

The Power Of The Spirit In The Early Church

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit and maintaining a deep devotion to Jesus Christ. It highlights the need for unity in the church, the significance of embodying a genuine love for Jesus, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit into all truth, especially in times of persecution.

Scripture: John 16:12, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Revelation 2:2, 1 Corinthians 4:15, Hebrews 9:14, Acts 2:1, Acts 4:29, 1 Peter 4:17

Topics: "Guidance of the Holy Spirit", "Unity in the Church"

Description

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Transcript

Once again, it's a good thing to move front and center. I know it's maybe more comfortable in the back, but it helps the speaker and it helps us all if we're all together. So, if you could move closer, not just now, but during the other services, that'd be great.

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I wanted to start by reading something in 2 Peter chapter 1. 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. 2 Peter chapter 1. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, seeing that his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence, for by these he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

I was asked to speak on the early church and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I wanted to start by talking about the need for the Holy Spirit, first of all. In our own lives.

And this verse, this series of verses, is something that constantly comes like a sword towards me. I'll tell you why. I want to kind of be able to explain that and set that up.

As the reason why we really need the Holy Spirit. You know, we hear the statement that Christianity is not a methodology, it's not a philosophy. It's not a set of statements, it's not a set of truths that we believe.

It's not a religion, it's a relationship. These are phrases we use. But I'll tell you something, as I look at my own life, as much as I hold fast to that, it's very difficult for me to look at my own life and not see that there's a constant urge and a constant pulsing within myself to reduce my religion, my Christianity, to a set of rules.

If I look back at my life, and I want you to think about your present Christianity, does it oscillate between being generally content during the day, because you're following the commands of God as you know it, that you're not sinning in some particular way that you used to sin with, and you comfort yourself that God is with you, and then oscillating between that and sometimes being discontent, because you're disobeying God's Word in some area, that you're allowing anger to settle in, or bitterness, or envy, or lack of forgiveness, or lust, or whatever it is, and that you slip back into something that you thought you departed from, so you oscillate between that, and you go back to the contentment when you repent about it. Is that your Christian life? Is that my Christian life? And that's where I was saying, I noticed that for me too, can slowly devolve into those two sets of emotions, those two sets of beliefs. And I noticed that in that, there is also a set of rules that are settled in.

The old covenant was a law, a set of law given by Moses. Now we're not under the law, we're not under the old covenant, we're under the new covenant. The old covenant is obsolete, is what Hebrew says.

But a new covenant can also be a new set of rules. The rule is not do not commit adultery, the rule is don't lust. But now lusting becomes the rule.

The old covenant said don't murder, the new covenant says don't even get angry. Well now, anger becomes the rule. And as long as I'm following the rules, I'm okay.

I'm okay with myself, and when I'm not obeying the rules, I'm not okay. And I don't even believe that the Christian life is meant to be a life where I'm exhibiting what are the virtues written in Galatians 5, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. This is what I mean by that.

Because those virtues can be birthed, those virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness can be birthed out of a lot of self-will and self-discipline. I know this, I've come from India, where there are other religions too. Where there are lots of very sincere people who demonstrate a fair amount of patience, a lot more than we see among most Christians.

And temperance and kindness and goodness. I've seen it in myself. Water that drips out of a towel that is squeezed.

And I can make my Christianity to be that. Constantly looking, okay I need a little bit more kindness, I need a little bit more goodness. So I grit my teeth and I try a little bit harder.

And I want to compare that to what we read in 2 Peter 1 verses 2-4. This is the standard. Let's read that again slowly and let me just point out what I see.

Here's the promise of the Christian life. What I said compared to what is written here. Verse 3 it says that God's divine power has granted me everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Then verse 4 it says, by this divine power he has granted me promises. A whole lot of promises in this book. All kinds of promises.

Sin shall not have dominion over you. It's not a command, it's a promise. Because you're under grace, you're not under law.

It's a promise. I'll always conquer through Christ. Overwhelmingly conquer.

It's a promise. What shall separate me from the love of Christ? Nothing, that's a promise. Now God's given me all these promises.

That's where it gets for me the rubber hits the road. Because in verse 4 it says, by these promises. So that, what's the reason he's given us these promises in verse 4? So that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature.

Not start to look a little bit like what Jesus looked like. Not have fruit that resembles the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But partaking of the divine nature.

You know what your nature is? I don't need to tell you, you know it better than I do. I know what my nature is. We're all called what we have, human nature.

Nature. Not behavior. Nature.

God is telling me that these promises in this book. Has got to take me to the point. That by those promises I partake of.

I take part of. You know we partake in a meal. We consume the divine nature itself.

How are we doing? In terms of being able to say, yes I can attest. That I have been living my life. By reading these promises.

Being able to take in the very divine nature. That my fundamental nature has been changing. It's not a behavior modification program.

It's not a methodology. It's not a philosophy. It's a partaking of the divine nature.

That word partaking is the same word that's in fellowship. Fellow sharers. God the father.

God the son. And us. Fellow sharers of the divine nature.

Is that blasphemous? It would be if it wasn't written in God's word. When I compare myself to this. I tell you I find that I am the most in need.

This is the standard. 1 John 1 verse 3 if you don't know. One of my favorite verses.

What we have seen and heard. Just a couple of pages over. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also.

That you too may have fellowship with us. John, the apostle John. Touched the physical body of Jesus.

Leaned on his breath. Smelled him. Felt him.

He says what we have seen, heard, touched. We're sharing with you that you may have not. Adore me because I touched Jesus and you didn't.

Or look up to me because yeah I was there. I saw Jesus. Touched his hand before he had the nails.

All that's great. But what I want to share with you is fellowship. And the fellowship I have.

Is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. Again that same concept here. This is why I'm here to tell you.

That what you must have with me. Is what I have with the father and the son. That's what the apostle John was saying.

It's a feasting. It's a fellow sharing. With the father and the son.

How can we do this? Fellow sharing with the divine nature. Some feet of strength. Some great gritting your teeth.

Some resolving to get up at five in the morning. And pray for two hours now. Reading one hour of Bible every day.

Partaking of the divine nature. Partaking of the divine nature. We'll quickly come to the end of ourselves.

And we say Lord Jesus we need your Holy Spirit. Not to bring revival out there. To stop homosexuality out there.

Not to stop abortion out there. Way before that happens. It happens with me personally.

To say Lord I need divine nature. Otherwise I'm way short. Who am I? To preach about this good news.

When I'm failing miserably. To partake of the divine nature. Lord I need your Holy Spirit.

Not to make limbs grow out. Not to make dead people get up. But for me to partake of the divine nature.

And I think part of the problem is because. We Christians have made the bar lower than that. We have looked at that bar.

Partaking of the divine nature. And said that's almost blasphemous. That's not realistic.

It's far from the reality in my life. So let me preach. A lower level of Holy Spirit indwelling me.

But the end result is there's not this. Gutted personal need for the Holy Spirit. In my own life.

That I say oh I need revival in the land. I make it so broad. But there's not a gutted sense of.

I'm the one most in need. That sense is lost. Because my standard.

Of what it really means as Christian life. Is yeah I should be living a good life. I should stop watching pornography.

I should stop shouting at my wife. I should generally be kind to other people. I should pay my taxes etc.

etc. And I'm doing it. So now it's my turn to help everybody else.

Get to where I'm at. And that primal sense of. Lord I am most in need.

Is lost. I want to start with that. And say there's no need.
For the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Out there. If it doesn't start.
With a great deep. Need for the Holy Spirit. In here.
That's where I am. Standing on the pulpit. Must recognize that.
I have a much greater need. Than any of you. Because I know.
Myself. I know the thoughts. That run through my mind.
Even sitting in the back this morning. And how it is a fight. To keep the temple of.
The Holy Spirit. Me pure. That I say Lord.
I need you for me. Most of all. It is from that basis.
Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying. Well I'm not interested in.
The sins out there. I have opportunities to speak. And I'll speak at times against.
Sins out there. But it should never be. It should never be.
That I get so focused. Or get too focused. On the sins out there.
That I don't constantly come back. To the fact that I am myself. Fall.
This is the standard that God set for me. How short I fall. It is this spirit.
With which the Holy Spirit is birthed. From that desperate sense of need. I always think of the way.
The Holy Spirit came upon. The first human being. To live inside of.
That human being. You know who it was? Mary. Not the day of Pentecost.
Mary. Was the first human being. On whom the Holy Spirit descended.
And lived. Came within her. And conceived.
As impossible. As it is. For a virgin.
To birth a baby. Is as impossible as it for you. To live the Christian life.
To partake of the divine nature. That Christian life. You want peace, patience, kindness.
You can do it. You can train your self-will. And self-discipline.
And get there. But you want to partake of the divine nature. How can it be? Is what Mary said.
I'm a virgin. And then the angel of the Lord. Responds to Mary.
The Holy Spirit will come upon you. And you will be filled with power from on high. But.

Do you see yourself as a virgin. Trying to birth a baby? The first body of Christ. Have we gotten to that sense of impossibility in ourselves? If that's not them.

How can the Holy Spirit come upon us? That's the way the Holy Spirit came upon us. In the first cause when Jesus was birthed. In the physical sense.

Through the body of Mary. It's that same spirit that was in the church. And it is out of that.

That we read in Acts 24 verse 49. It was in that spirit. I'm sorry Luke 24 verse 49.

Where Jesus said. Behold I'm sending forth the promise. Of my father upon you.

But you are to stay in this city. Until you're clothed with power from on high. And he was talking about the Holy Spirit coming upon them.

To live in them. The first church was given a very strict order here. Don't go anywhere.

Don't do anything. Don't think about telling anybody about Jesus. The resurrected Jesus.

I know you saw me. Don't go about healing anybody. Do you know the disciples healed people even before Jesus died? They had the power to heal.

Read Luke chapter 10. They had the power to heal. Jesus said don't do any of that.

Stay in the city. Stay in Jerusalem. Because this was something different that was going to happen.

This was not just going out and starting to heal people. They did that even when Jesus was around. Stay in the city.

Don't think about going to as a missionary anywhere. Don't think about evangelizing anybody. Don't think that you can start preaching messages or anything.

Don't think about all of that until you are filled with the Holy Spirit. If we don't have that need for the Holy Spirit in our own lives. Because we've seen our own lack.

The Holy Spirit is not complicated to receive. The Holy Spirit is as simple as receiving as a child receives bread. A hungry child receives bread from a father.

It's that simple. It's not complicated. I don't believe in tarrying for years and years waiting for the Holy Spirit.

It's very simple for me. If I'm hungry as a child. If I'm hungry for bread.

The loving father gives me the Holy Spirit. So it becomes sin. In John chapter 14 verse 16.

This is what the Holy Spirit was given to do when Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit. John chapter 14. This is what the Holy Spirit was going to do.

He was going to come and live. Verse 17. He says that you know him because he abides with you.

And will be in you. This was why we could partake of the divine nature. This is why David couldn't partake of the divine nature.

This is why John the Baptist couldn't partake of the divine nature. Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit living inside of them. The Holy Spirit came upon them but the Holy Spirit could not live inside of them.

David didn't have a clean temple. His heart was not cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9 verse 14.

Cleansed by the blood of Jesus. It was only because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. When the blood cleanses our temple.

That now the Holy Spirit can come and live in this clean temple. That's why David couldn't do it. That's why Moses couldn't do it.

Doesn't make us better than them. But we have an opportunity they didn't. To have our hearts cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

So that our hearts became the house in which the Holy Spirit can dwell. And the reason the Holy Spirit comes to dwell is so that we can partake of the divine nature. So that I can share with the fellowship.

That father, son and me. Because of the Holy Spirit in me can be in communion. And union.

That's the first work of the Holy Spirit that he wants to do. That is why John 16 7 makes sense. Look at John 16 7. I don't know if you understand this verse.

I tell you that it is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away the helper will not come to you. Do you really believe brother and sister.

Saint of God. Do you really believe. That it is better.

That the Holy Spirit is in you. And Jesus is not standing next to you. Than for Jesus to be physically standing next to you.

How often have we wished. Man I wish I was walking back 2000 years ago. And Jesus was right there.

I have. Do you think your life would be easier to always have Jesus right next to you. I have thought that.

Unscriptural. It is better that I go away and I leave you. So that I'm no longer here next to you.

You know why. Because I want to give you something better. I want you to have somebody.

In you. And we. In this room.

Listening to my voice. Have we embodied this. This.

Difference. That we cherish the Holy Spirit who has come to live. Inside of me.

If I have not. Recognized and embodied that difference. I have missed the very core of the Christian message.

The very core. Because the core is that I partake. Of the divine nature.

Not that I end up being some kind of good Christian. I partake of God's nature. I can't say that enough number of times to recognize how far I fall short.

We fall short. Of that. That is why Paul could say I'm the chief of sinners.

The least of the apostles. The least of the saints. You think he was.

Ogling at women walking down the street. Absolutely not. Is he shouting at his.

Coworkers. No. Partaking of the divine nature was what he was.

Reaching for. That I may be found in him. To know him.

Know him. Like a bridegroom knows a bride. Like the father knows the son.

I fall short. Not like I have attained. But I press forward.

With that as a background. With a personal need. For the Holy Spirit.

With a waiting in Jerusalem. Not saying Lord I'm ready to do it. Until I know.

That you and I. Are one. That I have surrendered everything. That was the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

That began not even in the early church. But before the very first church started. And it is with that in mind.

That we see in Acts chapter 2 verse 1. That the Holy Spirit came. I just want to talk about a few points here and there. I don't want to spend a lot of time on each point.

But I want to talk about the first church. And then a little bit of the early church. And how what.

What are some of the nuggets that I draw out of. The characteristic that. That described.

The Holy Spirit working among them. In the early church. You read in Acts chapter 2 verse 1. And that's the one phrase I want to talk about.

They were all together in one accord. They were all together in one accord. And then in Acts 4.24. You don't have to turn there.

The same thing happens. The next time we see that the same group. The apostles and the Christians.

Are filled with the Holy Spirit. They too. They lifted up their voice with one accord.

And this is the first moving of the Holy. This is the first point I want to make. About the moving of the Holy Spirit.

In the church. And it is unity. It is a unity.

That must happen. Among believers. All men shall know you're my disciples.

Because you hand out tracts to them. Because you have a good feeding program. Because you have a good missions outreach program.

No. All the world shall know you're my disciples. Because you love one another.

There's a unity. There's a deep intimate love. That the father in John 17.

Jesus said. Lord I pray that as. You and I are one.

That they will be one with one another. It is a unity. That is for me.

The fundamental mark. Of the Holy Spirit working. In and through me.

That is what the local churches. So when I think about the subject. That I was given.

The early church and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The primary. The very first mark.

For to see whether the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Is active. Is whether I am becoming one.

With my brothers and sisters. Is that happening. In your local church.

That you're becoming one. It was an absolute revelation to me. Changed my walk.

When I. Got open my eyes to see. That God was not. Interested.

In individually holy people. In the new covenant. You'll say that's wrong theology.

Hold on. God was interested in. Individually holy people.

To become one with one another. It's a big difference. That is why I'm not monastic.

It'll be so much easier. For some of those temptations that I. Presently struggle with. To just disappear.

If I just joined a monastery. But that's not the goal that I'm looking for. And I never knew why.

Because I said Lord it'll be easy for me to be holy. Yes it would. But God's not interested as holiness is the goal.

God is interested as holiness. That leads to unity. Holiness is imperative.

Don't get me wrong. You won't be able to be united with the father and the son. If you're not interested in being holy.

The spirit is called the Holy Spirit. Not the gift of tongues spirit. Not the healing spirit.

Not the love spirit. But the Holy Spirit. So yes the Holy Spirit will make you holy.

But it is so that you can be one. Who are you one with? Dear Saint of God. I hope if you're married to your wife.

I hope we're trying to get there. First of all she is your neighbor. Your closest neighbor.

And then the local church. It was a revelation to me. It redeemed my view of the church.

I was sitting in a church. And I was disgusted. And I was disappointed.

In myself and in the church. I said Lord what's the need for it? I can sit at home and I can listen to sermons. And I can get really good at becoming a good Christian.

But why need the church? I don't like the songs they sing anyways. I don't like the hypocrisy I see anyways. I don't like the sermons I hear anyways.

But God gave me a fresh revelation. Of why the church is so important. God's not interested in you just being holy.

God wants you to be holy. So that you can be one with the brothers and sisters in the church. Now if they don't love the Jesus.

If they're not connected to the head. You can't be one with them. They're not interested in being a part of the body of Christ.

Working together. If this thumb decides to check out of the rest of the fingers. Nothing I can do about that.

Nothing the rest of the fingers can do about it. But are you trying? Are you doing your part? Are you checking out? Saying I gotta be on my own. I got sermons to watch.

I got my podcast filled up. Just got a fresh download of new sermons. So I don't need to be one with other members in the body of Christ.

Unity. I think much about Jesus' last prayer in John chapter 17. Last thoughts before he died.

When he was thinking about his disciples and us. He said Lord I pray that they may be one. Jesus what about holiness? Yeah holiness of course.

Sanctify them in the truth. Consecrate them. But that they may be one.

As the Father and I are one. That they may know that you love them as much as you love me. It's a unity between brothers and sisters in the local church.

That is the primary mark of the Holy Spirit moving. I speak as an elder of a church in my local church. That is the fundamental mark I look for in my personal life.

If I don't see a unity with my fellow elders. I am not one. And the ministry of the Holy Spirit is fundamentally hindered.

I don't care how many people I preach to in public seminars or conferences. This is where the Holy Spirit must move in each of our Christian lives. Young people.

Are you one with brothers your age or sisters your age? Are you seeking to be one with the 30 and the 40 year olds? That should be the local church. Jesus loves the church. Gave himself up for the church.

There's going to be pure persecution because the devil hates Jesus. Listen, this has comforted me. I might face persecution but that's not because the devil hates me.

It's because the devil hates the Holy Spirit. Who's in me. Who's trying to make me the bride of Christ.

Who's trying to make me the body of Christ. The devil hates Christ. It's because I choose to be in Christ that the devil hates me too.

That's where the allegiance comes in. He doesn't hate you. He hates Christ.

And because you choose to be in the body of Christ. But you have to make that choice. So I say Lord I am making that choice to be in the body of Christ.

Then I'll face persecution. But if they persecuted the head they'll persecute the body. If they persecute the bridegroom they'll persecute the bride.

Comes with the territory. Make it about your allegiance to Jesus Christ. Let that be non-negotiable.

Make it an allegiance to the others who claim the name of Jesus. In this day and age where the internet and walls are built up especially in America. It is so easy for us to closet ourselves.

In a time and age where churches are half-hearted. And so few churches preach the truth. It is easy for some of us who are wholehearted.

Who love listening to Finney and Wesley and all the other ones. Or love reading these books. To closet ourselves.

And to become solo artists. Who have our private devotion and have our private intimacy with Jesus. And never hear the call of God to become one.

With other brothers and sisters in our locality. And if it isn't there say I have prayed this to the Lord many times. Lord if you pack up our church in San Jose, California.

I will move. Because I know you want me to be one. And if there's not one Christian brother or sister in San Jose, California.

That I can be one with. Take me somewhere where I can demonstrate the beauty of the church. Don't be satisfied with individual holiness.

Use that as a stepping stone to say Lord Jesus. I want holiness. I want the fruit of the spirit.

Without holiness no one will see the Lord. But I want to have that holiness so that I can be one with other people. Because it's with that unity that others will say.

They are disciples of Jesus Christ. It's when I lose that prime inward focus. And say Lord it's inward focus is so that.

I can be one with other people. The other two things I see about the first church. We saw about Acts chapter 4 verse 24.

It talks about how they spoke the words with boldness. This stuttering Peter who couldn't acknowledge Jesus to a servant girl. Stands up with the 11.

Stands up with the 11. I hope you noticed that in Acts chapter 2 verse 14. He didn't stand up alone.

The 11 are right there with him. There's no solo artist ministry anymore. Peter's the one who spoke.

But the 11 are right there with him. And Acts 4 29 through 31 it also says that too. That they were all praying.

And it's in light of their threatenings. In light of the persecution. That they were starting to get.

Not yet persecution. Just threatening. Just insults.

Not the real kind where they take our wives and our spouses and all of that. But in the light of the threatenings. Grant us boldness to speak the word.

And they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And what happened when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Is they spoke the word with boldness.

There's a confidence. There's an increasing confidence. That I noticed in the first Christians.

As I read Fox's Book of Martyrs. Who went singing to the stake. There's a confidence.

That increases in us. I don't speak as one who has been threatened with a stake. But I will tell you this.

That as I have sought to be unified with Christ. More in my personal life. I care less and less what people think about me.

I care what people think about me. I care what Christ thinks about me. That doesn't mean I act like a fool.

Or I'm unkind. And I'm not sensitive to people's feelings and opinions. I don't want to insult them.

But the more I'm directed to the Father and the Son. And that communion and union with the Father and the Son is what matters. I have more confidence in what I believe.

I'm more fully persuaded in what I believe. Because He and I. The Father and the Son. And the Holy Spirit in me are communing more.

And I'm confident that I don't have to be worried about what will happen when they come to try and. Take my children away. Because the same Father and the Son.

Who I've been looking at. Will give me the strength. But there must be an increasing boldness.

That is on the inside. Not something I muster up. It is an increasing boldness.

Because He's the one I'm constantly looking at. He's my constant reality. I've seen that.

And again, I mean as we've noticed. The ones we sometimes have to speak out first against. Is the religious leader.

It's standing up to religious. Religiosity in the Christian world. That's usually the first test.

Before we're asked to stand up to the persecution out there in the world. We have to be careful how we. Speak out.

There's a lot of foolishness in the way we speak out. It's easy for many of us to listen to enough Phinney. That we can also preach fiery sermons.

There's not. You just need a little bit of talent. And the knowledge of God's Word to preach like Phinney.

In the words. But boldness that comes with the filling of the Holy Spirit is a lot different. There's wisdom in there.

There's a reverence for God in there. There's a love for people that's willing to die for them. Even as we say such words.

That must accompany any fiery sermon. And along with this boldness. Comes a. Hatred for sin.

Because right after that in Acts chapter 5. I see what happens. When Ananias and Sapphira. Most of you know that story.

Came to the church and tried to deceive. The apostles that they had sold all of their property. You know some people think that.

Hey the mark of the early churches. They sold everything and had everything in common. It says in Acts chapter 2. It says in Acts chapter 4. But Acts chapter 5 tells me.

That Peter was saying. It was your property. You didn't need to sell it.

You would have been fine sitting in the church as a whole hearted believer. Even if you didn't sell your property. While it remained unsold.

Acts chapter 5 verse 4. Did it not remain your own after it was sold? Was it not under your control the money? God loves a cheerful giver. This is the mark of the early church. That everybody sells everything.

No if they want to they do it. If they don't want to that's fine too. It was under your control.

But what God hated over here. Was the deceit. And the hypocrisy.

That Ananias and Sapphira had. Pretending that they were like the other whole hearted people. I want you to think about that.

That the sins that are most serious. That God took most seriously. Was the sin inside the church.

Inside the church. And the sin of deceit. And hypocrisy.

The sin of being dishonest. The sin of saying one thing. And living another.

The sin of preaching a high lifestyle. But living an ordinary lifestyle. Those who stand up and speak.

Are the most guilty of it. People like me. Preach a high lifestyle.

Preach the gospel. But don't see that tremendous need. And don't make it evident.

To those who are sitting there. That I too am one under great need. I fear.

That hypocrisy and dishonesty will come in. Because I am enamored. By what all other people did.

In the name of Jesus. And I put it on other people. Saying you too must do it.

I have no intention of doing it myself. I must be very careful. As somebody who speaks.

That I am honest. Always brutally honest. It says in Matthew 23.

Where Jesus talks about the Pharisees. They love to put heavy burdens on other people. But they are not planning to lift a finger themselves.

Heavy burdens. Heavy spiritual burdens. This is all we must do for God.

This is all the things we must do for God. Meanwhile I am happy to live in my cozy life. And not do those same physical sacrifices.

It's not listening to fiery sermons. Preaching against sin. Do you know that Herod loved listening to John the Baptist? It's in scripture.

Herod. Evil Herod loved listening to John the Baptist. Fiery preacher.

So I take no comfort that I love listening to fiery preaching. Herod did too. But do I want to be one? Much harder.

Can I be bold? Can I hate sin? And here is the proof. This is how I look at it. There is a big difference between hating sin.

Because I listen to a lot of messages that hate sin. And embodying as a church a hatred for sin. Do you embody? I'm not asking you to preach great sermons.

I'm not asking you to write great blogs. I'm not asking you to listen to great sermons that preach against the hatred of sin. What I'm asking is does your life embody a hatred for sin? Do the ones you are one with, your church, embody that hatred for sin? And sin that's in the house of God first.

1 Peter 4, 17. Judgment begins with the house of God first. Does our Christian life embody that? That's the hatred of sin that I'm talking about because that's what happened.

The first death that happened in the new covenant church was in the church. Not by persecution, not Stephen. Stephen was the first martyr.

But the first death was Ananias and Sapphira. They died at the hands of God because they lied. Because they were hypocrites sitting in the church.

Way before persecution came from the outside. Is there a judgment that we have towards ourselves? And that is protected by the core of your churches. By the leadership of your church.

If you say you're the wholehearted member of the church, are you yearning for that to protect the core of this church that names the name of Jesus Christ? That hatred of sin may be embodied. And that the greatest sin that is kicked out of the church is hypocrisy. So that I fight to be honest about my true condition.

Not confessing your sins but to not give people a false impression of who I am. Do I take it so seriously or I comfort myself sitting in the church saying, Thank you God that they're preaching against abortion still. They're still on the church that doesn't allow homosexuality in the clergy.

Is that what comforts us? We're far from the real church if we don't see that hypocrisy is the sin that God hates the most. Then I look within myself the most. And then I will judge myself the most.

And then others will tolerate being around me too. Because I'm not constantly hitting them with daggers. They see a person who's most repentant towards themselves.

These are some of the things that I see in the first church. Not even in the early church, in the very first church. That as I look as being an elder of a local church and I say, Lord I want your Holy Spirit to move mightily.

These are the things that the Lord has called me and our church to be a part of. Seek to be one. Seek that the core, the people who are committed to this church will speak the word with boldness.

And seek that this church will be identified by embodying, not preaching alone, embodying a hatred for sin. Young people, be a group of people who embody a hatred for sin. In the way you look at women, young man.

And in the way you dress, young woman. Be somebody who hates the way in which culture tends to tell you to do things differently. Young man who's interested in making all the money in the world, be different.

Hate. That's what Paul told Timothy. Run from the love of money.

Run from immorality. That was a word that the Lord spoke to me. Are you running from it? I'm running.

The word that Paul uses is flee. Does that characterize my attitude towards the love of money? As I look at my neighbor's new BMW that he bought. And I'm still driving my old Honda Civic.

Flee the love of money. Is the word God tells me. I can buy a BMW no problem if I can afford it.

But the envy I see when the neighbor gets the promotion in his wickedness. And I'm stopped driving it is where the Lord's word comes to me first of all. Flee the love of money.

That's evidencing itself in a jealousy towards your wicked neighbor. And as I see the early church. Here's one word that I want to share that the Lord laid on my heart regarding speaking here.

1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 15 and 16. 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 15 and 16. This is the first thing that came to me when I was thinking about what to share.

What I see as a fundamental need and a fundamental lack in most churches. And a fundamental need in our own church. In our own local church.

1 Corinthians 4 verse 15 and 16. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ. Countless teachers in Christ.

Yet you would not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you.

Be imitators of me. Be imitators of me is repeated in 1 Corinthians 11. But here's the first instance of it.

Follow me. The core of the Christian message that was started by Jesus was this. Follow me.

He came and told his disciples. Follow me. Don't listen to what I say and just here's a white boat.

Let me draw it all out. Now just practice it. He says follow me.

It's a message of follow me. It's completely diametrically opposed to the Pharisees who say. Here this is what you need to do.

They don't do it themselves. And the church is in dire need of follow me people. There are too many YouTube sermons.

I'm on there too. But. What we need are follow me Christians.

I don't need to produce so many more YouTube sermons. What I need to do is build churches where people can follow me. That's what young people need.

Those of us who are older. That's what. I look at the people who are about half my age in my church.

That's what they need. That they can see in me somebody they can legitimately follow. Not preaching great sermons.

Not invited to great conferences. Not theorizing in all new revelations. They need to practically look at somebody and say I can follow that man.

That's the message that Jesus came. Elijah couldn't say follow me. Because one day he was up in the mountain.

Next day he was depressed. David couldn't say follow me. Because one day he was a man after God's own heart.

And the next day he was committing adultery with Bathsheba. John the Baptist couldn't say follow me. One day he was preaching against sin.

But then he was imprisoned. He was sending messages to Jesus. Are you the real one? Jesus could say follow me.

He was introducing a new covenant. A new agreement where he says now we work on the agreement that you build a bunch of Christians who as they mature say you follow me. And Paul said that too.

You imitate me. You follow me as I imitate Christ. Are you a follower? Are you somebody that is being available to follow? That's what the local church ought to be.

Not sitting and listening to fiery sermons. The church, the early church was where people like Paul labored to say follow me. Imitate me.

Jesus may be that person you've never met and is far away. But I'm trying to be like Jesus. If you can't see Jesus because he's not so real to you right now, follow me.

I'm flesh and blood right there. Follow me. I'm running hard after Jesus.

And the way that is supposed to be borne out is in the family setting. It says in that verse 15 and 16. Therefore I exhort you to be imitators of me.

Why? Therefore, you go to the previous verse because you have many teachers but you don't have fathers. You have countless sermons to listen to. But you don't have many fathers.

I know that. I was a young person living in California looking for people in my neighborhood. Men of God I could look up to and say I want to follow you as you follow Christ.

I tried. God knows I tried. Many people preach great sermons in California.

But where are the follow me people? The simple, humble men of God in their 30s, in their 40s, in their 50s, in their 60s that when I was a 20 year old could say follow me as I follow Christ. Few and far between. And that's what gripped me.

That's always what's gripped me about the Christian life. I look at people's preaching messages and I say Lord, is this somebody I can practically follow? Or is he too high up that I can never get an appointment? Or maybe I get a 10 minute meeting with him. What about you in your local church? You may be not preaching sermons but can young people get 15 minutes of your time? Can they get one hour once a month with you? Where you can say follow me young man, follow me young woman.

Look at my devotion to Jesus. It can be followed. I have not attained but you can follow me.

In my righteous, ruthless devotion to Jesus Christ. In my love and compassion for people. You can follow me.

But it's because the church isn't considered a family. That I don't look at them as my brothers and sisters. I use that label because that's the religious word to use.

But I don't treat them as father, brother, sister. That's why there's so little submission in the church. So hard to find people who obey and submit to their elders because they don't look at it as a family setting.

Maybe you've not had a good model of family in your own family. The church is meant to be a family then. The local church is meant to be a family.

Not an organization. It's meant to be a family. You've got brothers, sisters who care for one another.

I used to be a brother. I'm a brother but I used to be a brother who was always jealous of my brothers. Always trying to compete with them.

Immature. It's different now. It's a sign of maturity that we grow up.

Fathers and mothers, the leaders of the church should be one who care. Peter, do you love me? Care for my flock. Tend for my flock.

Shepherd them. You don't have to be a star. You know when Jesus said those words to Peter? After Peter denied him three times.

Jesus asked him, you love me? You, Peter, who just three days ago denied me three times, you love me? Peter said, look, you know, Lord, I do. So I'll take you at your word. Take care of my flock.

Tend for them. You don't have to be a superstar Christian. But you have to recognize, dear brother and sister, that God brought you into the flock so that you can care for the rest of the flock.

There's no useless member of the body of Christ. There's no useless member of the body. Even the hairs on my hand have a purpose.

To keep me warm when it's cold. Even the fingernails have a purpose. To scratch my back when it itches.

Every member of the body of Christ is important. Everybody's not the tongue. Everybody's not the eyes.

You have to see, dear saint, that you are a valuable member in God's family. You have your part to play. That doesn't mean you have to get up and speak for 30 minutes.

You have your part to play. It'll happen easier if we understand that the church of God is meant to be a family. We've got 10,000 teachers for every father.

I absolutely believe that that is true even today. That we have 10,000 sermons that we listen to over one person we can follow after. Very few people we can legitimately say, there's a man I can walk in his footsteps.

Because I've seen his life. I've seen the way he talks to his wife. I've seen the way he raises his children.

I see now the way he interacts with women. I see the way he interacts with money. I can follow him.

God needs such people. That is why every one of you are valuable. You can be that embodiment of Jesus Christ.

You don't have to go on the mission field. That may not be God's call for you. But you can be somebody who can tell other people in your neighborhood, starting with your family, imitate me as I imitate Christ.

Finally, as we talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the true spiritual church is one where the core of that church never dips in its devotion to Jesus. Here's the greatest tragedy. The topic of this conference is the church and the coming persecution.

I'll tell you what's a tragedy. If you go to Revelation chapter 2, Revelation chapter 2, verse 3 and 4. Well, maybe verse 2 through 4. I know your deeds. This is the church of Ephesus.

Your toil and your perseverance. You cannot tolerate evil men. You call out the apostles who are not.

And you found them to be false. And you have perseverance. And you've endured for my name's sake.

I believe that. And I've not grown weary. I believe that includes some sort of persecution.

But I have this against you that you lost your first love. And because of that, I'm telling you, verse 5, you have fallen. But God, what about all this persecution I endured? What about all this endurance I've stayed up with? You've fallen.

What a tragedy that we may go through persecution, but God says, you're worse off than when you started. Even with the persecution. Because you lost your first love.

Have you seen that? Are you busy preparing for the persecution, not knowing that the worst thing that is in spite of the persecution, you may stick it through even when they pull out your nails, when God says you've fallen. What a waste. What a waste because you lost your first love for Jesus Christ.

Second Corinthians 11.3. Remember this verse. Memorize this verse. Don't be afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve, you will also be deceived.

You'll be led astray from what? Simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus. Not that you'll be led astray and start raping and committing adultery and murdering. It's what we think it is.

No. From a simple pure devotion to Jesus. That's how bad it is.

It's as bad as when Eve listened to the serpent. You know how bad that was. You're all probably going to stand in line to talk to Adam and Eve and say, what were you thinking? Taking that apple or whatever fruit it was.

They'll ask you right back. What were you thinking? You read my story and you didn't listen to Second Corinthians 11.3. You could do the same thing. You lost your simple pure devotion for Jesus.

Have you equated the two? Have we equated the two that it's as serious? We are already deceived. I've preached, I've listened to many sermons about deception in the church. Where does deception in the church start? When I've lost my simple pure devotion for Jesus.

If you and I are sitting in the church, praying for hours but have lost our devotion to Jesus, we are deceived. That's Second Corinthians 11.3. If I as the father or mother of the house, have lost my personal devotion to Jesus, my family is in trouble. If I as an elder of a church, have lost my personal devotion to Jesus, that church is in trouble.

But I have to see that. I have to do the math. Persecution, enduring, toil, seeing false doctrine, all on there, lost your first love.

No good. I believe if my devotion is to Jesus, all the other things will become bearable. That's what I see Paul.

He says in Second Timothy 4, my life has been poured out as a drink offering. I fought the good fight. Finished the course.

And what's laid up for me is a crown of righteousness. And for all those who love his appearing. You think Paul was brash? Hey, you know I'm going to get a crown when I get to heaven.

You think Paul was arrogant? No, he knew what God, what was the result of his labor. It was going to be a crown. It wasn't because of all the stonings he received, but because he said, I so long for Jesus.

I want him. Not so that my cancer will finally be rid of it. Not so that my diabetic sickness will be finally done with.

No, because he's my bridegroom. He's the one I've been looking at. He's the one I've been partaking with.

The father and the son. I've longed for him. The spirit and the bride say, come Lord Jesus.

It's when that attitude is born in us that we will face anything for him. And it's when we understand that it is the devotion, that devotion is fueled by how much he sacrificed for me. For me.

I have to constantly reduce and simplify Jesus died for the world message to Jesus died for me. I'm a young parent. My children need to see that I am gripped with the reality that Jesus died for me.

Not for my three-year-old daughter. That Jesus died for me. That's what my three-year-old daughter needs to see as she grows up.

I'm not preaching a message to her. I'm embodying a message. She'll pick up on it.

She'll catch it. I'd hate it if my daughter said, you told me a lot about it, but I never really saw a whole lot of depth of gratitude. In your own life, that Jesus died for you.

You kept saying it. I didn't see it. I didn't see that deep gratitude.

Saints of God, do you have that personal gratitude? You maybe had it. Maybe we had it at some point, but do you still have that? Return from where you've fallen to where we've lost that first love for us personally. Let me end with one thought about persecution that has helped me personally.

I have a painting in my house. You may have seen it. It's a somewhat famous painting.

It's a painting about the Colosseum. It's a painting of martyrs in the Colosseum. In the background, you see all the crowds, the clamoring, obviously enjoying the show.

You see some people on crosses in the background. Clearly, that was part one of the entertainment where some Christians were crucified. That's all in the background.

In the center of the picture, there are two real main players. One are the Christians who are a group of Christians kneeling, praying, and looking up. The other players are two or three lions.

The gate has just been opened, and you see the lions standing up, starting to get up. One of the members of the church is standing, probably the local elder. He's coming up to heaven, praying.

The rest of the church are kneeling around him. Here's what I love about the painting. Of course, the elder of the church is probably praying something like, from whence comes our help? Our help comes from the Lord.

Here's what I love about the painting most, is that the lions are also looking up. In the face of meat, right in front of them, they're looking up. What are they looking up at? They may be more than many of us know that they have a creator.

They, too, don't do anything without the permission of their creator. They, too, are looking up. Child of God looking up.

Hungry lion has to also look up. Maybe these lions were direct descendants of the lions from a few hundred years ago who they heard stories of. Back in the day, in Daniel's day, where their forefathers sat with human meat right in front of them all night and they couldn't eat that meat.

The lions heard those stories about how God, because the creator said, don't touch that. They've always known they need to check with the creator first. They know what us humans forget, that everybody needs to check with the creator first.

Every persecutor needs to check with the creator first. You may not think that, but that's the reality. Animals know that.

And I don't know what happened in that story, but I know what happened in many of such stories, that the lions got permission from the creator to devour the Christian, even though the lions' forefathers didn't get the permission to eat Daniel. But it comforts me to know that permission needed to be given first. No weapon formed against you will prosper.

No lion will come against us unless it has been given to you from above. You would have no authority over me unless it would have been given to you from above. You know who said those words? Jesus.

You know when he said it? John chapter 19. He has just been beaten. A crown of thorns has been stuffed on his head.

He has just been scourged. If you've seen the Passion of Christ, you know what he looks like. He looked like.

One eye shut. Pilate asks him, are you the son of God? Jesus said, keeps quiet. Pilate is exasperated, and Pilate says, don't you know I have the authority to release you? Jesus says, I need to correct that right here.

I need to speak up now. You would have no authority unless it was given to you from above. India has faced terrorist attacks.

America has faced terrorist attacks. I was in India a few weeks after a terrorist attack. That was what the Lord told me then too.

These terrorist guys would have no authority over us. Look at the guy coming at me. That's what I'm going to tell him.

You would have no authority over me unless it was given to you from above. I could have a crown of thorns on my head. I could have blood streaming down my face.

I could have one eye shut, but I'll still look him with that one barely looking eye, and I'll tell him, you have no authority over me unless it was given to you from above. Family of God, let us commune with the Father and the Son. Let us be under the authority of that one person, the Father and the Son, the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit living in us, that we would choose to fear God.

And as I paraphrase, it goes, if you fear God, you need fear of nothing else. Let's close in prayer. Father, we are thankful that you ask us to embody the message, not just be moved by a message.

The proof of a good message is a changed life. Lord Jesus, I need to embody more and more of a life that recognizes you as my only authority. I need to embody a life that partakes more and more of the divine nature.

Father, you gave me this opportunity to speak. I pray that we may embody this life, a life where we fear God alone. Please have mercy on us.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you, Brother Sandeep. God bless that message.

God bless the message of unity as well. What a beautiful thing it is. I just want to finish.

Before we go for lunch, just read out the scripture. Actually, the chapter that Brother Sandeep was John 16, in verse 12, it says, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak of his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will tell you things to come.

He will glorify me, for he will take of what is mine and declare it to you. All things the Father has are mine. Therefore, I said that he will take of mine and declare it to you.

Thank you for the word. We thank you for the fact that the Holy Spirit has been leading and guiding his pilgrim church, his remnant church from the very beginning. He continues to do it today.

It is a vital aspect of our Christianity to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, to be led and guided into all truth. Can you imagine the confusion in the 2nd century, the 3rd century, the 4th century? But the Holy Spirit, the helper, was always there to lead and to guide his people into all truth. And he desperately relied upon the Holy Spirit.

And those that did, that pilgrim church, that remnant church, you saw the beauty of the unity that Brother Sandeep was talking about. Because their central focus was on the Lord Jesus Christ. And that willingness to go to the lions, to give of their life, to live the life of Christ.

So many times the martyrs were, what identified them as being not part of the Catholic church. They led an exemplary life. That was part of the accusation against them.

This was what identified them from the rest of the people in the day. That they led an exemplary life. And those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who he leads and guides them into all truth, all men should be able to say that about us.

That we lead an exemplary life, first and foremost our life. And that starts with the Holy Spirit. That starts with this baptism of the Holy Spirit and be guided into all truth.

And to have discernment, discernment of times. And the times that are to come. The times of persecution is vital that we know the truth.

And the way that we know the truth is through the word of God. By revelation. And by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who will open up the word of God to you.

It's a vital aspect of our Christianity. Always has been, always will be. Especially in times of persecution.

So brothers, we're going to gather back here. Brothers and sisters, it's 1.30. So we're going to break now for lunch. And we'll gather back here at 1.30. And we'll hear Brother Mark case there at 1.30. God bless you guys.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Vahx9oUCzws.mp4>

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