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SPEAKER: Bishop Festo Kivengere

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R 156 (AE154) "Christ on Calvary Set Men Free"

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We've been invited through the words of the New Testament to consider what it really means to find Christ realistically in every department and aspect of our lives, and as Scripture clearly puts it, almost all the trouble, I'm putting it rather gently, but actually all the problems which have pestered humanity have their causes in the fact that man has yet to find a reorientation for living.

The song of Charles Wesley, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in my Saviour's death." I, who helped to help to hang Him on the cross, can I also? That wonderful man. In fact, let me say to you, I'm very proud because they both, the Wesley's were Anglican to begin with. But they were liberated by the grace of God, that's why Charles Wesley wrote that beautiful passion hymn which thousands and millions have sung with excitement, a testimony, "My chains fell off, my heart was set free, I rose, I walked following Him."

My mind went back to the early days of St. Luke's Gospel. An elderly person, a very faithful Jew by the name of Simion, who had been in temple all his life waiting, waiting, waiting for the redemption, waiting, waiting. He was more than 85. On that particularly day when he entered the temple still waiting and praying, we read, "He came guided by the spirit to this temple in Jerusalem, and into the door walked Mary carrying the baby in her hands, and as soon as she came in, the elderly Simion told by the Holy Spirit became so excited, the trembling old limbs with excitement and he couldn't stop, he walked where Mary was, took the baby from her hands, I'm sure Mary was a little bit worried whether these poor hands could hold the baby, and holding the baby in his trembling hands the dear old man began

to compose a song. "Now you can let your servants depart in peace for my eyes have beheld your salvation." What a discovery. I suppose the priests were surprised. For the first time, they had never seen Simion composing a song so quickly. Immediately the vibrations were set free and the old man, and the limbs were vibrating with excitement. My! the temple was full of music as the old man's voice went through.

Paul, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a conservative pharisee trained in Jerusalem, very much of a bigot. Incensed with his own people, his own religion, his own standard, to the extent that humanity was dead as far as he was concerned. His religion simply put him in a cell. Now, there are many people whose religion has become a prison like Paul's. The religion of his father's, good as it was, it only helped to build a thick fence round him. It blinded his eyes to humanity, to the world, to men, to women, and he had only one interpretation, either they were pharisees or non-pharisees, either they were Jews or non-Jews, that was all. That was all his world. It was in black and white, pharisee or non-pharisee, and if you don't fit into the category, good-bye. Out you go. Either you are a good Jew, a Benjamite, right in or you are outside, a Gentile, unwanted, non-Jew, out you go.

This is a man whose life knew no liberation, and now he is speaking, "For," says Paul, listen to these words. "For us." No Paul is no longer the same, he has changed, listen. "There is no escape from the love of Christ, or the love of Christ controls, urges us, there is no escape." There was a time when I couldn't escape from myself, everywhere I turned I was there, myself, myself, myself. I had become a victim of my self-centeredness. A real introvert, and that's what we all had become. Sin, for out of touch with God we all turn inward, and when that world of yours becomes yourself, it becomes a tiny, little, miserable world. And then this man says, "For us, there is no escape from the love of Christ."

Of course, we use that differently. Because of our unredeemed nature we think that culture, color, race are things which we must use to create walls over which we can never relate. Never. The eternal God made it that way that we may communicate better. So, He died for all and therefore, all were dead. What does that mean? All were utterly helpless to help themselves, that's why He died. The death of Christ speaks about us. We, it's speaks that we couldn't lift ourselves. That we simply in alienation with God, apart from God we became utterly helpless, victims of our circumstances, victims of men, victims of appetites, victims of desire, we lost our abilities to live, and we simply became victimized men and women existing but not living. Simply going in circles, trying and failing, trying and failing, no way out until He came. He died for all, the reason is we all were as good as dead bodies, dead in trespasses and sin, helpless to help ourselves.

Alright, so now what happens then? So, He died for us. Oh, how beautiful. This is the essence of Christian life. So, He died for us. Listen. This is how we were delivered. And therefore, all through life men must no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again for them. A complete liberation. Because He died on the cross of Calvary, in dying He set men free from their hooks. They were hooked on themselves. My self was my center and now in dying He cut the chain on which I was hooked, and set the captive free to begin to live no longer for myself, but for Him who died and rose again for me.