been comforted, they've been helped, or miraculously healed, and they see the hand of God. Everyone's different. As pastors we have to learn to love people, to befriend people, and everyone's different. There's no uniform way of going about things.

But we have to pray that... I found it very helpful as a pastor when I was visiting a parish, the home of a parish, to have a brief word of prayer before knocking on each new door — that somehow God will take over and I didn't know what to say...would God just say whatever he wanted to say. You just relax, you try to love your people, to enter into their joys and sorrows and interests and family life. And yet within that situation try and help them to an understanding of God.

JMF: Well, we probably have come to the end of our time right now. There's so much more I'd like to explore, but thanks so much for your time. Thanks for being here.

DT: No, thank you very much indeed. Thank you, it's quite a privilege.

Already Forgiven (YI108)

The Christian life

J. Michael Fezell: Reverend Torrance, it's a joy to have you back with us again. I would like to ask you to draw on your many years of pastoral experience to talk about a topic today that has to do with how a Christian lives in light of the fact that they are union with Christ, and how a pastor should work with a congregation in light of the sin that so easily besets us and that we're surrounded with. How do those things work? We know that we're complete in Christ, we know that we're in union with Christ, we know that it's the vicarious humanity of Christ that makes us who we are. And yet, that doesn't mean that we can just not put any effort into serving God obediently. How does that work together?

David Torrance: That's a very searching and a very important question. How do we live the Christian life? How do we, as pastors, help our people to live the Christian life, or indeed, to receive Christ? I think that's what you're asking. What I feel very strongly about and I would say to myself as a minister because I am part of the church in all my faults...quite manifest.

Far too often we say to people, "You must live the Christian life with the *help* of the Lord or with the help of the Holy Spirit." Personally, I think that's quite wrong. I have a car, it's about three years old, and if it breaks down I'm not going to go to take it to the garage and say, "Could you lend me some tools so I can fix my car," or I'm not going to say, "Will you help me and give me a hand?" I hand him over the car. He fixes it. We can't come to Christ and say, "Lord, will you help me to live a good life, will you help me, guide me, in this line of activity." He is Lord. We have to surrender and hand over everything.

That is our problem of the Christian life. How do we hand over everything? It's vital. I always find it amazing, staggering in fact, that the almighty God came down to this earth and became a man. He became a particular man, a representative man, and yet at one and the same time remained God. Jesus is man and he is God. As man, he has come because in the end we can do nothing. We are utterly helpless. We've been caught in sin, we are bound by sin. If you take the parable that Jesus told about the strong man, he said, "No one can enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods without first binding that strong man, then he can take his goods." In our natural state, we are overcome by the power of sin, which is a very real power, and we are helpless. But God has lovingly come down, broken into our situation. He has, in Jesus, bound the strong man...died on the cross and has risen victorious.

But he has done more than that. In binding the strong man and setting us free, he has actually lived out on our behalf a new and a perfect life, a righteous life. And he wants to give us that life. As we come to Christ and open our lives and we ask Christ to come, he comes as our Savior, he comes as our Lord. He comes to give us that new life so that we receive forgiveness, we receive redemption, we receive reconciliation with God. It's a marvelous thing because with Jesus ascended, we are made to ascend to the Holy Spirit. We are made to enter into the presence of the Father we are welcomed by the Father into his family.

What I always find staggering and amazing is we look at John 17...we are made to share in the fellowship of the Trinity itself, that God treats us as if we are Christ. But only, only because in Christ we become new creatures — new men and new women. Jesus has lived out our life for us in a double sense, that he took away our sin, our life...but he sanctified our life, turned it around, made it holy. So that day by day, month by month, you and I, as we open our eyes to Christ, keep our eyes in Christ, are simply appropriating Christ in every situation in life.

I think it's a disastrous thing to have people pray, "Lord, will you help me to do this?" Who's in charge? If God helps me, I'm in charge. I can't treat God as my servant or the Holy Spirit as my servant. He is the almighty God. He is Lord. I, myself, can do nothing. So every step, every day, every moment of the day has to

be a looking unto Christ and surrender to Christ, but rejoicing, rejoicing that Christ is in control. So Paul can say, "It's not me, but it's Christ, Christ who lives in me." I think that's what we've got to try to get over to our people. The sheer joy, the sheer freedom, the sheer release from the shackles of sin, the sheer release from all the worries and the fears and anxieties is a letting go of God.

If I were to speak personally, I had a very happy marriage. We celebrated our 50 years. My wife was a doctor. She was, before we married, a missionary doctor in Africa. We came up to university together and ...my career was broken because of the army and the war. We met when she came home on furlough. She would have gone back to Africa, but she didn't go back. We married...had a very happy time. But latter day she wasn't well. She had Parkinson's suddenly, and she died. People said, "Well, what did you do?" I never thought of tomorrow. I never thought of the future. I felt we were in the hands of God. God loves her, he loves me, and we had a very happy time together.

In actual fact, her illness brought us even closer together. I had to do an awful lot for her. She passed away in peace. It's hard to put into words...I remember vividly the day two and a half years ago, it was a very lovely sunny day, and after lunch I asked my wife what she wanted to do. She said she would like some sunshine so I took her out in her wheelchair and we sat in the sun, came back a little late, at 5:00, and that night our youngest daughter came in, we had a meal...and normally she would go to bed early at half past eight, but this time it's half past nine. I helped her get ready for bed. We had prayers, we always had prayers together, we prayed together. I kissed her, told her I loved her, helped her to bed, quarter of an hour later, she was gone. She was restless, I said, "Would you like to sit up?" So I helped her sit up. She was actually in my arms as she passed away very peacefully.

It sounds strange to say, but I had a tremendous feeling of the sheer love of Christ and the presence of Christ that she didn't suffer, she had no prolonged illness, didn't have to go to hospital. She departed — it was in the hands of God. I felt the kindness of God. People would say, well, what about the future? I can't say I ever thought about the future. We were in the hands of God. He is our Lord and our

master, and we just day by day looked to him, thank him that yes, he's our lovely, glorious Savior. He's our Lord. He looks after tomorrow. Maybe that's oversimplified, but I feel that's the way I try to live so we don't have the worries, the fears.

I remember right in the area of the ministry visiting a home. She wasn't doing well and full of anxiety. I directed her to that passage in the Sermon of the Mount, "The birds of the air, they don't care about tomorrow, the heavenly Father feeds them. I said, "You read that." She told me a long time later, it was a great help and comforter, that the Lord provides. Yes, life can be difficult, it can be hard, we can face the dark and the stormy days, but we know that the Lord is there. Not only is he there, but as our mighty Redeemer and as a Lord who has total control over the whole situation.

So in the ministry I tried always to direct people to Christ. The most disastrous thing to do would be for the church to draw attention to itself, and what the church is doing. Sadly, the church is pretty good at doing that. But our task is to turn people away from us to Jesus Christ...and as far as possible to turn them away from their own problems and throw them to Christ.

Dealing with sin in our lives

JMF: If I have a sin or a destructive habit that I'm struggling with or that's bringing me down, or that is not the kind of behavior that reflects one who is in union with Christ, what is my role? What do I do to deal with that, and what is the pastor's role? How does the pastor deal with that sort of thing in the congregation?

DT: We all have these problems, sadly, we're all sinners, and I, as pastor, yes, I'm a sinner. How do I go about it? If there are bad habits, what do you do about those bad habits? Or what about an illness? And sadly, there's a lot of illness in the world, and what do we do about that? We have to look to Jesus Christ. When Christ came and gave himself for us on our behalf and he died for us and he rose again...and he rose we have that great shout of triumph, the shout of the victor, "It is finished." It is finished. He had accomplished everything for our salvation, everything to solving all our problems and anxieties of life, perplexities...has done

everything for our complete physical healing, everything. There's nothing left to do. So we look to him and thank him for what he has done in the finished work of Christ, so that he is the answer.

I attended a conference on prayer and healing under the director (name inaudible) on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of July. I had responded very warmly to that conference, and I've actually never ever witnessed so much physical healing ever before. Why I responded was because when someone comes who is sick, he doesn't pray, Lord, here's this person, he's sick, he's got cancer, please, take away the cancer. He said no, he said when that person comes – this is what he does in practice – he said you try and help that person to look away from their problem, away from their sickness, or if it's a bad habit like drugs or whatever, look away from that problem and to look to Jesus Christ and look to the cross and the fact that Christ has died and Christ has risen...and say that complete victory belongs to me in the light of what Jesus has done. Complete deliverance belongs to me from this evil habit because of what Christ has done. Complete healing belongs to me because of what Christ has done, thank you Lord, and go on and on saying thank you. And as you thank the Lord, the miracle happens.

Now it might sound very simple...it is very, very simple. But after all, the gospel is very simple. It's you and I who make it complicated with our sinful ways. Or the church makes it complicated. In that particular conference of prayer and healing, he had sessions on the Thursday night, Friday night, Friday morning was ministers/leaders, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, then we had a prayer. There were some marvelous healings. That's all we did. Those who were asked to join in that prayer, and I shared in it, to help people just to look at Christ, the finished work of Christ. He would say well, now you say, because of what Christ has done, complete healing belongs to me, complete healing, because of what Christ has done, thank you. There were some remarkable healings. I think when we approach our people and they share the problems...and we try to do that.

You take a common situation in a parish ministry...very, very common is broken marriages. I've tried all my ministry to visit people whose marriages were a problem or had a problem. I would have to say I find that the most difficult side of the ministry because of hardened hearts. I've equally found some incredibly lovely stories of people who have been reconciled and whose marriage was

healed. That has always upheld me and comforted me. So I've had many failures at that and some very, very lovely answers to prayer.

I've always said, when two people have a marriage problem, and I could see very vividly in one parish...a couple, they were in their 60s, married over 40 years, and he happily went off with another woman. I went back and forth between husband and wife for over three months, and I thought in a way I was almost battering my head against a wall, because these are not easy situations. I tried to tell them that both had to first and foremost kneel at the foot of the cross and receive God's forgiveness for themselves. They had to think of their partner, as a wife not to think of a husband who had gone off with another woman, but to kneel at the foot of the cross and receive God's forgiveness for her life and receive the whole fullness of Christ, the life of Christ.

I said to him, yes, I told him he had to abandon the other woman...I said, "You've got to kneel before the foot of the cross and receive Christ. Only as you both die to yourselves, you'll be raised up as one new person. And after 40 years, it means you start again from the beginning. But as you both kneel before that cross and in the light of all that God has done for you, forgiveness, a new life...he will raise you up with new life."

I went off on holiday, and I came back, and there they were, side-by-side in church. And they were there every Sunday. They were the last people to say goodbye when I left that parish. It's a looking...trying to help your people...we're all sinful...I can't look down at that, I'm in the same boat as a fellow sinner sharing as a fellow sinner with my people. But helping them to try and look away from ourselves, from our sins, from our problems, or from our physical illnesses to Christ, to the finished work of Christ, what Christ has done in his life, in his death, his resurrection, ascension, absolutely everything...and that finished work of Christ.

Having said that, I feel very strongly that when we think of the atonement, it is the entire ministry of Christ...his incarnation, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and Pentecost. We are reliant on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

JMF: Is there a time for the pastor to admonish the congregation, then, about some prevailing sin?

DT: Yes. But we have to be very conscious that *we* are sinners. We are not standing on a pedestal. We are fellow sinner. We're seeking to come together and to ask God's forgiveness.

When I entered my first parish, the ministry had gone wrong. It's very sad when the ministry goes wrong. Everything is turned around about. Office-bearers wouldn't speak to one another, they were at loggerheads. In my very first board meeting, I walked in, and they were already there before me, standing around in a circle...and the two leading office-bearers in the center, just about to have a physical assault to one another. I had to stride into the middle and push the two apart. I wondered as a young man, what do I do now? I've never been taught about boxing [?] Christianity.

So they were a bit appalled that here is a minister having seized two men, pushed them apart physically. I said, "Well, now we begin our board meeting." This is my first board meeting ever in the church. It was the fastest meeting I had ever had, because no one would speak. It was over in half an hour, and I was asked for a quick session meeting with the superior body, so I said to one of the elders, my session clerk, my leading elder, I said, "What's the problem?"

So he got up, and I would say blew off. For about 20 minutes he told us all the problems, the animosities, and the back-biting, and all sorts of dreadful things. I had to finally silence him after 20 minutes and thank him, and ask the other elder to say what was on his mind. He marvelously stood up and apologized. I looked at that and I thanked him, and I read the passage from the Bible, "Little children, love one another." I didn't know what to do. That's all I could think about. I read them that passage.

I said to them, you know, we have sinned against God. Here we are, office-bearers of the church, striving, God's church, and we're quarrelling. I said the Lord is grieved with us! We are absolutely sinners. I included myself. I said we just have to pray and ask God to forgive us. So we prayed and asked God to forgive us.

Every one of us, “bring us together.” Then I shook hands, and they went away. I went home that night with a bit of a headache wondering what sort of church I had come to. For the next 18 months I preached through the Sermon on the Mount, preached on requests for forgiveness...we receive forgiveness as we give it. I said to them I would never appoint to office anyone in the church who was not at peace with God, without peace with everyone in the church, with everyone in the parish. In the end they came wonderfully together, and those two elders who fought actually became good friends. Another two who hitherto wouldn't speak, they actually asked to share the car together in visiting their district.

You stand with them as a fellow sinner. You together ask God's forgiveness, and you try to speak about the marvelous love of God and the fact that God is so sad that we quarrel. He loves us, he's forgiven us, he wants us to come enjoy that love and love one another. We can't beat around the bush, but it's not easy.

JMF: You mentioned thanksgiving as part of the repentance process. In asking for forgiveness, we already know we have forgiveness, so in one sense we are giving thanks, aren't we, for knowing that we're forgiven, but we're giving thanks for the forgiveness even as we ask.

DT: I remember in the small Bible class, one of my teenage girls, very lovely person, said, “How often must I ask for forgiveness before I receive it?” I said, our Lord says in the Lord's Prayer, “Forgive us our debts, our sins.” We ask, but we don't go on asking. That would insult God — that we don't believe that God loves us, that he's forgiven us? Christ *has* forgiven us. So we come and ask, “Lord, forgive us our sins,” but as we look to Christ we thank him that he *has* forgiven us, forgiven us before we sinned, and before we were born. I find that a staggering thought. So I always tried to say to my people, You must ask for forgiveness, ask for forgiveness every day, but having asked for forgiveness, always, always say “thank you” that you *are* forgiven.

JMF: So the asking is like a participation in the fact of forgiveness.

DT: Absolutely. It's a sharing in Christ's finished work. So Paul says, “In all things, in all times, in all circumstances give thanks to God.” We're not very good at that.

But that's very, very important that we pray at all times with thanksgiving. If we don't pray with thanksgiving, we have no faith. We're not believing, we're not accepting the marvelous love of God.

JMF: Paul gives admonition in Scripture, but he always does it from the context of "this is who you already are in Christ, this is who Christ has made you be, and therefore act like it." He never turns it around and says, "You're behaving badly, and if you don't stop it then you're lost."

DT: Absolutely. Perhaps the severest forms of judgment we see in the gospel are out of the lips of Jesus. He was absolutely frank. When we look at the cross, we might belittle our sins. We might, you know, think it doesn't matter. I say to people, "You look at the cross, you look at the fact that sin was so serious it took everything that God himself had got, to remove our sin and deliver us." I think of that great cry, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" There you see the depths and the horror of sin. Sin is very real, but thank God that we're delivered from it. Thank God. We can't, we dare not...our church needs to be cleansed, I pray every day that we will be cleansed. I pray for our church will be cleansed, purified. We must. But we thank God that there is complete cleansing, complete deliverance.

JMF: Well, it's such a joy to have you on the program. Thanks so much for being here and for making the effort ...

DT: Thank you very much for inviting me. Privilege to be here. And thank you for all your kindness.

JMF: Our pleasure.