

# OpenTheo

## Encounter With Jesus - Part 2

April 18, 2021



### **The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier**

John Stott shows us that there is a world of difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus personally, and how this can only happen by us opening our hearts to accept Christ as Saviour.

### **Transcript**

At the top of the dome of the Old Bailey there is a representation of the old classical blind god of justice, wielding in the right hand the sword of justice, and in the left a scale of balance for the sifting of evidence and blindfold for impartiality. Many people think about God like that. God the judge.

Welcome to the Bible for today with John Stott. Time magazine ranked John Stott as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. During his lifetime he impacted the evangelical church on every continent and was author of the landmark Lausanne covenant on evangelism.

John Stott's ministry was centered on five priorities, prayer, expository preaching, regular evangelism, careful follow-up, and systematic training of new leaders. But for all his global influence he had an unassuming demeanor preferring to be known as Uncle John and living in a small apartment above a gallerge of a rectory in London. Indeed the rectory of all souls laying in place which was his home church for almost 60 years.

We are privileged to be marking John Stott's centenary by bringing you just some of his timeless teaching. In last week's message on what it means to be a Christian we saw that it doesn't depend on being born into a Christian family or living by Christian ethics. Have your Bible open to Philippians chapter 3 as John Stott now concludes his message by showing that there's a world of difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus.

Paul says he speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Now he is not talking about an

intellectual knowledge there primarily but a personal knowledge and there is a difference between the intellectual knowledge and the personal knowledge between knowing about somebody and knowing somebody. Is it like that between you and Jesus Christ course you know about him? You know the name of his mother, his foster father, you know the circumstances of his birth, you know the village in which he was born and the other village in which he was brought up, you know about his baptism, you know that he was a carpenter by trade, you know that he had 12 apostles and some of what he taught and he died on a cross as a felon, crucified by the Romans and the Jews rejected him and its said he rose etc.

etc. etc. You know all this about Jesus but do you know him? Is there any sense in which Jesus Christ is a personal reality in your life so that you could not conceive of living your life without Christ? Now that's what Paul claims he speaks of the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ.

Indeed he draws up almost what you might call a profit and loss account. He speaks a bit in a way that will appeal to any business men or women who are here tonight and he puts in one column everything he can think of in his past life that at one time where gain and profit to him is genetic inheritance to use an expression we would use today is upbringing, is Jewish upbringing, is education is a Pharisee, is righteousness according to the Lord the fact that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he spoke Hebrew as well as Greek and so on all his cultural upbringing and education he wrote them all down on one side and then on the other side he put the overwhelming gain of knowing Jesus Christ and then he made a careful calculation. And he said in comparison with the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord everything is loss gain loss profit and loss.

Now when you hear Paul said that you may say he's off his rocker, he's crazy but no it was a sober calculation, it was a sober statement by the apostle Paul written when he was in prison that you reckon in comparison with this gain this profit, this privilege of knowing Christ as a living reality everything, everything was rubbish. Good you said that even faltering, even hesitantly, it's a very searching test as to whether we are Christians or not. Do you a Christian is to know Christ as your friend too? Do you be a Christian is to trust Christ as your savior? Notice how Paul goes on.

He says in order that I make gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own, I'm reading verse nine, not having a righteousness of my own that is based on law that is on obedience to the moral law but a righteousness that comes from God, it's a gift, it's not my achievement, it's his gift, it comes from God through faith in Christ. So Christ is not only the object of my knowledge, it's the object of my faith, I don't any know him, I trust him, I don't any know him as my friend, I trust him as my savior. Now if some of you have never heard that verse before it probably confuses you, you wonder what on earth it means and I'd like to take a minute or two to try and unravel and

explain it.

It's all about righteousness. We all know that God is righteous. If there is a God at all of course he's righteous, if he weren't righteous he wouldn't be God.

So if there is a God he's righteous, perfectly righteous, absolutely holy. He sends the reason therefore that if you are I or ever to enter into the presence of God in this life or in the next we must be righteous too because what agreement has righteousness with unrighteousness. Okay? Then if we have to be righteous in order to enter into the righteous presence of God, where are we going to get this righteousness from? That will qualify us to enter into the righteous presence of God.

Only two answers have ever been given to that question. The first is I will go about to establish my own righteousness. That's what Wesley and his friends try to do in Oxford.

I'm going to become religious and go to church and I'm going to do good works in the community and engage in philanthropy and I'm going to try and weave around myself a tissue of righteousness and hope that I can make myself righteous enough for God to accept me. Well you can't. The Bible says that even our righteousness is in the sight of a righteous God or like filthy rags.

We can never make ourselves righteous enough for this all righteous God. Never. Never is ever succeeded in doing it.

The way into the presence of God is not by my own righteousness. It isn't righteous enough. It isn't good enough.

So what's the alternative? Well the alternative is what Paul talks about here. He tells us that Jesus Christ came into the world. God the son, the eternal son, made flesh became a human being, lived a righteous life in character and conduct and never did any sin in mind or word or deed.

He lived a perfectly righteous life in a world of unrighteousness. Then he went to the cross and on the cross while he was dying in some mysterious way we don't fully understand. He took upon himself our unrighteousness.

He died for our sins. So that if we come to Jesus Christ and put our trust in him a wonderful exchange takes place. He takes away our unrighteousness and clothes us with his righteousness and we stand before God in the righteousness of Christ.

And we are accepted by God not because of our own righteousness but because of the forgiveness that Christ has brought us through his death and the righteousness of Christ in which we stand with which we are clothed by Jesus Christ. That's what Wesley discovered. I don't know if you know that Wesley went to America to be a sort of a missionary and a chaplain and he stuck it for a couple of years in Georgia and then he

came home a very bitterly disillusioned man.

You know he wrote in his journal on his voyage back to this country. He said, "What have I discovered of myself while I've been away? Why what I least expected that I who went to America to convert the Indians was myself never converted to God." Well, one day in 1738, nine years after the founding of the Holy Club in Oxford, he went to a little religious meeting run by the Moravian Christians in East Central London in order to get straight on the 24th of May 1738. Today very precious in the calendar of Methodists and there he listened to something that Martin Luther had written a couple of centuries previously in the preface that Luther had written to Paul's letter to the Romans.

In which Luther was explaining what I've just been talking about, we call it the doctrine of justification by faith. That is the God accepts us in his sight not because of our own righteousness but because of what Christ has done on the cross if we put our trust in Jesus. And it came as an illumination to Wesley.

He read in his journal that night, well-known words, "I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ only for salvation. And an assurance was given unto me that my sins had been taken away even mine and that he had saved me from the law of sin and death." Are the operative words in that statement where I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ only for salvation. Who had he been trusting in? Shall I tell you? The Reverend John Wesley.

He'd been trusting in himself. Yes, he was a clergyman. Did you know you can be a clergyman and not be a Christian? He'd been trusting in himself that he was righteous.

He'd been trusting in his own religion and his own good works and his own orthodoxy. But at last he put his trust in Christ, the Savior who died for him and an assurance was given unto him that he had been forgiven. And his great career as a preacher began.

Now I sometimes think of this when I cross the bridges over the rubber Thames. I don't know if you've ever thought of doing this. Some if you have, but I always now look to the city when I do that.

And I look at the panorama, the silhouettes of the steeples and the domes of the city. You know there are two very striking domes of buildings in the city of London. One is the Old Bailey and the other is St. Paul's Cathedral.

They're both domed structures. And at the top of the dome in each case is a significant symbol. At the top of the dome of the Old Bailey, there is a representation of the old classical blind god of justice wielding in the right hand the sword of justice.

And in the left, a scale saw a balance for the sifting of evidence and blindfold for impartiality. Many people think about God like that. God the judge with the sword of justice holding the scale.

Every time they sin, he flicks it into the pan on one side and every time they do a good deed, he flicks it into the pan on the other. And they're hoping against hope that their good deeds may just tip down in their favor. My friend, that's not Christianity.

That's anything else you may choose to believe, but it's not Christianity. Bargaining our way to heaven by our own good deeds. Look away from the Old Bailey, St. Paul's Cathedral.

And there at the top of the dome of St. Paul's, the mother church of the Anglican Communion is that great golden cross that stood out in the fires of London in the Blitz in 1940. And it speaks of the death of Jesus. We come to God not through our own merits being weighed up, but through the merit of Jesus Christ.

Not through our own unfinished works, but through his finished work when he died for our sins on the cross. We come to him as we are made to. You know, in the Church of England in the Arab Republic, it said it after the Communion, "We pray that God will receive us, not, not weighing our merits." But pardoning our offenses through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The only way to come to God is to say nothing in my hand I bring simply to your cross-eye cling. Naked come to you of address, helpless look to you for grace, thou light of the fountainfly, wash me, Savior, or I die. Being a Christian is trusting Christ as our Savior, the one who died for us that we might be forgiven and brought into the presence of God.

Well, I've nearly finished. Just a moment on my third and last point, and there is to be a Christian, is not it to know Christ as your friend, that trust him as your Savior, that you obey him as your Lord, to obey him as your Lord. Paul speaks of the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, my Lord.

As Thomas called him when he fell prostrate at the feet of the risen Jesus, my Lord and my God. The Lord ship of Jesus is one of the most neglected aspects of the Christian church today, but the very first affirmation of Christians in the very earliest days was just there's two words in the Greek curious, "Jesus, Lord Jesus, Jesus is Lord, the Lord ship of Jesus." We have to bring every part of our life under a sovereign control. You young people, you're ambition, your career, your future, what are you going to do with your life? You ever brought your life to Jesus? Said, "Not my will, but yours be done.

If you have a surrendered your future, your career, your ambition to Jesus, why not do it tonight? Try and discover what he wants you to do with your life. You've any one life to live, live it according to his will, not yours. But it doesn't only mean your future, means the other great decision of life in addition to the life work is the life partner.

Whether you're going to marry at all, if you're not married yet, and if so, whom you're going to marry, and if you're a follower of Jesus, it will have to be another follower of

Jesus so that you build a Christian marriage and a Christian home. Bring up your children in the way of Christ, and if you're already married, if you brought your home life under the dominion of Jesus and your business life and your tax return and your money affairs, how you spend your vacations, every part in the secret chamber, the blue beards chamber, the chamber that often in the house of our lives, nobody's ever opened. Give the key to Jesus.

Let him be your Lord, every part of life. How can we claim to be a Christian if we haven't surrendered to the Lord, should be Jesus? The Christian life begins with an encounter with Jesus. When you come to him and say, Lord Jesus, you died for me.

You rose again, you live, come into my heart and life as my Savior, my Lord, and my friend. That's the verse that brought me to Christ. It's already 40 years ago where Jesus says, behold, I stand at the door, a knock.

If anybody hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and sup with him and he with me. He stands outside the front door on the front doorstep of the individual's heart and life and personality, and he knocks to signify his desire to come in. He's not content to be on this circumference of our life.

He wants to come into the center. When somebody told me that 40 years ago it was just what I needed to know. I'd believed in Jesus on the other side of the door.

I'd said my prayers for years through the keyhole. I'd pushed penis under the door to keep him quiet. And all the time he was outside.

And on that never-to-be-forgotten night, as I knelt at the darkness at my bedside, I told Jesus I'd made a mess of my life so far as indeed I had. But I thanked him for dying for me and coming to me and I opened the door and I said, come in, Lord Jesus, come into my heart and life, unworthy as it is. I can't make it fit for you, but come in as my Savior, my Lord and my friend.

And I heard no peels of thunder. I saw no flashes of lightning. I felt no electric shock pass through my body.

I had no emotional experience at all, so I crept into bed and went to sleep. But the following day I began to know that something had happened to me and the day after I was more sure. But it took me weeks and months to be clear what had happened to me and it's taken me 40 years for Christ to be the reality to me.

Therefore, all my failures still, I think I may claim that he is or is daily becoming. Will you open the door to Christ? Ask him to come in as your Savior, your Lord and your friend. Let's be quiet in prayer.

And turn our eyes to Jesus. He stands knocking at the door and the hand that knocks as

in it the print of a nail. He was crucified for us.

He died for us. And he wants to come in. Will you open the door and admit him? Speak to him now in the silence and the privacy of your own heart.

And after that, I'm going to say a prayer. I want to say a prayer like the one I prayed 40 years ago in the first person singular. And if anybody is ready, then say the prayer after me silently.

Sentence by sentence in the privacy and the secrecy of your own heart. If you're not ready, don't do it. Don't take a step.

You're not ready to take. But if you are ready, if that's still small voice inside is saying to you, this is for you. This is your night of decision.

You're in counter with Jesus. Then say it after me silently and mean it from your heart. Lord Jesus, I confess my failures.

I've gone my own way. But I thank you that you died for me, bearing my sin on the cross. I thank you that you rose again and are alive and here.

Thank you for knocking at my door. Now I open it. Come in, Lord Jesus.

Come in today. Come in to stay. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Is my Savior and my Lord and my friend. Thank you and help me to serve you all my life. Your name's sake.

You've been listening to the conclusion of a message by John Storton what it means to be a Christian and how you can become a Christian by opening the door of your heart to him today. John Storton was a prolific writer and many of his books have become the means of leading people to salvation in Christ. Today's recommendation is entitled Focus on Christ by Langen Publishing, which deals with much of what we've heard today.

Details of this and all books by John Storton can be found by visiting [premierchristianradio.com/JohnStort](http://premierchristianradio.com/JohnStort). The legacy of John Storton lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stort who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Langen Partnership. To find out about this and other ministries John Storton founded, go to [premier.org.uk/JohnStort](http://premier.org.uk/JohnStort). Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for Today with John Storton.

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