

The Holiness of God

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan emphasizes the holiness of God and the importance of boldly declaring His truth in the face of fear and societal pressures.

Duration: 48:07

Scripture: Acts 20:17

Topics: "Gods Holiness", "Christian Commitment"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and living a life fully committed to Him. It highlights the awe-inspiring holiness of God, the need to be prepared to face Him, and the urgency of making the decision to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. The speaker urges the audience to prioritize their relationship with God above all else, to seek forgiveness and grace, and to be ready to meet God with reverence and surrender.

Transcript

As I've been meeting with the elders and talking to different elders individually as we talk about this transition in the church, several of the guys encouraged me to just look at Acts chapter 20, because when they thought of the situation, they thought of Acts 20, and they brought that to my attention, different ones of them at different times. And it was interesting, because as I thought about the situation, it's the same passage that came to my mind, and I don't think it's coincidental, that we all kind of gravitated to this passage. And I'm sure a lot has to do, because we've been reading through the book of Acts this month also.

But in Acts 20, it's when Paul is saying goodbye to the Ephesian church. Paul has been leading this church for a few years, and now he's saying goodbye to the leaders there. And as I know, when I was reading it, there were so many similarities to the situation, and obviously major differences.

And I'm not saying, well, you know, I'm just like Paul. You know, there's obviously huge differences, but there were so many things that were alike. And so I'm going to use that kind of as a template or as a guide over the next few weeks, as I point out different things in that passage that are very meaningful to me, and then kind of expound on it through other passages over the next few weeks.

But in Acts chapter 20, starting in verse 17, it says this. It says, Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them, You

yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews, how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not count my life of any value nor as precious to myself. If only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And now behold, I know that none among you, none of you, among whom I have gone about preaching or proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." It's a powerful passage. You know, Paul says, Okay, you guys know me.

You not only just heard me teach publicly, but you saw my life, and you saw the way I lived, that this was the real thing. And Paul says, And now I'm heading to Jerusalem. He goes, I don't even know what all is waiting for me there.

I sense from the Spirit that I got some hard times ahead, but I'm going. This is what God has called me to do, and I'm constrained by the Spirit to do that. But the phrase that stuck out to me as I'm reading this passage is he looks at these people, and he goes, Look, I'm leaving.

And this was a different situation, because he says, Look, you guys will never see my face again. Okay, which isn't true here. You know, but the thing that he said was, he goes, Therefore, he goes, I testify.

He makes a statement in verse 26. He goes, I'm innocent of the blood of all of you, because I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Paul says to the Ephesian elders, he goes, Look, I can leave this place with a peace, because I know that I didn't back down, and I told you everything, even the hard truths.

I told you everything about God, not just this one little aspect, but I didn't shrink from declaring. I wasn't a coward. I told you everything, and I'm looking at this passage.

I'm leaving with that peace. I want to know that I've said everything, and even this morning, I'm praying, Oh God, is there something I'm scared of sharing with the people, because I don't want to have regrets and say, Gosh, I kind of backed down on this, and it was interesting, you know, because I consider myself a pretty bold person when I get up on this stage and declare what I believe is God's word, and even things that are difficult, but you know, this morning, I was wrestling with it, and just going, Okay, Lord, I want to search my heart, and I want to know if there's any sin, anything I'm afraid of, any places where I backed down, and I told you how last week, I went over to Sinaloa Junior High School, and just got kind of nostalgic as I prayed to the Lord, and so this morning, I felt led to be even more, you know, nostalgic, and I went over to buy Chuck E.

Cheese, you know, which is no longer there, you know, and I hadn't been in that place, you know, in so long, and I just was there in the parking lot, and I didn't realize that where we used to meet right there, our old Cornerstone Church there of Tierra Jada and Madera, that I'm sitting there trying to figure out, Okay,

where was our building, and it's that liquor store now, you know, Cornerstone Church is now Leo's Liquor, and I'm just looking at the entrance, the doors are the same, everything's still the same, and you know, my heart just sank, you know, because some of you gave your life to the Lord there, some of you fell in love with Jesus in that room, and I was just thinking about the memories in that room, and the times we had there, and just thinking about different faces through

the years, and the lives that were changed in that room, and then just to look and just see liquor, you know, all filled out in that space, and I thought, Wow, that's really crazy, but I started to think, and I go, Lord, you know, I do see, and I just have to confess to you, I do see a weakening in my soul, in some ways, I do remember the early days, and there was, I'm perfectly honest, there was a, there was more of a disregard for what people felt, and thought, and their response, and there was more boldness, I mean, obviously, there have been areas in my life that have grown, and there was a lot of immaturity in those days, but there was also like this, this youthful courage that said, I don't care what you think, here's what the Word of God says, and let me just lay it out, you want

to leave, leave, you know, here's what it says, and, and, and, you know, just as I was praying, you know, the Lord was just revealing, you know what, there, there have been times over the years, and periods where you, you almost backed off, you did back off, you got a little scared, you got a little beat up, and you kind of retreated, and maybe didn't lay out everything that I asked you to lay out, and as I, as I thought, especially over the last few years, I realized, sometimes I'll be reading a passage of Scripture, or teaching a passage of Scripture, and I'll think to myself, and it's not really like a fear of rejection, but I've noticed, I realized now that the whole world is watching in some ways, every statement I make is just, it's, it's picked apart, it's, you know, people on

other opposite ends, you just, just everyone's got an opinion, and, and we'll get that opinion to you somehow, you know, whether I email you, write you a letter, call your house, find your cell phone number from someone, and I'll write it on a blog, I'll, you know, and, and I just, and, and I catch myself going, okay, if I say it this way, I'm going to end up on this guy's blog, and this guy's blog, if I say it like this, he's going to say this, if I say this, I'm going to get about, probably 40, 50 emails, if I say this, it'll be about 400, you know, I'm, it's, it's, it's just a weird world that we live in right now, you just think, you're thinking response time, you're thinking, gosh, how busy of a week do I have, can I respond to this many people, let me just say it this way, whereas I

remember the olden days, I would just walk up here, just whatever, you know, here it is, here it is, and you know, if you catch me in the market, and you want to yell at me, great, you know, but, but here's, here's what it says, and there was just a complete disregard, and this morning, just coming before God, and going, I want to be that, I want to get back to that, I just want to be that simple person that just says, whatever, but you start hearing a lot of feedback, and I think this happens in all of our lives, right, you start hearing feedback from so many people, and it gets into your head, and unless you can just get yourself, and force yourself to be alone in the presence of God, you won't be able to do what Paul did, where Paul says, look, I'm innocent, because I said everything,

I said everything to you, and so as I, as I think about these next few weeks, and everything I want to share, I just go, okay, Lord, what's the most important thing, what do I want to just re-emphasize, and know that I did not back down at all, and the first thing that comes to my mind is the holiness of God.

This, those who have known me through the years know, this is my big passion, is the holiness of God, that every time I read about these descriptions of God in the Bible, I go, man, we don't get Him, we don't get you.

You know, these people approached me to do this whole video series, and everything else, and they said, you know, what do you want to talk about, if you could speak to everyone, and it's the same thing, I go, it's this holiness of God, the fear of God. I listen to the way people talk about God nowadays, and it's disgusting, it really is. You know, where we question Him, and we go, well, God can't tell me that I have, yes, He can.

He can do anything He wants, this freedom of God, just to understand there's this being in heaven, and the moment you guys see Him, and this is where I don't want you, one day, when you stand before God, to go, man, Francis, why didn't you tell me it was going to be this intense? I promise you, whatever view of God you have in your mind right now, it's not big enough, and the moment you see Him, the moment you see God, and everyone in this room is going to have to face Him one day, and the moment you get that first glimpse of God, I promise you, you are going to cower and collapse. It is going to be absolutely terrifying. Everyone in Scripture who has seen Him, prophets, these great men of God, the moment they saw God, it was just a sheer, I have never seen anything like this before.

And the crazy thing to me is most of the people, the vast majority of those who live in our country do not believe that they are going to cower or collapse when they see God. They don't understand or believe that He really is holy. You know, we sing these songs, holy, holy, holy, because it's what the angels keep saying, holy, holy, holy, meaning He's different from me.

He's not like me. He's separate from me. And a lot of us, we focus on so many things during the week.

We think about, oh no, you know, the economy is going bad, and this and that. Oh no, I'm concerned about the leadership. I'm concerned about, you know, health insurance, you know, this or that.

And I'm going, the moment you see Him, you're going to realize how ridiculous all those thoughts were, because you really should have been consumed with one thing, the fact that you're going to see Him one day. And that has to be the most intense moment of your existence. Isaiah, when he saw God, first thing that came to his mind was, I'm dead.

I'm so sinful. Here's Isaiah the prophet, probably living a more holy life than anyone else in this room. And yet the moment he encounters God, he goes, he's going to kill me.

I am so sinful. So much garbage has come out of this mouth. See, the moment you face God, you're struck with your own sinfulness.

See, right now, you can compare yourself to other people, because that's all you see. You see these other human beings, and you think, oh, I'm better than him. I'm better than her.

I'm higher on that curve, you know, I'm more on the good side. But I'm telling you, the moment you see God, all that goes out the window, because now you're not comparing yourself to other people, you're comparing yourself to a holy God. And like Isaiah, he sees Him, and immediately he's struck with his own sinfulness.

See, it's amazing how many people right now believe that they are good. I speak to very few people who believe that they are bad people. I speak to so many people who say, yeah, I think the good outweighs the bad.

I'm just telling you, when you see God, you're not going to feel that way. Revelation chapter 4 is a passage I want to share, and I know I've shared it here before, but I've got to re-emphasize this, because here, John sees God. John sees God.

And you know what, before we get to the passage, let me just give you some background. Revelation 1, John sees Jesus in Revelation 1. He hears his voice, turns around to see who's talking to him, he realizes it's Jesus in His glorified state. The moment he sees Him, he collapses.

Remember, this is John, the beloved disciple. Okay, when they talk about the 12 disciples, when they talk about the beloved one, the one whom Jesus loved, like they were intimate, they were so tight, they were so in love, they talk about John. And here's John, who now gets a glimpse of Jesus after Jesus already rose from the grave, ascended into heaven years later.

John gets to see Jesus in Revelation chapter 1, and he says the moment he saw Him, remember, this is his best friend, this is his love. He falls on his face, like he just falls over, he just collapses, he just faints. And he looks over, you know, Jesus, Jesus then comes over and says, John, don't be afraid, it's me, Jesus.

That's me, Jesus. Remember, you know, we have this relationship, we have this relationship, it's okay. And then Jesus starts speaking to him and gives him these words to write down.

And he says, look, here's what I need you to tell all of these churches. Give this message to all of these churches, you know, the church in Ephesus, the church in, you know, Thyatira, these seven different churches. And the last one in Revelation 3 that he speaks to is the church in Laodicea.

And then the church in Laodicea, he says to this church, he goes, you guys are lukewarm, you're not hot, like on fire, you're not cold, you know, you're just kind of this middle ground. And he goes, and because of that, he goes, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. He goes, because you're not serious about me, you're just kind of, oh, yeah, we believe, it's just like this lukewarm, he goes, it's like what you would do with this lukewarm drink.

Oh, it's disgusting to me. And he says, but we can change that. We can change that.

You know, invite me into your life for real, and I'll give you some clothes to wear so you won't be found naked. Because right now, he goes, you're naked, wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and I'm going to spit you out of my mouth because you're lukewarm. He goes, but then he makes a statement at the end where he goes, he goes, look, I said this because I love you, and I want you to repent, and I want to come into your life for real and actually have an impact in your life.

And then at the very end, and he says, and if you overcome to the one who overcomes, he goes, I'll give you the right to sit on the throne with me, because I'll let you rule with me. That's how he ends that. He goes, he goes, you know what, either I'm going to spit you out of my mouth if you don't change, or if you overcome, and I'll come into your life and change you, and I'll make you on fire for me, love me, be the real thing, he goes, and then at the end, you'll sit on the throne with me.

And then right after that comes Revelation chapter four, where he describes the throne of God. And it's so intense, because I don't know what picture comes to your mind when you think about God, but most of us just try to relate him to things that we see. And we go, okay, he's probably just like me, and you know, God's probably like me, but you know, he's probably bigger, you know.

We do these things, and we try to equate God, and what else can we do, right, you know, other than with what we know? But you look, and John tries to describe what he saw when he saw God, and he's just reaching for words. He's trying to find any human analogy to help us understand what he looks like. And you'll see that here in Revelation four.

Revelation four, verse one. After this, I looked. So right after, he says, you know, if he overcomes, he can sit on that throne with me.

And then after that, John looks, and he says, there's a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice, which I heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. And once I was in the spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne, and he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. So John goes, I see this door.

Okay, so right after, God says, okay, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth if you're lukewarm, but for those who overcome, you're going to sit on the throne with me. And John goes, right then, I look, and there's this door open up in heaven saying, come up here. So he actually gets taken up into heaven.

Okay, I don't know what you think you would see up there, but John describes what you'll see. He goes, this is what I saw. He goes, I actually went up there in my spirit, and he goes, I see this throne.

I see this throne, and there's a person sitting on it, but he has the appearance of jasper and carnelian. Jasper is like a ruby. It's a reddish clear stone, and carnelian is like a crystal or a diamond.

It's like a clear stone, and he says, you know, the person sitting on the throne, he doesn't describe him as flesh and blood like us because it's just his being, and he's glowing. He's like these jewels. He's like diamonds and rubies.

It's just, it wasn't like a normal person, and he says, and around his throne there was like this rainbow, and it was like an emerald. Then he goes on in verse four, and he says, around the throne were these 24 thrones, and seated on the thrones were 24 elders clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it is, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal.

So he goes on to describe. He goes, okay, so there's this one throne, and there's this being on it, and he's glowing. He's like diamonds and rubies.

It's just this different type of being, and then there's these 24 thrones around the one major throne, and he says these men are in white robes, and they got these crowns of gold on their head, and most scholars would say this represents the believers of all time somehow. You know, just like the 24 orders of priests, but basically it represents those who have, we believe, who have followed God through the years. They're like our representatives, and later on you see them falling on their faces and just dropping their crowns before the throne.

It's where we get that song, we fall down, we cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus. You know, it's this idea of everything we've ever earned, everything we've ever done. It's all for you.

It's all for your glory. It's all about this being, and he says the throne itself had lightning coming from it. Lightning and thunder.

Now, living in Southern California, we don't really get lightning and thunder. You know, I mean some of you come from the Midwest, some of you come from other places, and I've been in thunderstorms there, and it just takes your breath away. It's just the sheer volume, and I get excited every time there's like a lightning storm out there.

You know, I just, I just go outside, and you know, and risk it. You know, I just, because I just love that power, that sound, but I can't even imagine seeing a throne like that, and seeing lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder coming from a throne, and then it talks about these seven torches of fire around this throne, which he describes as being the seven spirits of God, and different people have tried to interpret this differently, and I'm gonna be honest with you. I don't get it completely.

When it talks about the Holy Spirit, and you know, Zechariah, and it talks about this, you know, the Spirit of God, and uses number seven. I'm just saying I don't get this completely. I don't understand the Holy Spirit, and why these seven torches represent him, and I know there's a plethora of reasons that people give.

I'm just saying it's a mystery. Somehow these seven blazing torches represent the seven spirits of God, which most say is another word for the Holy Spirit of God, singular. I don't get it.

All I know is if I were there, I would be scared. Okay, what we're talking about a being who's holy. That's why I want to be careful of this.

I don't want to give you a simple illustration of this, or a simple answer to this. I'm just going. I believe what John is showing us is we can't fathom this being.

Here's this being on the throne that looks like nothing we've ever seen. Lightning and thunder coming from his throne. These pillars of fire around the throne, and then around the throne is this sea of glass, clear as crystal.

See, what's it going to feel like to be before this God? When's the last time you thought about that? What it's going to be like when you face him? What else matters? Really, in light of facing that being, when you see him, what is going to matter? Because I've been thinking about this moment more and more. I want to be ready for this. I can't wait to see you.

I think it's going to blow my mind, but I think about this moment. Maybe it's because I do all these funerals, and we're doing one in this room every week or a couple of weeks now, it feels like, and it's like, well, all these people just saw that. They just saw that.

What was it like for them to see that? Will they care about anything else? And again, I want to say this with so much respect, because the Bible does talk about respecting those who are older than us, but at the same time, as a pastor, I have to say that some of you who are older, older than me, you know, I just got to go, you're still focused on things of the earth, and I don't get that. With all due respect, I think you're crazy. I really do.

You're still thinking about things of the earth and setting yourself up here, not realizing any moment you're going to see that, and all you're thinking about, oh, what's going to happen next year or next week? And I'm going, I don't get that. I really don't get that. It's just because I'm looking at the pattern of my life, and with every year, I'm getting more and more serious about the end.

I'm assuming, and I'm hoping and praying that as I get closer and closer to that day, whenever it is, the Lord knows, man, that I'll just get even more and more less attached to things of the world, and go, man, I really don't care anymore. Here, I got to just start giving, caring, doing everything I can, because I want to end this thing well, because I'm going to stand before Him any moment, and in that parable, the talents, when he talks about the person who just wasted their time, I don't want to be that person that God says, you wicked, lazy servant. I want to be the one where he says, well done, good and faithful servant.

I gave you this to invest on the earth for me, and you did it. Well done, good and faithful servant. Man, I want that, because I'm going to face this God, and you are too, and some of you are not serious about this, and you're living exactly what Revelation 3 talks about, the lukewarm life that's going to get you spit out of the mouth of God, rather than being the overcomer who's going to sit on, can you imagine sitting on that throne with God? Can you imagine that that verse still blows my mind, to him who overcomes, I'll give him the right to sit with me on that throne.

It's like, wait, where the lightning, the thunder, and this being who's glowing like diamonds and rubies, and these 24 elders bound, all of that's going on, and I've got a part in that? What else matters? He goes on, and it gets even weirder, you know, you talk about holiness, and just a different world, at the end of verse 6, he says, around the throne, on each side of the throne are these four living creatures, and they're full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature is like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, third living creature with the face of a man, fourth living creature like an eagle in flight, and the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within. So as he's sitting on this throne, the lightning, the thunder's going on, the fire's everywhere, then there's these four beings, you know, one looks like an ox, one's like a lion, one's like an eagle, one's like a man, and he says they're just covered with eyes, and they each have six wings, and their wings are covered with eyes.

I mean, they're just terrifying beings. I mean, what would happen, what would happen if this morning God allowed us to get a glimpse of this? Okay, and one of these beings, let's say the one that's like an ox, let's say the one, this being that just looks like an ox, just, you know, he's got six wings, though, and he's got eyes all over his wings, all over his body, what if that thing just hovered right over us right now? Okay, can you imagine? You probably don't want to imagine, but just, what do you think you would do? I guarantee some of you would collapse. There'd be screaming, sheer terror.

This isn't over God. This isn't even God. This is one of these creatures that he made that's around his throne.

You would be freaked out. There's no words for that type of terror, but then, in the next verse, look what these beings are doing all the time. It says day and night, they never cease to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

So those beings that would terrify us in this room, they all day, all night, right now, what they're doing is they're looking at the throne of God, and they're going, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. In other words, forget me, forget about nothing. It's that one on the throne, he's so holy, so different from me.

So these beings who would terrify any of us, all they can think to do in the presence of God is talk about him, saying, don't look at me. He's so holy. He's so holy.

He's so set apart. He's the one that made us. The whole earth is full of his glory.

He's just so amazing. They're screaming out to each other how holy this God is, and yet some of us come in this room like, oh God's so honored I showed up to church today. Like it's about you, and I get emails all the time of how dare you say this was wrong? How dare you say that was wrong? I'm going, I never said it.

It's just black and white in that book. It is wrong. Some of the things that are going on in some of your lives is just sin, and I don't want to be, I don't want to, I want to be innocent of your blood and let you know you need to think through your decisions, and you need to think through your life.

You need to pray through things in light of this. Your biggest problem is not a broken relationship, a lost home, job, or even the death of someone you love. Your biggest problem is one day you're going to face that.

You're going to face this being, and it is going to be so terrifying. The beautiful thing is that we can be ready for this, and excited for this, looking forward to this. The greatest thing is the more I focus on this being, the more excited, not terrified I get, the more excited I go, because I think if that God is for me, who can be against me? Where do I get my boldness? It's not from people going, way to go Francis.

It's from going, wait, that being is looking at me right now and saying, Francis, thank you for not backing off. So many people are backing off. So many people are cowering, not saying the way it is.

You keep saying it, and for me to go, okay God, that's the only approval I need right now. That is all the approval I need. You and I, you know, if I can sit on that throne at the end, I'm not going to be lukewarm and go, okay, you know what, let me just skip this part, because the rest of the book of Revelation is about his wrath.

You know, chapter five talks about Jesus and how a hundred million angels are worshiping him, but then you get in chapter six, and Jesus starts pouring out the wrath of God on this earth, and it's happening. It's going to happen, and I want to be on the side of God. Do you remember what my wife said last week? She gave a different message, actually, every service, but each one was so powerful, and when she said in the second, I don't think she said at the first, but she just talked about how badly she wants to hear those words, well done.

It's on the podcast if you didn't hear it, but she just so beautifully and powerfully said, this is why I'm leaving. Am I scared of taking my four kids into some crazy, of course, but if God's leading, I want to be completely surrendered. Surrendered, she goes, because in the end, I got to hear those words, and I doubt very many of you remember this, but it was probably, I don't know, seven, eight years ago, I shared about this.

I came in the office one morning, and I grabbed, at that time, I think it was Doug Fox, and it might have been Chuck Bomar, a couple guys, a couple of pastors, and I just came in a little freaked out one morning, because I told them, I go, you guys, I had the craziest dream last night, and I'm not one of those dreamer type guys. I'm not like, oh, I got another dream, got another, you know, this was like the first time where I go, that was a crazy evening. I don't want to make too much of it, but I also don't want to make too little.

I just want to be careful, but I told the guys, I go, gosh, last night, I dreamt that I died. I never dreamed that I died. It was the first time in my life I had a dream where I actually died in the dream.

I always flew away or bounced off of something, you know, found a scuba tank. You just always get away, right, and I go, man, this is the first time I dreamt that I died, and my mind went to that freak out zone where it's like, okay, what happens, and you know, you see lights, I don't know, whatever, but all I know is I got to this point where, you ever dream of like, you're in a baseball game, and you dive and try to catch a ball, and you actually move in your bed, and you know, and it was one of those dreams where I dreamt that I died, and I was standing before that God, and so in my bed, I'm on my knees, and my face is in my pillow, and I am, I've broken out in a cold sweat. I am drenched with sweat, and I am shaking, because I'm thinking, oh my gosh, everything I know of God right before me, here's his throne, the lightning, the thunder, the fire, a hundred million angels, all those beings, and it's just one of those things where I thought, I'm in the presence of God.

I'm in the presence of God, you know, my heart's pounding, you know, I'm sweating, I'm shaking, and I just think, this is the moment, this is the moment, I'm before him, and then my mind went to, wait, maybe this is a dream. You know how you do that in your dreams, and you're at that moment where you go, I don't know if I'm dreaming or not, and I was caught in that middle stage, and you know how when you, I don't know if you all do this, what I do is, I just think, I'm gonna jolt my head up, or I'm gonna just, I gotta make a sudden movement, and it always wakes me up. So I was so scared though, I thought, I'm gonna count to three, I'm just gonna jerk my head up, and I will either see God or my head bored.

That is a terrifying thought. It really, really is. I'm not trying to over dramatize this, I'm just going, no, this was a crazy night, and I'm just going one, two, three, I'm going, oh good, oh wow, and again, I'm not afraid to die.

It's a wonderful way to live life, to go, I don't really care, you know, I really don't, like when Paul says, I don't really count my life, you know, as something so valuable or precious to myself. I just got to finish what God asked me to do. That's the way I look at my life, and I know there's times when I try to hold on, but I was like, kill me, shoot me, what's going to happen? I mean, there's a sense in which I'm immortal.

I don't really die. I just transitioned to a better place, and it's a great way to live. Nonetheless, there is still something terrifying about seeing God, of being like you've never seen before, and I bring that story up because, what if that were you? I don't know how this really ends, but let's say that is how it ends.

Maybe this thing that we call life ends with us on our face, this being before us, and what if that were you? Let's say you're just down there on your face, shaking, knowing what you're about to see. Okay, picture yourself in that moment like I did, and what if at that moment that you're shaking, you realize nothing else matters, and what if at that moment you hear God's voice speak to you, and what if at that moment God says to you, well done? What are you going to feel? What are you going to feel at that moment when He says, well done? Isn't it at that moment you just go, yes, that's all I ever wanted to hear. Everything else, nothing else matters, and you kind of ask yourself, is there anything in your life you want more than to hear those two words out of the mouth of God? See, for me, I've decided there's nothing else I want, and so God, if there's some pride that's getting in the way, get it out of there.

If I'm trying to please people too much, get that out of there. If there's any sense in which I'm scared to say everything you're telling me to say, get it out. If I'm just holding on to my comforts and my riches and trying to make myself comfortable, get that desire out of there.

I want to live by faith. I want to hear your voice. I want to follow you.

I don't want to be lukewarm. I want to be this overcomer that says, you know what, I'll say whatever you tell me to say, and I'll say it to anyone, and I'm not going to apologize for your wrath. There is a God.

Not all of us are going to hear those words out of the mouth of God. God says that road is really narrow, and it's hard, and very few will find it, but the road to destruction is wide, and it's easy, and just about everyone goes down this road. That's what God says, and I go, God, I want to be found on this narrow road by the grace of God, by the blood of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Put me on this road. Do this in my life, and we live in a time when every single funeral, it seems like the guy up front goes, he's in a better place. She's in a better place, and that completely contradicts everything that Jesus says when he says that is a narrow road, and few will find it, but this broad road that leads to destruction, many will enter through it.

If Jesus were doing these memorial services, he wouldn't just say, oh, he's in a better place, she's in a better place. Everyone's in a better place. Not everyone's in a better place, and I want to be innocent of that to let you know that this life of following Jesus, it's not easy.

Man, there are days when it is so hard, when everything in you is going, man, I can't do it, I can't do it, I can't do it, and then you just are reminded of the spirit that God gave you, and he says, wait, that's not my spirit. I didn't give you a spirit of timidity. I gave you a spirit of power, and love, and self-control.

Man, there's days I wake up, and I forget who I am in Christ, and I got to be reminded, no, you can do anything. You can do whatever. Christ is going to strengthen you.

The Holy Spirit is in you. If there's one thing I want to make so clear before my time is through with you guys, it's that God is a holy, holy, holy God. He does have the freedom to judge you however he wants to.

I don't care how much you feel something, desire something, believe God ought to do something a certain way. He's not bound to your feelings, your notions, your opinions. He doesn't care what Francis Chan conjures up in his head of what he thinks ought to be right and what ought to be wrong.

He says, Francis, you're not God. I am, and here's what I say is right and wrong. It doesn't matter that you say he has no right to punish me.

He has no right to have this type of wrath, or a loving God can't create a place of punishment. You need to understand God does whatever he wants to do, and it's not about you, and maybe you've lived this weird Disneyland life where people bow down to you and really care about your opinion. That's not the way God is.

I don't care how powerful you are. I don't care how much money you have. I don't care how good you look.

I don't care how popular you think you are. You're nothing. I'm nothing in the presence of God, and I got to remind myself of that, but because the blood of Christ, he calls me his child.

He says, one day you're going to sit with me on this throne because you confess me before men, and so I'm going to confess you before my father in heaven, and I want that, and I live for that, and I don't know what you're living for, but I'm just saying one day you're going to look back and go, why did I waste my time? Why did I live that lukewarm life on that planet for those few years? No one ever thinks it's the end.

No one's ever ready except for those who are really walking with Jesus and in the Spirit, and so this morning, I don't know if there's some of you today who, and I want to apologize if I haven't held some of these truths sacred in my own fleshly personality. I like to screw around, laugh, joke, but when it comes to God, I pray for more reverence and just more of an understanding that we're not dealing with just another person here, and maybe there's some of you that say, I am not right with God today, and I want to tell you right now and be innocent of your blood and tell you, you need to get that right.

This is not just some optional decision time we have at the end. This is the most important decision of your life that you are making right now, that either you will follow that God and count Him worthy of surrendering your whole life to Him, or you go, God, I believe you're there, but I'm not ready to give everything up for you. I'm telling you, that's the biggest mistake you've made in your life, and I say that because I care about you, and I don't want to face you one day and for you to say, Francis, you screwed around up there a lot.

You didn't tell me it was this serious. You never told me God was this holy and this set apart, and the hardest thing for me right now is I can't paint a picture big enough for you, because however big of a picture I painted today, it wasn't big enough. Some of you have no clue who you're going to face, and I'm begging you, surrender to Him, accept His forgiveness, His grace, invite Him in, follow Him.

The worship team is going to come up, and it's going to sing a song to Him about His holiness, about His greatness, but for some of you, you've never bowed down to Him. You've never made a fool of yourself by coming up here, even though it would mean rejection by your family, your friends, or whatever else, to come into this body of water and saying, you know what, I'm done living for myself and being so concerned about what everyone else thinks. I'm dying to my old self.

I'll plunge myself in that pool of water and come out. It's a representation of what Jesus did, who died and rose again. You're saying, I'm done with that old life.

I surrender myself to Jesus. I'm ready to follow Him now, and I know some of you came going, well, I wasn't ready for that. I didn't bring the right clothes.

Is that really significant at this moment when we're talking about this? If that's what you're thinking, then you don't get it. You really don't get it. We're talking about God and being right and ready for Him, and if that's a step of obedience that God's called you to because you're recognizing you can be forgiven by that God, and you can start this relationship because of what Jesus did on that cross.

Or if you have questions, find out the answers to those questions. But we're going to have some pastors and some leaders up here by the prayer room, and in my mind, I think, okay, I've got four or five more weeks with these guys, and I'm going, I don't know that I have four or five more weeks with you guys. Like that song we sang earlier, our life's a vapor.

You're one moment, you're gone. We've all experienced that. Some of the toughest times of our lives, and I've been through it with you, and you saw life pass before your eyes, and boom, you're right there before a holy God.

I'm thinking about it quite a bit lately, and I pray that you are too, and that you get this right. So as we sing, if there's any of you that just need to pray with someone, talk to someone, I beg you to do that.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/k5m8aLq3QEU.mp4>
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