

# The Path Ahead of Us

by Sandeep Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of setting the right goal, understanding the role of temptation, and having faith and dependence on Jesus to maintain a pure testimony and overcome sin.*

**Duration:** 59:47

**Scripture:** Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:2-4, 1 John 3:2-3

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Testimony"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a pure testimony and the need to start with a pure testimony in order to preserve it. It delves into the process of growing in purity, maintaining zeal for a pure testimony, and making Jesus more attractive than sin. The key point is to define the goal accurately, focusing on becoming like Jesus, and not getting sidetracked by other worldly goals. The sermon also highlights the role of faith, endurance, and proven character in the journey towards presenting a pleasing offering to Jesus.

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## Transcript

When I saw the subject of the camp, I saw preserving a pure testimony and I noticed that if I were to preserve something, it must already be there. You can't preserve something that doesn't exist already. If you want to preserve mangoes, you have to have mangoes to begin with, then you can preserve them.

If you're trying to preserve a pure testimony, you must have a pure testimony to begin with. And if your experience is anything like mine, in our young days, when we are still young, it may be very difficult for us to look somebody in the eye and say, I have a pure testimony. So what's there to preserve if I don't have a pure testimony? Maybe some of us young people need to back up and say, I must have a pure testimony before I can preserve a pure testimony.

How do I have a pure testimony? How do I have purity? How do I grow in purity so that one day I can think about preserving that purity? Those are a couple of questions I wanted to ask you. I don't have the notes in front of me, so do we have the PowerPoint up? These are questions. How do I maintain a zeal for a pure testimony? This is a huge question.

How does Jesus become more attractive than sin? Don't all of us want Jesus to be more attractive than sin? Wouldn't we love it if that was the case? I want to try and address those questions as best as I can. How do I maintain my zeal for a pure testimony? Here's my point number one. You must get your goal

right.

This is the key that has transformed me and made a big difference in me understanding how I ought to live my life. I don't know how many of you, young or old, have ever considered the question, what is your goal in life? You want to get married? You want to have children? You want to have grandchildren? You want to have a good job? And on and on. Is that your goal? What happens when you get married? What do you do then? Ready to die and go to heaven? What happens when you get children? What happens then? Most people, when you get children, like I do, I don't want to live for a long time to see my children grow up.

What is my goal? What is your goal? Do you have a goal? In the world we understand, we will never get anywhere if we don't have a goal. If we're pointed in one direction, then we can get to that direction. If you're trying to go to Chennai and you head west, good luck.

If you're starting from Bangalore and you're trying to get to Chennai, good luck if you're going west. You're going to spend a lot of time trying to get to Chennai. You'll never get there.

You'll encounter mountains and all kinds of water bodies, but you'll never hit Chennai. If you're trying to get your goal right as a Christian, if you're trying to be where you want to be as a Christian, you must define your goal accurately. Once you define the end goal in sight, then you can say, I'm pointing in that direction.

If I ever get lost, let me reset, find out which direction I'm pointing into. So what's our goal? Nothing new for you. You've all heard it from the pulpit here.

Just wanted to reestablish and make it cemented in your hearts. If anybody ever asks you for the rest of your life, if anybody asks me, if you have a different goal based on scripture, please use that. This is the goal I have defined based on what I have seen on scripture.

1 John chapter 3 verses 2 and 3. Take a look at that. It's on the screen. If you have your Bible, bring it out.

Underline it. It's such an important verse. 1 John chapter 3 verse 2 and 3. This among other verses gave me my goal.

It once and for all settled the goal I needed to have in life. It says the second half of verse 2 of 1 John chapter 3. We know there are not a lot of things, John says, we will know about what happens when Jesus comes again. But we do know one thing, that when he appears, when Jesus appears again, we will be like him.

Because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope, everyone who has this goal, you get busy purifying yourself as Jesus is pure. If you want to maintain a pure testimony and you don't have the right hope, you're in trouble.

So maybe what we need to do in order to purify ourselves and in order to embrace the purity of Jesus, we have to define our goal clearly. So all other goals are negotiable and can be changed and can be thrown away when compared to this goal. What is the goal? It's clear from here that my goal is that when I see him, I will be just like him.

Have you made that your lifelong motto, that I want to be like Jesus? Not tomorrow, not next year, but by the time I die, by the time I'm called back to go to be with Jesus, I want to be as close to him as possible.

That's my goal. So was 2009 a good year or a bad year? I had a child, I kept my job, I didn't lose my job in the economy, the recession was going down south, but my job prospered.

Did I have a good year? None of those things. Did I become more like Jesus in 2009? If not, I'm not going towards that goal. I've got all of the goals worked out, but I'm not heading in that direction towards that goal.

And I made that one of the things I had to make as a foundation of my life, that from henceforth, this was going to be the goal that could always be something I could look towards. Like the north star in the sky that never moves, that the sailors always look at. This would be my north star, the pole star, that I would always look at when I was in trouble.

When I came across shaky waters, I would always say, where am I? Am I heading towards my goal, my lifelong goal of being like Jesus? When I clarified that goal, it put my career into the right perspective. It put my desire to have children in the right perspective. It put my desire to have healthy children in the right perspective, much lower than being like Jesus.

It put the desire to have some sort of ministry in the right perspective. It put all definitions of success in the right perspective, way lower than the one ultimate goal of being like Jesus. And there are other verses that I just want to put up on the screen.

You can write it down. These are other verses that all say the same thing in different words. Romans 8 29.

He predestined us. He made a destination way ahead of us. He made a predestination for us that when we were born, we were created that we may one day be conformed to the image of his son Jesus.

Second Corinthians 3 18. We are being transformed from glory to glory into his image. Colossians 1 27.

This is the mystery that God has revealed to all of us. Christ in me, the hope of glory. Not Sandeep perfected on his own.

Not the most sanitized and the most integrity, integrist version of Sandeep. No place for that. The only goal we could have is Christ being like Christ and Christ in me.

That's my hope. That's my goal of glory. If I don't have that hope fixed on him, all my purifications, all my attempts to get purity will be shallow.

It'll be broken. I have nothing to center myself on. When I'm lost in the shaky waters of the sea, I won't know where to look at because I don't know what my goal is.

Maybe my goal is to be a good person. And so my goal, I get real discouraged. I found that when I fix my eyes on Jesus, he gives me comfort even when I fall.

I don't know who gives you comfort when you fall. If you're just trying to be a good person, if you're just having trying to do good works, I don't know who comforts you when you fail. I know who comforts me when I fail or when I fall.

I go to Jesus. He is my goal. He is my destination.

He is my hope. It's so important, young people especially. We've gotten a tremendous gift to be able to understand this when we are still young.

Some of the brothers and the sisters, brothers and sisters who are older than us and who understood this much later in life will tell you the same thing. They wish you would grab a hold of this vision, that simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus that he alone would be your only goal. We've heard this numerous times.

I'm not saying anything new, am I? But will we throw away all other goals? I want to be a great worship leader someday. I want to write that one song just like, Lord I lift your name on high. I want to write something like that.

That's my goal. If I did that, I'm all set. I've done enough for Jesus.

That's it. We have plenty of people who've written songs like that and have ended nowhere. Their souls have been stripped wrecked.

Who are the people? Who are the examples? Who are our examples? The people who have made Jesus their goal. That's how you maintain your zeal for a pure testimony because you're going to leave this camp and you're going to go elsewhere and all the messages are going to get a little unclear. The passion that you feel here is going to feel a little old.

The fire is going to seem like it's dying out and you must renew your goal. You must renew your mind with this goal. God for 2010, my goal is to be more conformed to the image of your son Jesus.

I want to fix my hope that one day I will be like you and it was with that desire that I purify myself. And every day, every month, every week, every month of the year, I'm going to check. Is that still my goal or has some corporate goal snuck in? Has some marriage goal snuck in? Has some number of children goals snuck in? Our goal must be single.

Our devotion must be single, simple, pure, just to Jesus. He who must be my disciple must forsake everything. Must hate father, mother, the closest relationships.

I could add career. I could get desires for marriage, desires for children, desires for healthy children, whatever it is. We must lay them all on the altar.

Every part of our body, as we heard yesterday, two days ago, chop them up piece by piece, body part by body part and say, God, this is on the altar. This needs to be purified like you are pure. Your eyes, your ears, your hands.

God, I have a goal to be made pure. Now maybe some of you have that goal, but I wanted to talk to you the rest of the time about one other concept and this is so huge. I hope you will get a hold of this, is understanding the role of temptation.

Understanding the role of temptation in this whole process. We've understood the goal. I want to be like Jesus.

Okay, why God do you allow temptations in my life? Why do you allow these things? Why can't we just have a blissful life? Why can't you just zap me with the Holy Spirit? Give me this shaking experience and I'll have God flowing through my veins and sin will become like nothing to me. I wish he did it that way. I really wish it would be much easier for all of us, but that's not God's way.

That's not the way God has described it in the Bible. So we either do it God's way or we continue with the illusion that maybe someday we'll have it our way and we'll go to heaven thinking we're going to have it our way and be disappointed. I want to show you what God's way is and the first thing we must understand is that it starts with faith.

Why do I say it starts with faith? Because there's a verse in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6. There's a verse in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6, very simple verse, which says it is impossible to please God without faith. So if you want to get into the journey and the pathway of pleasing God, it must start with faith. It is not slightly possible.

It is not really difficult to please God without faith. It is impossible to please God without faith. So we must start with faith.

What is faith? I want to give you a definition of faith that you can remember for the rest of your life, which I got from here. Faith is the absolute and total dependence on Jesus. It is impossible to please God without an absolute dependence on Jesus.

Oh, but what about all those good works I did? You can't please God without him with a dependence on Jesus. I don't know what about your good works. I just know what the Bible says.

You cannot please God without a dependence on Jesus. And I trust that all of you are willing to accept that, that you want to have faith and that you have faith, at least some level of faith. You have some level of dependence on Jesus, at least at a minimum, you've depended on Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

But faith doesn't end there. Faith just begins there. Faith is the total leaning and the total dependence upon Jesus in every situation of our life.

So we come to God and say, God, I want to be pleasing to you. And God says, just depend on me. And I say, God, I buy that.

I get that. I understand that from scripture. I'm going to have faith.

I'm going to depend on you. God, I depend on you. God says, let us see.

Let's check and see if you have faith. Let's test whether you have faith. Do you have faith? You tell God you have faith.

How do you know if you have faith? God says, I'm going to test it. And I want to show you that passage in James chapter one, verses two through four, which talks about, look, if we want to be like Jesus, and we want to have a total dependence on Jesus, because that's what's pleasing to God, which is called faith. And we want the most perfected faith that that's possible, then we must really understand what James says.

And we will understand what James says when he says, consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. You want to test, you want, you say you have faith. God says, let's test it.

It's for your good. I don't want you to be deceived that you have faith when you don't have faith. It's for your good that we test it.

Let's see if this thing you hold in your hand is really faith. That's what trials are. That's why James says, consider it all joy.

Because you know what another word for trials and temptations are? Testing of your faith. Testing of your dependence on Jesus. That's what that desire to look at that woman after lust is.

It's a testing of whether you're going to lean on Jesus, not whether you're going to look away. It took me a while for me to understand that, that the temptation to look at a woman after lust, the real test was not whether I would look away. The real test was, will I lean on Jesus? Will I fix my eyes on him? Otherwise, it's a dead work.

It's my own righteousness. The test is, are you going to lean on him? Are you going to tell Jesus at that moment, Jesus, I can't do this on my own. I need you.

That's what it is. Simple, isn't it? You try it the next time you're tempted. You might find it's not that simple.

But really, it's much simpler than all the gritting of your teeth and the clenching of your fists that you might have done for years. And Jesus is saying, when I send a trial to you, when I send trials all day, trials of jealousy, trials of competition, trials of lust, trials of insecurity, trials of not feeling good enough, whatever it is, all of them, every single one is a testing of whether you will depend on Jesus. So let me draw a little diagram.

There's your faith. You give it to God and you say, here God, here's my faith. What's faith? Dependence on Jesus.

God, I depend on you. I sang it last yesterday in the morning on Sunday morning service. I really depend on you.

You are the air I breathe. In fact, I am lost without you. All right.

You're lost without me. All right. Let's test your faith.

Let's test this lostness without me that you sang about yesterday. This is what James 1, 2 through 4 is saying. That the testing of your faith, God wants it to produce victory over sin.

No, not yet. Endurance. Endurance.

You know what that means for me? That if you've tested, if God says, let's have a trial to test this faith that you say you have and you fail, God says, that's okay because I'm trying to produce first of all in you endurance, not victory over sin. Young people, listen to me carefully. This is so important to get.

It may liberate you from thinking I need to get victory over sin tomorrow. God wants to produce endurance in you. What is endurance? Endurance means not giving up.

Telling God, I'm going to come back to you. That test proved that I didn't have dependence on you like I thought I did. I had enough dependence on you, but the trial proved that I was wrong.

So God, I'm coming back to you and say, God, I need more faith. Increase my dependence on you. And we think the problem is God is withholding his grace from us, but he doesn't withhold his grace from the humble.

From those who say, I'm completely leaning back on Jesus. In areas we realize and sometimes areas we don't realize, we depend on ourselves. And so it is in our best interest that we fall so that we could understand that we can do nothing without him.

God in his great mercy doesn't want to get us empty victory over sin, where we just don't have any victory. We have victory over sin, but it doesn't come with the dependence of Jesus because dependence on Jesus is fake and that's what pleases God. So every time you fail, every time you fail or you fall down, whatever you want to call it, it means that you didn't have the requisite amount of leaning back on Jesus.

So no problem, get up and tell Jesus, I know my true condition. I don't have as much leaning back on you as I need. Let's do it again.

Let's try it again. Let's try that trial again. I want to lean even more on you.

We must understand that that is what is being tested. Simon, Simon, Satan wants to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed that your faith may not fail, that your dependence on Jesus may not absolutely give out. You may fall down, but you may not fail.

Your dependence on me may not completely fail. And we know Simon Peter fell down, but because of the prayer of Jesus, his faith, his dependence on Jesus didn't completely run out. And we know about the redemption of Peter and that's how it is with each one of us.

Step number one, when we get a trial, fail or success, it's a reflection of whether we are depending enough on Jesus. And if we don't depend on Jesus, all we need to do is get up and say, God, I'm going to endure. You're producing endurance in me.

And then finally one day, one day we will be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But you ask me, what, where is victory over sin? You don't have victory over sin on this diagram. I don't.

Let me take you to another passage, Romans chapter five. All of us want to conquer our sins. I think that's why you're here.

All of us want to conquer those things that beset us. Let's start with verse three, Romans chapter five and verse three, just three verses. We'll read Romans chapter five, verse three, and not only this, but we also exalt in our temptations, knowing, here you go, similar that these trials, which is a testing of our faith, which we found from James chapter one, verse two through four brings about, Paul says the same thing as James says, it brings about perseverance, another word for endurance.

Paul is saying exactly the same thing. And perseverance brings about proven character and proven character hope, and hope does not disappoint. Proven character is what I mean by victory over sin.

Proven character says you've got character that's proven. The tests were there and you succeeded. You've got proven character.

You got victory over those sins. So victory over sin comes in the process, but it comes after endurance. So young man, young sister, young brother, you're struggling with a particular sin.

Don't give up. It's producing in you first endurance. Endurance leads to proven character.

Endurance leads to victory over sin. Let me show you something. This is why we have this here.

I've got in my hand here, some seeds. These are seeds that we can plant in the ground. I'll just give a few in here.

We've got a bunch of seeds. What is the seed? Seed is the word of God. We hear the word of God all the time.

We take these seeds and we put it into the soil of our heart, and the seed is supposed to bear fruit, and trials come, and it's the testing of your faith that's supposed to grow, and the testing of your faith depends on God saying, will this seed grow when it's put into the ground? And you don't see anything when it's put into the ground. It's a little seed, but then you buried it in the ground. You have no idea.

Did it produce any fruit? It's still stuck into the ground. The testing of your faith which comes from hearing the word of God being planted in your heart, the testing of your faith produces what? Endurance. Don't give up.

The seed is growing. You don't see anything, but it's growing. It's caused a death within it, but life is coming out.

Nothing's coming out of the surface. Okay, and you endure, and you endure, and then suddenly a shoot comes up, and you're like sweet. We've finally got growth.

A shoot is coming out of the tree, but it doesn't look like we'd like it to look at, does it? Let me show you what it looks like. Who wants this? This is my life. Jesus, look at my life.

I give it as an offering to you. Beautiful little tree, and I look at this tree, and I say, this is not working. Not working.

I don't have any fruit. I don't have victory over sin. I don't have any beauty to my life, and I've had something spring up.

There's some kind of plant, but it's ugly. There's no fruit. There's nothing pretty about it, and what is God's word to you? Endure.

I'm producing a fruit in you. I'm producing proven character, but you've got to endure, and I think too many of us, I know myself included, for many years looked at this ugly little tree that was not at all pretty to Jesus, and I said, God, I'm not going to give you this. I'm going to give up.

I must have sold the wrong seed, so I dig up this plant. I would have dug up this plant, and I would have shown you what we do with it, because it's pretty tragic what we do with it, but because it's not mine, I won't do it, but we dig up this plant. We uproot it, and we say the seed's the problem.

We don't have the right word of God, so we go to the next preacher and say, preacher, give me another word from God. This word doesn't work. Look, look what I got.

I got this ugly little tree. I don't have victory over sin. This is not victory over sin, so you go to some other preacher who tells you some other theology, and you say, okay, I'll plant that seed into the ground, and I'll

let it die, and maybe I'll wait a little longer, but this is all you get, and you're stuck in this ugly little Christianity.

I know because I've been there. I'm still there in some areas where I see the filth. I see the ugliness.

I see the depravity, and I say, God, this is not presentable to you. What kind of life is this for you? I see the men who've gone before me. What is this compared to that? This is the word of Jesus.

The word of Romans chapter 5 says, persevere, persevere. Young man, young woman, I don't know where you are in your walk with Jesus, but most of us, if you're anything like me, are looking at your life, and it may resemble this, and my word to you is endure. It's the word from God.

I believe I have the mind of Christ when I say, this is what you must do. You must stick with him. You must go back to God and say, God, I need more faith.

I trust your word. Something beautiful is coming out of this, and we keep working, and we keep working, and we keep going back to God, and we keep depending on God, and one day we will see beauty. How about this? Do you want to clap for this? Now this is beautiful.

This is a lot more beautiful than this. Don't we want this life? Wouldn't we like to take pictures next to this life? This is my life. This one, that's why we don't testify in the meetings, because we're standing next to this life and say, the elders can see through me.

I'm saying nothing. I'm just going to stand like this. Don't look at my life.

You don't want to see what's behind me, because this, you've got to endure. If you can't run back to God, you've got to walk back to God. If you can't walk back to God, you've got to crawl back to God.

Whatever you do, you've got to pick up the phone and call God up and say, God, I'm here. I'm back. I want to depend on you again.

I didn't see the testing that this was my faith. I didn't realize that all it was my dependence on you. I didn't realize that you were just, you were producing something in me.

You were saying, hang on. Beauty is coming. Beauty is coming.

Hang on. And the problem is not that Jesus is trying to torture us. His word of God is true.

God gives grace to the humble. What's the problem? It's our pride. God's word is true.

And we go to God like a seven-year-old child, and we go to God the father, like a seven-year-old child goes to the father and you say, I want to do this, or I want to play with a knife. And the father says, no, no, no, no playing with the knives. And the seven, and me, the seven-year-old, or the five-year-old child says, Daddy, you're mean.

You don't want to give me what I want. I so enjoy playing with the knife. Daddy says, not yet.

You're not old enough. You don't know how to handle it. You don't know what you're doing with it.

You've got too much belief in yourself, and you don't know how dangerous this is. I need you to get a little older. You'll be a little bit more humble.

And the same thing's happening in the Christian walk. It is not that Jesus is withholding grace from you. It is our pride that God has to work through.

And God is saying, I'll work with you. Hang on. Hang on.

The roots of this need to go deep down enough, and there's some rock we just encountered. That rock is called your pride. But hang on.

Don't uproot the tree. Whatever you do for heaven's sake, don't uproot the tree. We're working on getting that rock that our roots have hit.

We're getting that rock blasted away. My Holy Spirit is getting through to you on that one. But hang on.

Don't uproot the tree. Don't go to some other theology. Don't think you need another word from God.

You don't need any of all these other things. You just need to depend on God, and stay dependent on God, and stay dependent on God, and God will work it out. He'll get through all the pride areas in your life.

Somebody asked me, how do I get more humble? I told them, this is how I try to stay more humble and get more humble. I try to say, God, I'm more dependent on you. God, I need you more.

I can't do it on my own. I don't have the ability to do it. That's why Jesus was the most humble man on this earth, because he never did his own will.

It's not because he sinned, and sinned, and sinned, and that's how he became humble. He never did his own will. That's how I become humble.

I say, God, I do my own will too many times. I have my own agenda. I have my own thoughts.

That's what's keeping this plant from growing. But we as children can blame God, and God doesn't mind, as any good father doesn't mind when this three-year-old child says, God, Daddy, you're mean. God the Father doesn't mean.

He understands our immaturity, but he says, stick with me, stick with me. Don't uproot your faith. Don't lose your faith.

Don't give up. Persevere, persevere, persevere. I'll get you to victory over sin one day.

I want to show you the flowchart of this, Romans chapter five. You know what tribulations are. They're trials, which is the testing of your faith.

What does that produce in you? Romans chapter five, it produces a new perseverance. Another word for it is endurance. What does that produce in you? Proven character.

Don't we all want proven character? Persevere, persevere, persevere. You'll get proven character, but we're not done yet. We're not done yet, and this is the beauty of the Christian religion.

People ask me, what's the difference between Jesus the holy man and other religions who have holy men? People who have integrity-driven lives, people who are so upright, what's the difference? They have proven character. All of these people have proven character, don't they? I can't deny that, and some of us so long after victory over sin that when we do get victory over sin, we just love hanging out with it and

smelling the roses and saying, wow, this is beautiful, and we keep admiring it and we kept looking at it and saying, wow, this is unbelievable. Isn't this beautiful, this victory over sin? I don't lust with my eyes anymore.

Look at all these little, little petals. I'm not getting angry like all these other people. Oh man, what beautiful victory over sin, victory over sin.

Look at me now. Am I not beautiful? Please take my picture. I've got proven character.

I'll speak at your conferences. I'll do all of this stuff. I got proven character.

I got a pretty picture to show you. That's not the Christian religion. You want victory over sin, that's it.

You've got the wrong religion. Proven character leads to hope, leads to our goal, which says it's all about Jesus. It's not about me and my victory over sin.

It's about Jesus. So Jesus, this is for you. You take this.

It looks really pretty next to you. This is my humble offering to you, my life full of proven character. I just want you.

My goal is not proven character. My goal is not victory over sin. My goal is to be with Jesus, to be as close to Jesus and conformed in every way possible so that I could offer to him a sweet smelling aroma as a fragrance to God and say, God, have this smell at it.

I hope it pleases you. I didn't work. I didn't endure through all of this stuff.

I didn't get to proven character and all of the beauty and the fragrance of our lives just to hang out with it. This was meant to be given to you. Jesus, it's for you.

It's never been about me, has it? It's never been about you, has it? Jesus, it's about you. Can you picture that? Can you picture that one day you will have victory over sin and you'll be all excited? And then the greatest temptation of all would come for you to be proud of all your achievements. And then God says, that's the worst of it all.

If you have proven character, but you don't have your goal right. If you have your goal as proven character, if you have your goal as victory over sin, time to recalibrate, time to reset and realize I have been going towards an inferior goal. Let me get my goal right, which is to one day present this to Jesus and say, Jesus, this is for you.

I kneel at your feet, unworthy slave. This is because of what your spirit did through me. This is for you.

None of this I'm going to take the credit for. I just hung on. I just stuck with you.

I just kept depending on you. How can I take credit for when I was just depending on you? I can't. Jesus, this is for you.

That's the goal we must have and we reset ourselves back from that. That is why I said, if you want to be a pure testimony, it's not because this pure testimony is this beautiful little thing that one day you'll show to the world. No, this pure testimony is something you're going to offer up to Jesus for prostrate at his feet and say, Jesus, you deserve any beautiful thing.

That is why the people, the 24 elders, I believe, will get all these crowns, which is a symbol, if I'm right, of the reward for their righteous work. When they are before the throne of God, and I believe that's in Revelation chapter 4, they'll fling their crowns at the throne of Jesus. Without a moment's notice, they'll take off all their best beautiful works.

The reward of that, which is their crown on their head, and they fling it at the throne of Jesus and say, it's all for you. We must work backwards from that. We must work backwards from that moment.

So we must stop interacting with Jesus as a God who's far away. We must stop interacting with a Jesus who's commanding us to do all these tough things. We must interact with him as a bridegroom who deserves a matching bride, a bride who's as pure as the bridegroom, a bride who's as loving as the bridegroom, a bride who's fully conformed, who's an equal match.

Think about this. If God was a father and Jesus is his son, what kind of bride does Jesus, does God God the father want for Jesus? Does he want a third-rate kind of bride? Some kind of bride that's not at all at all compatible to Jesus, that have completely different values, that's all messed up? Does God the father want that kind of bride for his son Jesus? That's an easy question, isn't it? Absolutely not. He wants a pure bride.

He wants a bride who's pure like his son is pure. Then that's a match that is fit for heaven. Jesus and the bride conformed to the bridegroom.

And the bride looks at the bridegroom and says, it's all for you, Jesus. We must as young people get a hold of this bridal relationship with Jesus that so many people have talked about. But we must understand that if I am a slave working for a master, I may not get this.

I say, God, I want a piece of this. Can I just take a piece of this and take it for my own? Because I deserve at least one percent, maybe just one little shoot out here. Maybe that's what I deserve.

The bridegroom gave us everything. Won't he freely give us all things? The father who gave the son, won't he freely give us all things? The least we can do is whatever we produce through our dependence on Jesus, we offer it up to him and say, God, this is all because I depended on you anyways. I didn't do anything.

I just leaned back. I don't know where you are, young brothers, young sisters. I don't know where you are.

I don't know if you have a seed in the ground and you don't even see a shoot coming up. Then my message to you is, hang on. Keep talking to Jesus.

I don't know if you see a shoot coming out of the ground, but it doesn't really have any kind of prettiness associated with it. You got a couple of buds that have potential here, but not really anything pretty to look at, nothing pretty to present to the church. And my message to you is, hang on, endure, stick with Jesus.

And maybe you have achieved some level of victory over sin, whatever that word means, where you are able to conquer sin, where you're able to say no to temptations consistently. And then my word to you is, get your goal right. This is not about you.

This is not about you looking all pretty. This is about presenting it to Jesus. So take it off your showroom, take it off your showcase and throw it at the feet of Jesus and fall prostrate and say, Jesus, this was all

about you.

And from my own life, I realized that there were areas in my life where I was getting victory in certain areas, where I was able to overcome temptation, but I wasn't able and I was caught up looking at it, smelling the roses, so to speak. And God said, what are you making this about? You of all people are most guilty. You should be offering this up to me.

Don't give up. Don't give up at whatever stage you're in. Don't give up and make it all about Jesus.

It is Jesus. Jesus only is our message. We keep trying to say that in many, many different ways possible, but the key part of our message is that it must be about Jesus at the end and hanging on with him.

I have made this, I share this with you as a hope that it may be helpful to you. A lot of us young people struggle with various sins. Some of us struggle with very shameful sins.

Things that we think are shameful. Things that really don't have that much shame associated with it, but maybe our culture, maybe our family, maybe about church, maybe whatever it is, put a lot of shame associated with it. It's not right, but because of the shame associated with it, we hide behind it and we tuck it away in a corner and we act as if it doesn't exist.

And we think that once we get that one area figured out, then I can serve God. Then I can stand up and share it and testify in church. I've realized something about all the sins I'm dealing with and all the sins I've dealt with.

I have realized that I have committed a much greater sin and I've committed a much greater sin and I commit a much greater sin even now. The greatest sin I can commit as far as I'm concerned when I'm dealing with temptations is that whenever I deal with temptation, fail or pass, succeed or fail, I don't communicate with Jesus. Young brother, young brother dealing with pornography, young sister dealing with body image issues, whatever your problem is, this is my message to you.

Your issue with pornography, your issue with your body image, your issue with whatever it is you're dealing with is not the worst thing you're doing. The worst thing you're doing is that after you sin, you don't go to Jesus and you tell him, I'm coming back. I'm getting up.

I'm not giving up on you. You only have the words of eternal life. Where else can I go? That is the greatest sin I can commit.

I hope I could look each one of you in the eye and tell you that, that the greatest sin you're committing every day is not that secret sin. It's not that besetting sin. It's that after you commit that besetting sin, you don't go to Jesus and say, Jesus, I failed, but I'm getting up and I want that trial again because I want to depend more on you.

I don't want victory over sin. I want to give you something that's pleasing to you because I want you. That's why I'm coming back to you.

When I want victory over sin, I'm so tied up with this. When I'm tied up with Jesus, even when I fall, I get up. I don't lie down because Jesus is my goal.

Why would I run away from him when he's the very goal I want? And I completely agree. That's something I learned from my dad and many other people that when we hear the voice of Jesus, we must hear the

voice of Jesus, which tells me, first of all, that I am loved. Way before, I know he knows I came to him about my besetting sin, but before he gets into that with me, he says, sit down.

He looks me in the eye and he tells me, I love you. Have you heard that voice of Jesus consistently? If you haven't, that's why you don't go to him. You hear all kinds of other voices of Jesus or that you think are Jesus telling you you're not good enough.

This religion is not for you. You need to fast more. You need to pray more.

You may need to do all kinds of things, but first of all, Jesus wants to tell you that he loves you. It's the picture of the prodigal son and the father's face that drew me to him. And I had to keep that picture in front of me for months.

And I had to keep that picture in front of me in different locations. That when I started up my computer, the first thing I saw was the father's face smiling at me. And I was all discouraged and I was all depressed because for whatever reason, and Jesus was smiling at me.

And the father's face was smiling at me and says, how are you doing? I love you. Why would I run away from that kind of voice? And our mind plays tricks on us and that mind and that voice may not be clear very in the beginning, but we must have the Holy Spirit come upon us. That includes the spirit of discipline that says, I'm going to listen to this voice.

I'm going to put that verse that reminds me that God is a loving father all over my room, in the bathroom, when I, in my car, on my cell phone, right before I go to bed, I'm going to tell God that I know that you love me. When I wake up in the morning, I'm going to tell God, God, I know that you love me. And I'm going to hear God speak that to me.

I'm going to hang it on the doorpost of my house. I'm going to put it on the gates. When I get up, when I sit down, when I have a meal, I'm going to say, God, one thing I know is true.

You love me. I know you're telling that to me. You call me friend because I come to you.

Then he'll sit down with you and he'll say, you just need to depend on me, son, daughter. Let's do it again. Let's get up.

Let's keep going. Your goal is to be like Jesus, but we're not done yet. You're not dead yet.

Another tip I'd like to share with you is I've tried to eliminate the word failure from my vocabulary. I'll tell you why. Because I got my goal set to something different.

My goal is to be like Jesus. So I'm a failure if I don't be like Jesus at the end of my life. And I'm not done yet.

And you're not done yet. And you're not done yet. So don't call yourself a failure.

I don't call myself a failure because I say I'm a work in progress. I fall down a lot. I fall, but I'm not failing just yet.

We'll see when I die whether I failed or not. Right now I'm just falling. When you fall, you get up.

Which parent in his right mind or in her right mind would call a one-year-old or a two-year-old learning how to walk a failure? He or she, that baby's not a failure. He's a faller. He's going to walk someday.

You know that. I have a baby girl. She's going to walk someday.

When she falls, I'm going to rejoice. You know what I mean. I'm not going to call her a failure.

I'm going to call her a faller. I'm going to tell her get up. I'm going to help her up.

And so we're going to do it again. And one day she'll be running so fast, I'll have to tell her to slow down or she may fall. Brothers and sisters, this is the message that has deeply changed my heart.

Fundamentally reset. I used to go up and down in my Christian life, really wanting to follow Jesus, but suffering with bouts of discouragement, bouts of falling, falling and staying down. But I thank God that he revealed the open desire in my eyes to see that I had my goal wrong.

That I had not surrendered every other goal. The goal that I might get married, the goal that I might have children, the goal that I might have healthy children, the goal that I might have a second child, the goal that I might have a secure financial future, the goal that I may be able to retire, the goal that I might do this, the goal that I might have some kind of ministry, the goal that I might have this and that and this and that, the goal that I might have grandchildren. All and on and on.

I can have all these goals. And then God says, that's why you've lost your joy. If you only had your goal as to be like me, you would have so much joy.

It's a tough road. God disciplines those he loves and I have been a recipient of much discipline. I will continue to be because he loves me.

But there's so much comfort in the discipline of the Lord because of the discipline of the Father. And there are tough days where things are hard, but Jesus is with me. And the goal is always clear ahead of me.

And I love it that I don't have to get victory over sin tomorrow. I just need to endure through this, the ugliness of my life, when my pride comes up, when my anger comes up, when I blow up and the world and everybody else sees what I truly am. What's my response? I humble myself and I say, I'm not giving up though.

I'm a work in progress. So what if I'm not done yet? I'm getting up. I'm not giving up on Jesus.

I want proven character because I want to give it to him. Young brothers, young sisters, if you will see this truth that I have discovered, that I have learned after years of the elders teaching it to me, but it's suddenly my eyes got open to it. Nothing that I've said is anything new that has not been shared.

It's just my way of retelling the same old story that Jesus said, that Paul said, that James said, that the elders here say in every local church. I'm just putting my own little picture next to it and saying, I hope this helps somebody to understand. If you're here, don't give up.

Endure. He's working something in you. He's working the fruit of the spirit of patience in you.

Don't give up. You'll get there one day. If you're in your 20s, if you're faithful in your 20s, you'll have victory over sin in many areas in your 30s.

If you're in your 30s, work with God, endure with him and he'll get you through it and he'll give you more areas where this is maybe the lust of the eyes. And then he says, now let's work on your jealousy and he gets your jealousy, the proven character and giving it up to God. And then he says, now let's work on your hypocrisy in this particular area and where you seek the honor of man and on and on and on.

He'll work you through different places until one day we give an orchard full of beautiful flowers and beautiful trees to Jesus. And each tree resembles one area of our lives, one body part, one sin in our lives that has been completely, we're depending on Jesus and can be offered up to the bridegroom. And it'll be the lust of the eyes.

It'll be the lust of the flesh. It'll be our desire to seek the approval of man. It'll be the desire to be competitive with other people, the desire to be jealous of others.

All of those things will be beautiful trees one day if we will stick with him. And depend on him. Consider it all joy when you encounter trials because that's the way you're going to go from a little seed of faith to this not so pretty thing called endurance to proven character that one day you can offer up to God as a fragrant aroma.

Let's bow our heads. Let's close this time with a word of prayer. It all starts with faith.

It all starts with a dependence on Jesus. Maybe some of you have victory over sin but it's not been achieved through through dependence of Jesus and God says we need to reset. All these things you call victory over sin is not victory over sin because it's not done in faith.

It's not done by dependence on me. It's a dead work. It starts with a dependence on Jesus.

And then he's going to test you. Expect trials. Expect temptations.

It's going to produce endurance which will produce proven character which will produce faith. Father above I pray that you will speak into each of the ears of people the minds of everybody hearing here right now and let them hear you say that you love them. Above every other voice of the devil that tells them that they're a failure or they're not good enough or they've been a Christian too long and not made it.

I pray Lord that you would break through and help them to realize that the voice that you are saying is that you love them. You love them and you call them your children because they come to you. Broken prodigal children, lost children, tattered, squandered half the inheritance but they're coming to you.

Father speak that word into their hearts that you love them. Brothers and sisters I hope you will hear that. It is so important that you know that the God that you worship is one who intensely loves you.

He sends trials to perfect you because he wants to make you a bride worthy for his bridegroom son Jesus. That's the goal that you may be just like him. Stick with him.

Stick with the process. Don't give up yet. Get up if you're lying down.

Get up and not fight harder. Get up and lean more on him. Get up and depend more on him.

Get up and tell Jesus this time I will depend more on you and if that's not good enough you'll get up again and depend even more on him and that's not going to end until you get that proven character that you can offer up to Jesus. Father please build endurance in each one of us. Us young people Lord who are trying

to get victory over sin overnight.

I hope that we will throw away that broken ridiculous theology that we can just get this victory over sin just like that. It's not your way Lord. It's not your way.

We've seen this through your word. Your way is to build endurance first. Forgive us Lord that we thought that we could just get something quickly like victory over sin overnight.

Help us to embrace this pathway that you've created. It is for our best. Help us to endure.

We trust that one day we will have victory over sin but even then we will present it to you. Our master, our king, our lord, our bridegroom. We owe it all to you anyways.

We want to live our lives only for you. That we may be conformed into your image. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

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