

Heaven Undistracted Devotion to Jesus

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on heaven and the eternal perspective, especially in times of loss and anticipation of passing away. It highlights the need to live each moment prepared for eternity, not seeking personal glory but being transformed into the image of Christ. The message encourages being deaf to the distractions and voices of the world, embracing a humble recognition of our own vile estate, and finding fulfillment in serving within the body of Christ.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:27, Philippians 3:20

Topics: "Eternal Perspective", "Humility in Service"

Description

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Transcript

You brothers who shared already, you must have looked at what the Lord had planned for me to say. Thank you for sharing. I really believe the Lord led you in what you had to say, both of you and Paul.

Together with what he laid on my heart to share this morning. I've been thinking much about heaven over the last week or so, especially week or two. We've known that Rosanne's sister Louise would be passing away soon.

We've been anticipating this time for a while because she had cancer. You probably heard of Billy Graham who served the Lord faithfully, I believe, according to my knowledge of his life and ministry. For 99 years, almost 100, he would have been 100 in October.

The reason heaven is predominant in my mind as I've thought about them. I was looking at a picture of Louise and her family a few days ago after I heard she passed away. As I was looking at that picture, this is the thought that came to me.

Those eyes are actually seeing Jesus right now. That face that I saw in a picture that I've seen, right now is actually looking at Jesus' face. What a tremendous thing that is.

That's what we have to look forward to. This person that just a few days ago was here on this earth amidst her family and others that you know that have died and gone on. There was a time when they were here and they had the perspective of life that you and I have.

In a moment when they were caught up in the glory, they saw Jesus face to face. It's a tremendous thing. I want to show you a quote here in a second.

What it's done for me is, it's done a couple of things. That's really the essence of what I'd like to communicate to you this morning. The first was, I want to live every moment of my life that if I don't have warning that I'm going to die, because I'm still young enough that you wouldn't expect me to die, right? The world doesn't expect you to die at my age, but you could.

The Bible is very clear on that. Don't plan on tomorrow because you're not guaranteed it. Jesus spoke about a man who was a fool, made big plans for tomorrow.

I imagine he was a man about my age, thinking, nah, I'm not going to die. Maybe if he was 90, he wouldn't have made those plans. But he was in the prime of his life, planning to build bigger barns.

Jesus said, you fool, this night. And I want to live my life, at whatever age I am, and for the rest of my life, in such a preparedness, that if the Lord was saying, hey, you've got two minutes, and I'm going to call you home, I wouldn't have to scramble to all of a sudden, like, what have I not said right? What have I missed out on my opportunity to live for God's kingdom that I still need to before the end of my life? This is a quote that, let's see if I can get that. This is a quote by a Quaker missionary.

I read it years ago, and I was reminded of it earlier this last week. He lived 150 years ago. Look at what he said, I expect to pass through this world but once.

Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer, that means wait, say put it off, I'll do it next week. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

You and I probably have things that we do every day, paths that we walk every day. But there's a sense in which I'm walking down this path only once. Because I'm only walking down that path today once.

And this moment in time that is today, right now, I only get to do once. And so even if I, maybe it's a co-worker and I think, well, I could do that good deed to them tomorrow because I'll see them tomorrow. Or I could set that thing right later on.

I could put off that good thing that I can do. The opportunity to do that right now is the one, I shall not pass this way again. I shall not pass this moment in time again.

Let me read that again, this quote by Stephen Gray. I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now.

Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again. And I want to tell you practically what that looks like for me. See, we could take it one of two ways then.

You could say, well, I'm going to run around like a chicken with its head chopped off thinking, what do I need to do next? This could result in an unhealthy panic to do good. And that's not God's intention at all. When I look at the life of Jesus, who in 33 years, finished every possible good thing that he could do in

those 33 years.

Have you thought about it? When Jesus said, it is finished on the cross, what he had finished was this. Even though these aren't Jesus' words, there's a sense in which I believe he lived on this earth with that mindset. We've been seeing in Matthew chapter 18 that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Which is another way of saying the same thing. That Jesus Christ went about his earth saying, what good must I do now? And it wasn't in a way that caused him to be stressed out. You know, we heard already how multitudes came and pressed on him.

The words that's used in the King James is, they thronged on him. That means it's just like they squeezed him so much, physically. And how much more mentally and emotionally, it must have been draining for Jesus to constantly be answering people's questions and healing people.

And then somebody else says, come over here, my servant is sick, so he goes over there. But, Jesus lived a life of rest. And the reason for that was because he wasn't answering to the call of man.

So, when he thought about the good that he could do on this earth, it wasn't so and so says, hey, I need your help. Somebody else says, hey, I need your help. And then there's a schedule, like a calendar.

The only calendar Jesus had was the one that his father wrote. And the father said, Jesus, I want you to go here right now. I know they're calling you over there, but you need to go over here.

And that other person that's asking you, I want you to say no to that. And that other person that needs help, I want you to say yes to that. So, his command, his chain of command was only one, the father.

And he wasn't affected, he didn't allow himself to be pulled this way and that, emotionally or physically, by the demands of people on this earth. And as we build the church, it's very important for us to see that. I recognized that from the day that I knew that God was calling me to be in ministry here in the church here, that the most important word for me to learn, first of all, would be the word no.

Because my tendency is to say yes. I like to say yes. Now, it might sound spiritual.

Before you credit me for being spiritual, I want to tell you that it can be quite carnal, actually, to say yes. Because that saying yes could come out of a what will they think of me if I say no. They'll think, oh, he must be, he's not compassionate, or he doesn't have time for me, or he's self-centered.

And that, that fear of man, that fear of what people will think if I say no, can hold us in such bondage. And I know I myself, in my thoughts, in the past, have been held in bondage by worrying about what people will think about me if I seem un-Christ-like or un-compassionate in the way I do things or the way I see things. And what I want to bring out today is this ultimately, again, we're going to be talking about heaven, but ultimately it is to hear from the Father and to seek to please Him alone.

And going back to what I was saying when I saw that, I was looking at that picture of Louise and her family and how her face is looking at Jesus in a pure, undefiled way. And I've been trying, church, as we stand up here and sing, for us it's a little bit difficult because we're facing you and we see you guys looking at us, and it's a struggle. Pray for us that the Lord will help us.

That when we're up here, that even though we're trying to sing in a way that doesn't distract you and doesn't sound off-key, we practice hard so that we're not a distraction to you, not to be an attraction. You've heard us say that before. But it's difficult for us to get into that spirit of heaven where even though we're facing you, we're really facing Jesus.

And I thought about that. It's like, oh, if only I could be there with Louise, with Billy Graham, with others who've gone ahead and praise Jesus in such a pure, undefiled way where I'm not affected by the fact that you're here next to me. And I find that it's like the layers of an onion, perhaps even more than other things in our flesh that are like layers of an onion, that the more I strip it off, the more I realize, man, I really seem to be affected.

I'm aware, I'm conscious in some way that you're standing here next to me or you're looking at me and as much as I'm trying to behold only the face of Jesus, it's hard. But I don't believe, and this is the essence of what I'd like to communicate today, I don't believe we have to wait until heaven to get to that place where Jesus captivates us in such a way, a pleasurable, like Ulu was talking about, in such a way, he mentioned it actually in passing, I hope you didn't miss it, that that experience of dwelling in the presence of the Lord begins now. Do you know that when you were born again, when we were born again, our eternity began then.

It's not after we die. Our eternity became when we, now for us at least it was, when we saw that we were placed in Christ. We were hearing on our Wednesday meeting how Zach spoke about how he placed us in him before the foundations of the world.

So God through his foreknowledge placed you and I, if you're born again and I'm born again, placed us in Christ before the foundations of the world. I only realized it on the day that I was born again. But my awareness of my eternity should have begun then.

And really we should be growing in our experience of that eternity now on this earth. I think that's what a lot of Christians miss. And I did too for many years.

Where I was waiting for eternity to begin after I died. I was like, oh, eternity is going to be great. Going to be great in the future.

And I'm starting to increase my awareness through the Holy Spirit, through him opening the eyes of my heart to see eternity is great. If you're willing to see it right now here on this earth. And thinking of those people who are there in the presence of God, in the presence of Jesus, rejoicing with him with such unadulterated, undistracted attention.

That's what I was looking for. Undistracted attention on Jesus. I know it's true.

And I believe, dear brothers and sisters, that God wants us to have that in our spirits. Yes, we'll have physical eyes that still look at the things of this earth. But in our spirits, we can increasingly become more and more undistracted by the things of this earth.

This privilege is not just for those who are physically in the presence of God. That's what I want to show you. 2 Corinthians chapter 3. 2 Corinthians 3. It's a wonderful chapter that talks about the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

In the Old Covenant, they couldn't see God this way. Moses begged God, read it. He begged God, will you show me your face? And God said, if I do, you would die.

But I'll tell you what, I'll hide you, I'll walk past you, and then you can look at my back. And I hope, I don't know what that means, to look at the back of God. Perhaps that means that you say, Lord, I really want you to answer this prayer.

I need a little bit more money. I need some healing in some way. I need this other thing, this other material thing, or I need a job, I need to get married.

You know what those are? That's like the back of God. Those are the things that follow God as He comes into your life, moves through your life. His blessings, goodness and mercy follows God wherever He goes.

And if that's all you want, your experience with God is just as good as it was in the Old Covenant. And we read about that in different passages in 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3 as well. Of how there were people who were content with just seeing the back of God, His blessings.

And we read about Moses in Psalm 103, that he really wanted more, but God said, that's the best I can give you. And even you, you just see my back. But you know that for us, it's so much greater.

And that's what he talks about here in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4. I just want to read this one verse. Verse 17, 2 verses actually. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 17.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. What do you think of when you read that verse? I've heard a lot of people quote this verse out of context. Where the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

I can do whatever I want, I'm not under the law, and all kinds of other things. Now it's true, you're not under the law. But what is the liberty you now have? If the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

What are you at liberty to do? What do you have the freedom to do? He tells us very clearly in verse 18. We are at liberty to behold the glory of the Lord. They didn't have the liberty to do that.

Oh, Moses begged for it. God said, no, I can't do it. Because my spirit doesn't dwell within you.

If I could put my spirit in you, Moses. If I could expand on what God would have said to Moses back then. Because we know now, under the new covenant.

Moses, if I could put my spirit inside you, then you could behold my face. You would be at liberty to do that. But you don't have my spirit dwelling within you.

It comes upon you. And so you're not at liberty to. Oh, this is changing my life, as the Lord is walking through this passage.

Walking me through this passage. The Lord is the spirit. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Now, my dear brothers and sisters. You have the liberty to see the face of God. More undistractedly than you ever have before.

What a higher standard that is than. Oh, I'm at liberty to eat shrimp now. Or I'm at liberty to not have to live by the tithing.

And all those literal things of the law. I'm at liberty to behold the glory of the Lord. That's what he says.

Verse 18. Let's read it. We all, if I could say, are at liberty with unveiled face.

Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. What do you see when you look in a mirror? You see yourself. And that's why we are at liberty to look.

Because if I truly have the spirit dwelling within me. Then I look in the mirror and I see myself. But I don't see myself anymore.

I see something in my spirit. Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord in here. And that allows me to communicate spirit to spirit as it were.

Beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image. From glory to glory just as from the Lord the spirit. And so this privilege is not just for those who have died.

And are in the physical presence of God. This privilege, this liberty, this freedom. Is for you and I who have God's spirit dwelling within us.

And my dear brothers and sisters. If you're born again God has planted the seed of the Holy Spirit within you. Why then do we pray? Fill me with your Holy Spirit Lord.

I used to pray for many years. I'll tell you first I prayed. The first time I started praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Was because I wanted to speak in tongues. I thought it was the ultimate thing. Even though I grew up in a church where we were taught that that's not it.

It just seemed like if I could really pray in tongues. I know I have the Holy Spirit. If I could pray in tongues.

Then my prayers got a little bit more spiritual. I started to pray that I would have the Holy Spirit to overcome in my battles in life. To overcome lust.

To overcome anger. To overcome bitterness. To overcome the use of my tongue.

Jealousy. The love of money. All these things that the lust surround us.

The pride of life. The lust of the flesh. The lust of the eyes.

I needed help. And so I cried out for the Holy Spirit for that. And that's good too.

Maybe that's second grade. First grade was speaking in tongues. And you realize God wants to give you more than just speaking in tongues.

Because he may not give you that gift. But victory over sin. That's for all of us.

But you know what's even greater than that? Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit. After you bring me to a place of victory in a particular area. The reason I still want to hunger and thirst for your Spirit.

Is because I want to behold more undistractedly your face. That's why I need this Spirit. Where the Lord is, there is.

The Lord is the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And I found that liberty was hindered in some way.

Because I was distracted by this and distracted by that. And if you are there, my dear brother and sister. As I hear you often testifying up here.

And I testify too. I find that my biggest battle in life now is distraction. Distraction with this and distraction with that.

Distraction with thoughts about this and distraction with thoughts about that. And in order to be able to praise the Lord. And dwell on Him and meditate on Him.

In a more undistracted way today than I did yesterday. I need more of the Holy Spirit. So that His Spirit within me here reflects His glory more clearly.

More purely. This is what I want. We sing a lot of songs about seeing Jesus.

In fact, over the last week or so. I've been going through my mind. With different songs we sing here even on Sunday morning.

We want to see Jesus lifted high. Open our eyes Lord. We want to see you.

Or this one. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. In fact, let's sing that.

Can we sing that together? You know the song. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face.

And the things of earth will grow strange. In the light of His glory and grace. If you think about how dim are the things of this world to Louise right now.

I'm just going to use her example. How dim. It's just darkness.

I mean that. The draw. I'm just using her as an example.

Please. Just because this freshens our mind. These are the thoughts the Lord has been reminding me of.

I want that on earth Lord. I don't want for the glare of earth to be so powerful. And then I get to heaven and realize that was just darkness.

And I believe that what we're seeing here in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Is that we can be transformed from glory to glory. And behold in an increasing measure. In such an undistracted way that what we just sang is a reality.

And if it's not, it's not because I need to work harder at it. Or do something else. It's just Lord give me your spirit.

Clean this glass that is supposed to reflect your glory. Of all the things that pollute it. So that I can look in that mirror and see more clearly.

More undistractedly your glory. Be more taken up with you. And truly experience what we just sang.

The things of this earth truly growing strangely dim. Matthew chapter 17. This is a little bit of the experience that the apostles had.

The three apostles on the mount of transfiguration. What does it mean then to truly see Jesus? Matthew 17 verse 8. You know the context. We went through it a few months ago.

How they were there on this mountain. And Jesus was there and he was transfigured. And Moses and Elijah showed up.

And I believe God the father allowed that as a test. To see what will they do if I put Jesus there. And bring two other men that they respect.

I believe the Jews respected perhaps Moses and Elijah more than anybody else. And if Moses had showed up. And done the things that Jesus had done.

The Pharisees would have received it. Think about that for a moment. If Moses and Elijah had showed up.

And done the exact same things that Jesus did. I believe the Pharisees would have received it. They believed in Moses and Elijah.

And I think Peter, James and John were a little bit like that. They were Jews too. And they were taught to respect these two as the pillars of their faith.

Moses and Elijah. And when those pillars of their faith show up next to Jesus. Their natural response.

And Peter is the only one that is honest enough to admit it. But their natural response for all three of them was. Okay great.

The big three. Jesus, Moses and Elijah. We got it.

And then something happened. Verse 5. A bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold a voice out of the cloud said.

How dare you think of a big three. This is my beloved son. With whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. Throw out everything you've heard from Elijah and from Moses. Because there is only one voice now that is speaking.

It's not Jesus plus add in a little bit of Moses and add in a little bit of Elijah. It's Jesus. This is my beloved son.

And what I believe the father was saying is. Moses was not my beloved son. In fact you read about that in Hebrews 3. He was a servant.

Elijah was not his beloved son. He was a servant too. Jesus my beloved son.

Hear him. Listen to him. When the disciples heard this they fell face down to the ground and were terrified.

Jesus came to them and touched them and said. Get up. Do not be afraid.

And lifting their eyes they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. I get two things from this passage. If I really want to see Jesus.

If I really want to have this undistracted devotion to Jesus. It will come out of a conscious blinding myself. And deafening myself to the things of this world.

Two aspects. Blinding myself to the things of this world. And through God's grace.

Through the power of his Holy Spirit within me. I must choose to be blind to the things of this world. And deaf to the things of this world as well.

I've talked a little bit about blindness already. Being blind to the things of this world. I want to talk about deafness.

I read a story some time ago. Which I thought I would share with you. You may have heard it before.

If so, wait to laugh until after it's over. Don't spoil it for everybody else. Two frogs fell into a well.

And it was a pretty deep well. And they couldn't get out. So they decided to try to get out.

They jumped and jumped and jumped. And tried hard to get out of this well. They just couldn't make it.

It seemed like they would get close. But they couldn't make it. And they were expending all their energy to try to get out.

And their friend frogs came to show up. Kind of like Job's three friends showed up. To analyze what they did wrong in falling into the well, first of all.

And then maybe give them some techniques about how to jump up. And you know, armchair critics who sit at the top of the well. Telling you what to do when you're at the bottom of the well.

And it was wearing on. And finally their friend said, Hey, you might as well give up. There's no hope for you.

There's only about a half hour of daylight left. Once it gets dark, you're just going to die in that well. Might as well just prepare for the worst.

And one of the frogs said, Yeah, you're right. I'll just give up. So he just laid down and decided to calmly pass into whatever eternity the frogs had.

The other frog said, No, I'm not doing that. I'm going to get out. So he kept jumping.

And the other frogs yelled at him, Don't waste your energy. And they were waving their arms as frogs do. And yelling their voices as frogs do.

And saying, No, don't waste your energy. Just look at the other frog. He's just peacefully going to sleep.

Don't waste your energy. And this frog said, No, I'm going to get out. And believe it or not, the second frog got out.

What do you think was the difference between the two frogs? Was it that the second frog had more determination? Had more willpower? Very simple. The second frog was deaf. So he couldn't hear a single

thing that the other frogs were saying.

And he saw the frogs at the top of the well waving their arms. And he thought, They're cheering me on. I'm going to get out of this.

This is what it means to be deaf. And you know what? It's really spoken to me. Because I find that one of the reasons I'm distracted from hearing the voice of Jesus only is because I'm hearing these other voices.

Now, they may be criticizing me. They may be praising me. I'm not saying that everyone that's speaking into my life is putting me down.

But imagine if you were really deaf to the things of this world. And you could perceive the arm waving and all of this stuff that the world throws at you as positive reinforcement. Because you hear the voice of the one who says, like we sang in that song, With Jesus, I can take it.

With Jesus, I know I can survive. He is speaking his love into my life. And he is at the right hand of the Father, interceding.

And Satan is the loudest of those frogs. He'll tell you that. He'll remind you of your sin and remind you of this and remind you of that.

And tell you how you're never going to make it. It's like that song, Voice of Truth, that I think Casting Crows sings. It talks about how the giant keeps reminding me, I've ruled you all this, all your life.

How dare you think that you're going to win now? That's exactly what Goliath said to David. See, the Israelites had tried to fight Goliath, tried to fight Goliath. And the more they fell, the more empowered Goliath felt.

Let's look at that. 1 Samuel chapter 15. And when we battle against sin and battle against sin, And perhaps you fall and fail in many areas, And the giant's voice seems louder and more empowered as time wears on.

1 Samuel chapter 17. He says in verse 8, you read about how strong and powerful he was. And he was there basically showing force with all his weaponry.

He said, he stood and shouted to the ranks. 1 Samuel 17 verse 8. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, Why do you come out to draw up and battle array? And that's like the lust telling you, What do you mean you're going to fight and try to overcome this sin again? They tell you, you think you're going to win this time? Why do you come out to draw up and battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Interpretation, have I not ruled you all your life? Choose a man for yourself and let him come down to me. Etc, etc.

Verse 10, I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together. That song, the voice of truth says time and time again, the giant tells me, you'll never win.

Oh, you'll never win. But the voice of truth tells me a different story. The song goes on to say.

And this is the voice of truth. This is the voice of faith that David says. Skip down to verse 20.

Sorry, it's 30. Okay, 41, 42. Philistine looked at, saw David coming up.

This is 1 Samuel 17, verse 42. And he disdained him. It's like, I've beaten worse, stronger people than you.

You're too puny. You're too weak. You're too small to win.

Disdained him. For he was but a youth and ruddy with a handsome appearance. The Philistine said to David, am I a dog that you come to me with sticks? And cursed David by his gods.

And Philistine also said to David, come to me and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field. Do you hear your lust telling you this? That same temptation, that same area that's held you in bondage. Then David said to the Philistine, this is the voice of truth.

You come to me with a sword and a spear. Yeah, you might seem to have more power. Historically, I am doomed for failure.

You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. But I come to you in one name, in one name alone. The name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have taunted.

This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands. And I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth.

This is the voice of truth. Let's go back. I found that this, to continue what I was talking about with, in my battle against sin, in my seeking to overcome, in my seeking for the power of the Holy Spirit as well.

The reason I'm distracted often from seeing the face of Jesus and hearing the face of Jesus is deep down, the reason I'm affected by what people see of me and what people say to me or say about me is because deep down there's a desire to preserve my identity. There's a desire to preserve my name in some sense. There was a time in my life when I sought to overcome.

I want to say this carefully so you understand what I'm saying. There was a time in my life when I wanted to overcome and be victorious so that I could get some credit for it. So that somehow I would be the one that overcame.

I would be the one that overcame and I pictured this, that I would battle and I would battle and I would battle and I would overcome and Jesus and I would be there together. You know, there'd be Jesus, there'd be I. And I was like, hey, I was part of this too. And I overcame and my name could be attached to it.

And I could perhaps give a testimony to you all about how I overcame in that temptation. And I was tempted to do that or I really felt the pressure but I overcame, I overcame, I overcame. And I envisioned perhaps at the end of my life, after all these my overcomings, I would be there seated with Jesus on his throne and me on my throne.

Jesus and Santos overcame. Jesus overcame in his life, Santos overcame in his life too. And I saw, I remember the time when the Lord showed me so clearly how horrible, how filthy that mentality was.

Even in my desire to overcome and to live in victory, how off balance it was and how corrupt it was, how adulterous it was. Because it was the spirit of the world brought into the things of Christ. And I was trying to bring this, preserve me, my name.

And I realized when I read this verse in Ephesians chapter 5, I'd like to show you. Ephesians chapter 5, because I envisioned Jesus coming back to this earth and I would be the one that rises up and says, yes Lord, I overcame, so take me with you. And somehow I would be there, my name, Santos would be there.

And it's true that I have a personal relationship with Jesus, he calls me by my name. But I saw this, this verse really spoke to me some years ago in Ephesians 5 verse 27. That Jesus Christ is coming back for his church.

He's not coming back for Santos specifically. He's not coming back for me in that individualistic kind of way that allows me to somehow have an identity on my own. Read what it says in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 27.

It says in verse 26 that he's washed her by the word, by the washing of water with the word. That he might present to himself, does he say, he could have said you, in all your glory. In all the battles that you won and how you were tempted and you fought and you fought and you overcame.

He's not coming back for me in all my glory. He's coming back, it says, to present to himself the church in all her glory. Having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

But that she would be holy and blameless. And what I'm getting at was there was an aspect of my overcoming and my striving and my coming to victory over sin that couldn't care less about yours. About the church of Jesus Christ.

And ultimately, that's what brought me to seek a local expression of the body of Christ. Because I realized that Jesus Christ is coming back for his church. And in that church, there is only one name.

It's not my name. It's not that, oh yeah, Santos, you want to be in that area and let's keep a record of who all have overcome. They're the good guys.

And who all have not, they're the bad guys. And we do this to ourselves too. But there's one name over that.

That's the church, the body of Jesus. The name of Jesus is stamped over all of our lives. And there's a big difference between me thinking that I've overcome and feeling like I've overcome and rising up in my glory, in my self-righteousness as it were, and Jesus Christ looking down from heaven and seeing his church.

Ephesians 5 verse 27. In fact, turn over to Philippians chapter 3. This is the verse, look at what I contribute to the glory of the church. Okay, the church says in all her glory, and Jesus has his glory, and because of his glory, the church has a glory.

You know what my part in that is? You know what your part in that is? Philippians chapter 3 verse 20. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly estates. My translation says, who will transform the body of our humble estate.

Humble is almost a little too good. I think it's the King James that says lowly. What's that? Vile.

That's even better. I like that. Who will transform this vile person, this vile state, this vile estate? That's what I bring to the table.

He will transform, Santosh's name? Vile. The church in all her glory. And the reason I think so much of God's work in the church suffers, is because there are these vile estates sticking up their heads and saying, hey, me, none of this church, what about me? Am I not of value? How dare you speak to me like that? I'm going to leave the church in my vile estate.

It's like Paul was saying, right, the person who thinks he's perfect, when he comes to, looks for a perfect church, makes it imperfect by being there. This is vile estate. This is my contribution to the body of Christ.

Vile estate. And he says, but he doesn't leave you like that. He will transform this vile estate person into conformity with the body of his glory.

And that's why when he comes back, he sees the church all glorious. And I believe that that's the reason that the devil has succeeded in blinding the eyes of the vast majority of Christendom to the beauty of the body of Christ. And that local expression of it where it's lived out.

Where, yes, we're part made integrated into the body of Christ when we're born again. But I the reason that we speak often about the local expression of the body of Christ and being committed to it is because what happens as I walk alongside you, if I'm really becoming seeing Jesus, turning my eyes to him and the things of this earth worth world are growing strangely dim. I'm increasingly seeing myself as more and more vile in my own contribution to this church.

And so, hey, what's your role in the church? Vile estate. What's your responsibility in the church? Oh, I'm the pastor or I'm the music pastor or I'm the deacon or I'm all these. Let's be done with that.

Vile estate. This is what I bring. But you know why it's good news is because he will transform this vile estate into conformity with the body of his glory.

And I think of, I remember hearing this in a message that Brother Zach spoke once. When God was making Adam, he had to make him out of dust and clay, as it were. And he was gathering little piles of clay.

And let's say there was a piece of clay that says, what are you going to do with me? You're going to twist me and turn me and bend me. You're going to integrate me into a body where all of a sudden I lose my identity? God says, yes. And that pile of clay says, no, I don't want that.

I want to be a nice little pile of clay here by itself. And God would have just passed by that little piece of clay that says, me, my identity, my name. And would have missed out on what happened some minutes later when God went, and breathed into those piles of clay that had allowed themselves to be integrated into this body that he was forming.

And this is the same thing God is doing today in building his church. There will be those who says, no, but I want this and my likes, and you've got to pay attention to me, and have it my way, and all these things, and my feelings got hurt, and all this stuff. And God says, okay, I'm not going to force you to do it.

But if you will yield to my hand, allow me to break you, and see yourself as vile outside of the glory that he breathes into his church. And I am that. And the Christendom sadly exalts gift.

If you can preach, if you can sing, if you've won a Grammy award, if you've got a good voice, play a musical instrument well, or you're a good administrator, or all these other things. Articulate. These are the

things that Christendom looks for in making itself bigger.

Thinking that they can accomplish the work of God by those means. And God is looking for vile estates, seeing themselves that way. He says, come, let me integrate you into my body.

And that piece of clay that said, I'm a vile estate on my own. Make me a heart. Make me a lung.

Make me a muscle that strengthens. Make me a fingernail that itches when you need that. Make me a hair that helps keep warm.

Whatever it might be. And finding our fulfillment and our function in the body of Christ. It's a beautiful thing.

Turn with me to Revelation chapter 2, and I want to close with this. Now, maybe we'll continue. I don't want to rush through it.

There's more that I'd like to share. We can meditate on that for now. Lord, I pray that you'll continue to help us to see that the best we can do is give ourselves to you as we are and think nothing of ourselves.

Come, fill us with your Holy Spirit, Lord, I pray. Thank you that when your Holy Spirit breathes inside of us, you make our existence on this earth meaningful. Believe you'll do that.

Build your church, Lord Jesus, all over this world, but here too. Build it through us. We give ourselves to you.

Believe you'll do that. Thank you that you're not afraid of our weakness. You're not afraid of our filth.

You come and you thrive on weak circumstances. Your grace shows up best in weak vessels, in those that have seen themselves in their helplessness and hopelessness. We come to you that way this morning and believe you're going to do a great thing.

You are doing a great thing. That's great in your eyes, no matter what the world thinks of it. We trust you in Jesus' name.

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