

Looking to Jesus for Faith That Leads to Life

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of faith in Jesus Christ, highlighting the need to overcome the world through faith. It discusses the significance of surrendering to God, taking up our cross daily, fixing our eyes on Jesus, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us to manifest the life of Christ. The message encourages believers to testify to the life of Jesus through their actions, showing the transformation and power of Christ within them.

Scripture: 1 John 5:4, 1 John 5:7, 2 Corinthians 4:4, John 15:26, 1 John 5:8

Topics: "Living by Faith", "Transformation through Christ"

Description

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Transcript

I hope there's a spirit of faith that you have or if you don't have, that you're longing for this morning. The only way we can overcome the world is by faith. It's not by knowledge, it's not by doctrine, it's not by attending RLCF.

When you face trials in life, the only way you'll overcome is by faith. You know that verse? Maybe we can start there. 1st John chapter 4. John wrote these words after many years of walking with Jesus physically and then walking with Jesus spiritually even longer.

About 60 years he walked with Jesus in absentia as a term that means absent from the Lord. Paul talked about being absent from the Lord. Right now we are absent from the Lord.

We'd rather be with Him but we can still be with Him in spirit and John is a good example of somebody who was present with the Lord physically for just three and a half years and then while he was physically absent from the Lord, he still walked with the Lord for 60 years. Absent in body but present in spirit and it's wonderful that he's an example for us and he says, 1st John chapter 5 verse 4, whatever is born of God, there's a lot of people in Christendom who say they are born again but here's the Bible saying here's how you know that you're born again. Yes it comes through the Spirit of Christ within us, the Holy Spirit cries

out within us, Daddy in heaven but there are also some proofs that you're born again and it's good for us to examine ourselves.

Paul told the church in Corinth, examine yourself if you're off the faith. Test if you're really born again and one of the proofs of that is 1st John 5 verse 4, whatever is born of God overcomes the world. You know John told us earlier if a few the previous page in my Bible at least, 1st John 2, whatever is of the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life and it's not out there, it's in your flesh.

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life. It's easy to see it in people who don't know Christ but what matters is do you see it in yourself, do I see it in myself and if I'm born of God there is an overcoming of this lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh and maybe I can just quickly explain what I believe that is. The lust of the eyes is the desire to have what you see.

If somebody has something else and you don't have it you want that too. If somebody has a better car or a bigger house or a nicer job or earthly circumstances, health that you don't have. If there's something that you see around you that you lack and you desire it secretly.

You may never say it but in your heart it's in the eye. You know the eye never speaks and if you're lusting with your eyes, what I mean by that is not sexual lust but the desire. The eyes could quietly be taking in this desire for what's in the world.

Nobody knows it is. You have no idea what I'm looking at right now. You kind of do but if my eyes were closed let's say and with my eyes I'm desiring something that I've seen and I'm overcome by that and my thoughts are preoccupied with wanting this and wanting that.

Why haven't you answered this prayer Lord? Why haven't you given me that? That's the lust of the eyes. The lust of the flesh is the desire to please oneself. Includes sexual lust but other pleasures, a desire for good food all the time.

The desire to constantly be going out to eat nice food because you don't like the food that mom cooks at home or other things like that. Sexual pleasure, things that comfort, ease, sleeping in too much when you should be waking up in time to spend a little bit of time with God's Word, going to bed at a good time, being careful with what you watch. If you have a television or you watch movies, being careful with what you watch.

That's things that please yourself and then the boastful pride of life, the desire to exalt oneself, to think. What is the boastful pride of life? You could set different standards for pride and I find in myself at least I think of pride as oh I'm boasting or I walk around with a swagger or I talk boastfully. That's easy to see but you know that even one millimeter of thinking I am something, one millimeter of thinking of myself as something is boastful pride of life.

And if I don't have a radical attitude of being absolutely nothing, being an absolute nobody in this church or in any circumstance, in your home, husbands, how do you know whether you have the boastful pride of life? Do you think that you're better than your wife or your children in any way? I'm not saying more spiritual or more mature or that you have to correct them and discipline them, all those things, yes. But do you think that you're more important than them? Then you have the boastful pride of life. Are your comforts and your needs more important than that of your wife or your children? In the church, are you more important than even one person in this church? Because you know that they are backslidden or

they're not as wholehearted or something else, you think that you're a little bit more important than them, you have the boastful pride of life.

And Jesus had zero pride in him. If I have one percent pride in me or point zero zero zero zero one percent pride in me, I have the boastful pride of life. So having described all of that, we read in 1st John 5 verse 4, if you're born of God, you overcome this, this desire to have everything you see, this wanting to please yourself, and this desire to think of yourself as even a little bit, not nothing, and overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Our faith overcomes the world. That is why faith is so important.

I see that there are two reasons why Christians fall off the rails in their Christian life. I'd like you to turn with me to 1st Timothy chapter one. And by falling off the rails, it could be that you walk away from your faith altogether.

I know people personally who once upon a time were walking with Jesus and today are not. I hope it won't stay that way. I don't know whether what their eternal destiny will be.

I hope that they will turn. I hope they will repent. There is still time to repent as long as they are alive.

But there were people who walked with Jesus who are not in his presence today and will never be. Judas Iscariot is an example of that. There are many others like that.

How is one get off the rails? And like I said, getting off the rails could be something obvious like that, but it could be that you have the form of godliness, but you don't have the power. We read about that in 2nd Timothy 3. It could be that you completely renounce Christianity, but what could be less obvious is that you still call yourself a Christian. You still go to a church instead of just staying home or you haven't taken up some other religion.

You still call yourself a Christian. You'll still read the Bible. You still pray in the name of Jesus, but all of that form is there.

The words are there, but you don't have the power. I would say to such a person, you've fallen off the rails. You've gone off track in your Christian life, and I don't know what the eternal destiny of such a person is.

If you have the form of godliness but don't have its power, read 2nd Timothy 3 and see the warning there. But I see that the reason why people fall off the rails, for example, is clearly stated here in 1st Timothy 1, and Paul actually gives examples of two people who I believe were close co-workers of his. Do you know that it's possible to have been a close co-worker of the mighty apostle Paul himself and yet fall off the rails and probably end up in hell? I have a feeling Hymenaeus and Alexander mentioned in verse 20 are in hell today.

I have a feeling. I can't say that with confidence, but they were co-workers of Paul. They walked with him for some period of time, but something happened, and they got off the rails, and Paul actually handed them off to Satan.

Now, what Paul did was didn't say, okay, you're going to go to hell. Paul didn't have that authority. Only God has that authority, but what Paul did was he handed them over to Satan.

What authority he had to do that? To hand even two of his co-workers off to Satan so that they wouldn't blaspheme, it says. They will be taught not to blaspheme. In other words, I believe Paul said, Lord, let Satan do something in their life that will be so serious, so dramatic, traumatic even perhaps, maybe a sickness or some serious catastrophe that they will realize I should not have blasphemed, but I wonder if despite that their heart was hardened, and they continued to blaspheme, and in rebellion they turned against God and continued to blaspheme and ended up in hell.

We don't read that they were, I mean you read about, I think it's the same Alexander later on who caused Paul much harm, he says. And so anyway, this sermon is not about Hymenaeus and Alexander. It's for us.

How did they end up that way? I imagine that when Paul went and traveled somewhere and spoke for multiple meetings, he said, Hymenaeus, why don't you take one of the sessions, speak about 15-20 minutes before I get up and speak, and these people sitting there listening thought of Hymenaeus as a godly man because he was there with Paul and Alexander, another meeting, these co-workers of Paul, and Paul said, handed them over to Satan. What happened to these two is a warning for all of us, because if it could happen in Paul's own ministry, which I think is perhaps the purest ministry that has ever existed in church history, Paul's himself, I think was the purest ministry, and if it could happen there, certainly it could happen in our midst. And he says that it happened because they didn't keep, verse 19, faith and a good conscience.

Faith and a good conscience. If you don't keep faith and a good conscience, you will go off the rails. First of all, what does it mean to have a good conscience? What does it mean to have a good conscience? I think of it like rails.

You know, you look at trains that run. They need power, but they also need rails. Rails are what ensure that that the train doesn't fall off into the mud.

There was a train derailment just a couple days ago here in Loveland, and they had, you know, they shut down the whole street and all that. It's possible for trains to go off the rails, and that happens when you stop listening to the voice of God every day. I want to lay a simple exhortation for all of us, dear brothers and sisters.

If even one day goes by that you have not listened consciously to the voice of the Holy Spirit, your train's going to get derailed that day. I have a feeling. Now, it may be the next day or something, but God may be merciful and doesn't allow your train to get derailed that day.

He'll allow it to go off for a little while. You know, I think about what it might be for derailed trains. Like when they derail, maybe they can still kind of stay upright for a little bit, but the longer they stay off those rails, eventually they're just going to collapse and fall off.

And if there are passengers on the train, it's pretty serious. There's probably going to be injury and death. And if, dear husbands, as heads of your homes, if one day goes by that you haven't consciously sought to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in your conscience, I fear for your life and the life of your wife and your children that day.

Think about it seriously. Make a conscious effort. Say, Lord, I want you to speak to me today.

I want you to keep me on the rails. I want to check and ensure. And if you've been going for some time, if you're going faster, if you've been running after Jesus more wholeheartedly as we're seeking to do in this

church, then the danger is even more.

The consequences are even more if you get derailed. When the trains go through Loveland, they go through very slowly. So from my understanding, when it got derailed, it sort of tilted a little bit because it's just slowly going through life.

But if it was a fast train going at high speed and got derailed, it would have been disaster. That happens sometimes. Fast trains get derailed.

A lot of people die. I think about that. It's more dangerous to not keep a good conscience at a church like this, where we're seeking to pursue Jesus.

We want nothing of this world. We're running hard after him. And if then I don't keep a good conscience, then if I go by without listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, even one day, it's dangerous.

So keep good conscience. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit every day. It's true for all of us, not just men, but for all of us.

And the other is faith. I think of faith like power. You know, faith itself is not power, but it results in power.

Faith is the victory that overcomes our world. You can think about that. Faith is authority.

It's power. It's the ability to overcome the world. So in a sense, it's power.

And so let's say you have a good conscience and you're keeping, making sure your conscience is clear, but your train is just sitting there at the station. Everybody's boarded. You've got your wife and your children.

Everybody's nice and good. You're coming to the church meetings. You've got a good job and all that, but the train hasn't gone anywhere.

The clock is ticking and you have a destination. God wants you to get somewhere by the end of your life. He wants you to be conformed into the image of Jesus by the end of your life.

It's time for you to start moving. It's time for the train to leave the station and not like the writer of Hebrews says, to lay again the elementary principles of washings and dead works, repentance from dead works, Hebrews 6. It's time for us to go on to more mature things. Some of you, dear brothers, I want to say it plainly.

Some of you who have been sitting in this church, I don't say this, by the way, I'm not pointing a finger, should have God's word on your tongues. You should have a prophetic word on your tongues. When we open the time of sharing here and you say, I don't know, I don't have anything.

It's okay if you're starting out, but if you've been here in a member of this church, and I'm not talking about just saying something, oh, I thank God for what I heard. I'm talking about coming to this meeting. Lord, I have a responsibility to edify my wife and to edify my children, first of all, at home.

And I want to tell you, and as an exhortation, if you struggle with knowing what to share here, start at home. I hope there's no nervousness. You maybe are a little bit nervous about sharing here, but you certainly shouldn't be nervous about sharing at home, right? Encourage your wife, encourage your

children, wives, encourage your husbands with a word at home.

And you do that six days, Monday through Saturday, your heart will be overflowing with words of encouragement to share with somebody else, because you practiced it for six days. What's it to do it one more day with others who are part of God's family? So take it seriously to move on, to grow. Take it seriously to ask God to give you spiritual gifts.

You know, 1 Corinthians 14, let's turn there for a moment, says that we should earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Now, it only says one gift that you're specifically told to desire, and that's the gift of prophecy. And that's why I said some of us who are in this church, who've been here for some time, who don't have the gift of prophecy.

It's a gift for every one of us, brothers, sisters, and even children. Read Acts chapter 2. The children memorized it a few weeks ago. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

And I hope you've been praying, as I've been praying, that our children also will prophesy. And I see them from time to time prophesying, and I hope they'll continue to do that. And it'll be more than just saying their memory verse.

It'll be living it out, and having something to say about their memory verse, even something that will encourage us, or coming back like they do from the Sunday school class and saying, this is what I learned in that Sunday school class, and in prophesying and encouraging us through that. Pursue love, 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1. Yet, Santos, desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. If you're in the habit of underlining it in your Bible, or some other way of marking this verse in your Bible, please do so today.

Put it in your phone, or something like that. Say, this is a verse I want to seek the Lord for today. Lord, I haven't been pursuing it.

You know, I've thought about it like this, that I ought to look at the world and see how they're pursuing money. There's not a single person in the world who's not pursuing money. Whether they're homeless, or don't have jobs, or poor, or rich, every single one of them is pursuing money.

That's the characteristic of the kingdom of this world. Riches, wealth, money, that's what they're pursuing. And when I look at somebody who's, when I read about these rich people, and how they've come up with some other new invention, or you read, you know, Forbes magazine of how these people became millionaires and billionaires, how they schemed and planned, and things they did along the way, because they were pursuing money, I ought to look for wherever the word pursue comes in the Bible, and do the same thing.

Pursue love. Pursue love. Chase after it.

Run after it. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see God. And he goes on to say, desire earnestly.

Desire. Let me put the word lust there. Usually you think about lust, because that's the word that the old English used, for example, in Romans 8. The spirit lusts after the flesh.

The flesh lusts after the spirit. What does it mean? There's a desire. I don't want you to take Santos.

The flesh says, I want Santos. The spirit says, no, I want him. You know, that's the conflict going on in your body.

The flesh is saying, I want to take all of Santos with me to hell. And the spirit is saying, no, I want to take him with me to Jesus. He belongs to Christ.

This is that lust, this desire, this war. That's the word used there. And think about 1 Corinthians 14.

Let me start, especially with us men. You know how sexual lust is such a pervasive, heavy battle for men. The desire to look with our eyes, to please ourselves sexually.

Think about using that same desire, the way you used to desire to please yourself, and that desire for sex was there. Desire spiritual gifts. Earnestly desire spiritual gifts.

Say, Lord, now He doesn't tell us what it is. It could be different ones, but if you find that you don't know what your spiritual gift is, are you content? Because sometimes I talk to people, and brothers, especially speak to us here, because let it start with us, right? I've had people say, I don't know what my gift is in the church. I don't know, I just come and I am part of the church and all that, but I don't know what my gift is.

So I think to such a person, I say, why are you asking me? The Bible says, desire it. That means go to God and say, Lord, I don't know what my gift is. And you said, desire it.

What is the gift that you want me to have that I can bless others with? I don't want it to be prominent. I don't want it to be big, and a thing that even people see. Let it be something secret, but Lord, give me the spiritual gifts you want me to have.

Most people in charismatic circles, for example, are desiring tongues. I don't know if the Lord lays it on your heart to desire to speak in tongues. By all means, do so.

Paul did. Godly men and women through the years have. I believe very much in that gift.

If the Lord lays it on your heart to desire the gift of tongues, do so. I'm not here to tell you what that gift is, but desire earnestly spiritual gifts. It's a clear command.

Sisters, for you too. Children, for you too. Desire.

At a young age, think about it. If you've given your life to Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells within you. You can start praying, Lord, I know that all the older people in the church may not be taking it seriously, but I want to.

I'm only 11 years old, and I've asked you to come to my heart. Your spirit dwells within me. Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit.

Give me power, first of all. Give me your life, but also give me spiritual gifts, and especially the latter part of verse 1 that you may prophesy. So it's going back to faith.

Faith is that power, that moving, as it were. Faith causes us to move. And how do we get faith? You know, I think of the example I was just thinking about this morning, and I wrote down.

I wanted to speak on it very briefly. Mark chapter 8, if you'll turn there with me. There were 13 men in a boat, and I wonder which one of them is your example.

One of them is in hell today. Judas Iscariot. He walked with Jesus, saw Jesus, experienced miracles, saw the life of Christ right in front of him.

I mean, the life of Christ couldn't get more pure than in Jesus himself. He was the perfection of godliness and the divine nature, and yet there was somebody close to him who spent three and a half years right there seeing it, and was offended, and is in hell today. That's one.

There's 12 more. Remember I said there's 13 men in a boat. We've identified one.

None of us has said Judas Iscariot as our example, but then there's 12 other men, and of those 12, 11 are in the presence of the Lord today. They're in heaven, but in this situation here in this boat, there was something that distinguished them in a way that they're not my example. Peter is not my example.

James is not my example in Mark chapter 8. There are other things that I can follow from Peter, from his life, and from his writings. There are other examples I can follow from John, and from his life, and his writings, but there's one example that I follow foremost, and that's Jesus himself. It says here, you know the story, right? The 13 of them were in a boat and the storm came, and what does it mean to have faith? See, it's possible to be in the presence of Jesus and not have faith.

That was true about the other 12, the 12 disciples. They were with Jesus. They were in the presence of somebody who had faith, but didn't have faith.

Do you believe that Jesus had to have faith? Of course he did, because he was like us in all things. What was faith for Jesus? It was depending on his father for all things. The son can do nothing on his own initiative, but except as he sees the father doing.

This is faith manifest in Jesus. Jesus set us an example of faith as well. Jesus wouldn't ask us to have faith if he himself hadn't shown.

This is how you can have faith. So, when I see... Mark 4, verse 38. There's a word I was singing here this morning as we were in the boat.

I remember this verse. It says, Jesus by himself, Jesus himself was in the stern, asleep on the pillow, on the cushion. And I just got this picture of what would have rejoiced Jesus' heart so much when Jesus said, hey I'm gonna go lay down on over there at the bottom of the back of the boat, and here's a pillow.

I think Jesus would have loved it if John also or somebody said, hey Jesus, are you gonna go take a nap? I'll go too as well. I just want to be where you are. Why am I in this boat in the first place? It's not because I like boat rides.

It's not because I like fishing. It's because I want to be where you are. And if Jesus went to the back of the boat, what should any one of us have done? Say, Lord, I'm gonna find a place where you are.

You know what would have happened? Let's say, Matthew. Had said, Lord Jesus, you're gonna go, you grabbed a cushion, you're gonna go lay down, I'm gonna do the same. I think Matthew would have been the other person also, who in the midst of the storm was fast asleep.

He had found faith, like Jesus himself had found. And today, you and I are in a boat. And we could say, Lord, still the storm, still the storm, calm the storm, calm the storm.

And I'm waiting for Jesus to calm the storm. And while I'm waiting for him to calm the storm, it's just chaos. What do you think it was like in that boat? 13 men, 12 of them in a panic over what's gonna happen, and one fast asleep.

And I ask us today, there's a question the Holy Spirit's been asking me all morning. Who is your example? Where are you going to be today? Are you gonna say, Lord Jesus, I see that the storm is not stilled. But I'm gonna go find a place where you are.

And I'm going to find faith. We're talking about faith here. I want faith, Lord Jesus.

And as you're falling asleep, and I'm falling asleep, and I'm and I somehow I'm not quite where you are. Imagine again, I want you to think about a hypothetical situation that's true for us today. That Matthew, let's use him as an example.

He sees Jesus slowly slipping away, grabbing a pillow. And he goes to the back of the boat. And Matthew says, Hey, what's Jesus doing? Let me just do that.

He called me to follow him. Let me just do what he's doing. I'm gonna grab a pillow as well.

And he lays down in the back. And I go there, put my head on the pillow lay next to him. And I imagine a conversation here with Jesus tells Matthew, Hey, Matthew, you know what, there's a storm coming.

Can you see it's starting to rock a little bit? It's going to get worse. But stay with me. I'm right here.

There's a plan for your life that the Father has written out. Every day of your life is written out. This is the safe place.

You're with me, Matthew. Let's just hold hands together while it starts to get rockier. What a different story would have been for Matthew.

If he had found the place at the back of the boat where Jesus was, okay, these things are written for our instruction. None of them found that place. But today, what will you and I do? When Jesus closes up time and says, Hey, I told you the story in Mark four, and I told it to you three times in Matthew eight, Mark four, and I think Luke six or Luke eight also three times I told you the same story.

What did you do with it? Do you were you satisfied to just be in the boat near Jesus waiting for him to calm the storm? Or did you say, Lord, you showed me where you were. I didn't want to see where Peter was or where Matthew was where Thomas was. I wanted to see where you were.

You were in the back of the boat fast asleep. I want that now. And I'm saying Lord in the storms of my life today, coming this week, coming this month, the rest of this year and the years to come.

I don't want to spend all my time praying for the storm to be stilled. I believe he will in his time. And I will pray for the storm to be stilled.

But I want to do it from the back of the boat. With my head on a pillow, holding Jesus hands. Let's go forward into this week that way, brothers and sisters, at the back of the boat with my head on a pillow holding Jesus hand because he's there.

What a difference. Hebrews chapter 11 were told about faith, but the faith of the old covenant people was quite different from the faith of the new covenant. And that's the essence.

A lot of Christians know Hebrews chapter 11 and know the stories and some I've heard of even memorized Hebrews chapter 11. I tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, don't memorize Hebrews chapter 11. Memorize Hebrews chapters 12 verses 1 through 3. That's more important.

That's for us. And start with Hebrews 11 verse 39. If you want to memorize something in the book of Hebrews, memorize Hebrews 11 verse 39 onwards.

It's good to know what Samson did and David did and Jephthah and Gideon and Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and Joshua. Good to know that. But what should we experience? The faith of the new covenant Hebrews 11 verse 39 says all these having gained approval through their faith.

Yes, God gave approval. That's good. Good for you, Joseph.

Good for you, Jacob. Good for you, Moses. Good for you, Abraham.

All of that gained approval. But there was a but at the end of that statement. God would say, welcome Abraham, but I've got something better for Santos.

Do you know that? Did not receive what was promised Hebrews 11 verse 39 because God had provided a better faith, you can say, for Santos, for you. Put your name there. God had provided a better faith for Santos, for you and I, under the new covenant than what Abraham, Moses, all those people in the old covenant experienced.

Abraham waited and waited and waited and waited and waited and one day he got a son. Moses waited and waited and waited and he got to see the promised land and trusted God to lead him 40 years in the wilderness, etc, etc. What does faith look like for you, dear brothers and sisters? When you think about it, you know, it says in the previous verses, they shut the mouths of lions, live in skins, animal skins, hidden caves, all this stuff.

God preserved them. God had provided something better for us so that apart from us, they would not be made perfect. And what was that better thing? What is the faith of the new covenant? It is looking to Jesus.

That's what he says. Fix your eyes on Jesus. This is faith.

How are you living at a standard that's higher than Moses and higher than Abraham? It's very simple. Every day you start out saying, Lord Jesus, I want to fix my eyes on you. I want to fix my eyes on you.

It doesn't look impressive to the rest of the world. It's hidden. It's something to say, hey, do you have faith? What's the proof of your faith? You know, James says, what's the mark of your faith? And he gives different examples.

But you know, ultimately for me, if you ask me, Santosh, how are you walking by faith today? Every day I'm looking to Jesus. I'm fixing my eyes on him. And I'm asking him before I send an email, before I send a text message, before I speak something, before I discipline my children, before I go to work, before I do this or I do that, before I cook that meal or do the dishes.

I'm saying, Lord Jesus, I want to find you here. I'm fixing my eyes on you. And dear brothers and sisters, do you see that by that simple walk of every day, fixing my eyes on Jesus, he says, you're walking by faith.

And this faith is much greater and far better than anything they had under the old covenant. That's what he says in verse 40. God has provided something better for you.

Let me make it simple. Children, pay attention. God has planned something better for your life than to tear down the walls of Jericho like you showed us in the skit some time ago.

God has planned something better for you than to shut the mouth of lions like Daniel did. I think you guys did that play also, maybe, or you will someday. God has planned something better for you than to part the Red Sea like Moses did.

God has planned something better for you than to call down fire from heaven than Elijah said. Did you know what that is, dear children? I hope you'll never forget it, that you can walk every day fixing your eyes on Jesus. Now you'll say, well, really, that's it? No fanfare? No waters parting and fire coming down from heaven? See, this is what I see Christendom chasing.

They want something spectacular, some great miracle that they can boast about. And God says, I'm looking for a people that are humble, that are after the treasure hidden in earthen vessels. They're after the treasure, not the earthen vessel.

And I look at people who are taken up with this word of faith and faith movement and all that. You know what it is? It's a fancy vessel, but the treasure inside is missing. And it doesn't matter if the vessel outside is great, that's fine.

If God does outward miracles as we have seen him do, and I believe he will, evidences of healing and other great miracles, relationships being restored and healed, I'm trusting him for that. Lives being saved, our children growing up to love the Lord Jesus Christ and commit their lives to him and being baptized and becoming his disciples and obeying all that he taught us to do. Those are miracles, and I'm trusting him for more of that.

But deep within is a simple treasure, a simple treasure of faith, and that is fixing your eyes on him. God has planned something better for us. What is that? Verse 2, to fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, of our faith.

This is something better. You can follow Jesus, you can fix your eyes on him, and you can run a race and you can be like Jesus. In Acts chapter 1, we were told that Jesus told us, told the disciples first of all, and then told us as well, that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Acts 1 verse 8, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. What is that power? It's not to cast out demons, it's not to speak in tongues, it's not to do mighty miracles and healings and raise the dead or anything like that. Very simply, it is power to be his witnesses.

You shall be my witnesses. A witness, you can testify. You can testify.

And what is that testimony? We read later on, after the Holy Spirit came, so Acts chapter 1, the Holy Spirit had not yet come. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come, and there were many who heard it, and 120 that went up into the upper room and said, Lord, you said you would send power, now send us

this power. And after that power came, they knew what that witness was.

And Peter speaks of it on behalf of the disciples, you know, it says Peter taking his stand, Acts 2 verse 14, he's speaking on behalf of all the others, the 120 that were there. And we read in a little statement in verse 32 of Acts 2, what this testimony was. You will be power, you will receive power to be my witnesses.

What is that? Here's Peter, having received this power now, now at that point, he hadn't done a miracle. On the day of Pentecost, when it says 3,000 of them were saved, no miracle was done. Yes, they were speaking in tongues, but they were speaking in languages that other people could hear at that time.

And so you could say there was not really a miracle, in a sense it was a miracle, but it wasn't like there was a great healing or somebody raised from the dead. But here was Peter, before he did any outward miracle, being a witness. And what did he witness to? What did he testify about? He says, verse 32, he testified about Jesus, that this Jesus God raised up again to which we are all witnesses.

Now that was true about Peter, here in this verse, but there was something different about Peter saying this, than a few hours before that, or even the day before that. You know, the day before that, a few days, Peter witnessed the resurrection. Weeks before this.

The physical testimony of Christ's resurrection, Peter already knew. And you know what happened after that? So here's Peter seeing the resurrection, here's the day of Pentecost, receiving power to be his witnesses. And in between, you see Peter still afraid.

Peter's still like, I just want to go back to fishing. I don't know if I want to do this discipleship thing. I don't know Lord, can you still use me? He's in this not having power to be his witnesses, even though he can see that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

So clearly what Peter was talking about in Acts 2 was a power that he had received through the Holy Spirit. What was that? I believe, and it's testified to in other portions of scripture, that the life, the resurrection life of Christ was now within him through the Holy Spirit. That he said, I know I saw Jesus raised from the dead, but I am a witness of it in here.

The Holy Spirit, before he came down, I could just say, yeah, I saw him. Well, so did other people. The Pharisees, I believe, knew that Jesus had raised from the dead.

They didn't want to admit it. The soldiers who were guarding the tomb, I wonder if they could say, well, yeah, there was this big explosion and our eyes were blinded and all this, the stone rolled away. They were witnesses of the resurrection, but this was different.

What Peter and the apostles had was a witness in their Holy Spirit, in their lives, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is alive. And that's where you and I also can testify to the same. Is there a witness in your life that Jesus is alive? Let me ask you plain and simple, dear brothers and sisters, is there a witness in your life that Jesus is alive because his power lies within you? You used to be defeated with your tongue, where every time something happened, you would just like say that hurtful word, that careless word, word that didn't have care.

But now you're a witness to the power of Christ because all of a sudden you're finding a power that's beyond you. It's not self-control, but it's a power that has come through a longing and a thirsting for righteousness. And God's satisfying your thirst by giving you self-control, control over your tongue.

You used to be defeated with your eyes. Any time a pretty woman walked by, you would just look at her with lust. And then you cried out and said, Lord, I don't want to be defeated that way.

And now you find, you can testify that the life of, that Jesus is alive. Why? Because I'm no longer defeated by that lust. Jesus is alive.

It's one thing to sing it. It's one thing to say, well, yeah, it's true. He's written in his word.

It's another thing to know it by the power of his resurrection in my life. This is what Paul wanted, Philippians 3, that I might know him and know the power of his resurrection in my life. Witnesses of his resurrection.

This is what we're called to do. And my dear brothers and sisters, this must be the basis of our evangelism. Let's turn to John chapter one.

I think of RLCF, and this is really the verse with which my message, the thoughts of the Lord laid on my heart for today started, started with this verse, John chapter one, verse four. And the cry in my heart was, Lord, I believe you want us to be bolder witnesses as a church. I believe you want us to be bolder witnesses as families.

I believe you want our marriages to be bolder witnesses. I believe you want us as individuals to be bolder witnesses. What does that look like, Lord? Some people think, well, it means standing with a bullhorn on the street corner and preaching God's word.

If God calls some to do that, I'm not here to judge them. For others, it means setting up a booth in a, in a, in a fair, maybe, or on a street corner or down in old town with a table with tracks and handing out tracks and talking to people. If God calls somebody to do that, that's, that's great.

But what is it that all of us are called to do? Some are called to be evangelists. That's a gift. There is the gift of being an evangelist, but there's a specific gift that all are called to be his witnesses, every single one of us.

And I've been crying out my heart and saying, Lord, how are you calling us as a church to be your witnesses? And this is the verse that God has taken me back to over and over again. John chapter one, verse four. In him was life and the life was the witness.

The life was the light of men. In him was life and the life was the light. And this is it, dear brothers and sisters, you've heard it.

It's nothing new. We've preached this for years in this church. Our witness, how will River of Life Christian Fellowship, represented by individual families and marriages and individuals within that, men, women, and children, how will we shine as a light? How will it be that people will be drawn to Christ through that is through the faithfulness of our inner life, our secret life, or nobody knows what I'm thinking.

That's why I've said it often, and I'll say it again, that this church is built up mostly by when we're away from each other, not as much by when we're together. That's why we don't have 24-7 meetings. Some churches do, you know, constant meetings, constant singing.

If the Lord calls them to do that, that's fine, but I'll tell you how this church is actually going to be built up is through the times when we're away from each other. It's not going to be through sermons. Yes, that will

help, that will add on.

The sermon that you hear is something to help you build up your life. It's something to help you make sure that that light is shining stronger. In Him was life.

Think of what, if God was to be able to say about RLCF. See, I long for God's witness to know what is God's opinion of our church. Often you'll see in neighborhood posts on social media and such, people asking, is there a church you'd recommend? And I never post on there, because what is the recommendation I can give? I'll say, come and see.

We're here, there's a sign out there, we have a website, we have a YouTube channel, and we are all witnesses. Tell anybody you can about this church. But what I long more than anything else, not to tell them, you should come to this church because of this, because of that.

I'll tell you, I'm thankful. There's nothing outwardly attractive about this church. Even the building is kind of old and such.

No, thank God we have a building, because we're not glorying in a fancy building with stained glass and all this stuff. We don't want the latest lights or this curtain we've had for about 20 years. Doesn't it look like 15 years? That's it.

It's what's necessary. We're not interested in spending a lot of money on things that will fade away. I'll tell you what we want.

We want the life. And I pray that anybody who walks in this door or listens to us online will say, there's life here. It's not fancy, it's not impressive to the world's eyes.

I can't describe to somebody why this is the church where I want to be, where God has planted me. But I am tasting of it. You know, if somebody was to tell me, hey, what's your favorite food? Mango.

And I say, can you tell me why? I'm like, I don't know. I just like it. You have to taste it to know why I like mango so much.

And you have to taste the life of Christ to know that it is good. Oh, taste and see that he's good. How would you describe the life of Christ? Do you find yourself running out of words? You say, hey, you just go and seek God for it.

Let him put a little bit more of his life in you. Cut off a little slice of that mango and put it in your mouth. And it'll be like an explosion in your mind.

The taste of the life of Christ. And I'm not trying to be silly with it. I'm not trying to make it earthly even.

That's the thing. I find that I don't have words to describe it. But I just say, as the Psalmist did, oh, taste and see of the life of Christ and you'll see it's good.

The life of Christ, if you're tasting of it, if you're drinking of it, I can't give it to you. No human being can lay hands on you and give it to you. You can get it from the baptizer himself.

And that's Jesus. Ask him to baptize you, the Holy Spirit. And I tell you, when the life of Christ is in you, it will shine.

You won't have to be urged and pressured into having something to say because the light is shining. And he'll give you five words that will edify somebody or five sentences that will be so edifying because it's a light shining. And think about us as a church shining like that.

People coming in and tasting of us. And it doesn't have to be that they come in here to taste it. Do you believe that the life of Christ in our midst can be a witness to those who watch online, that take the effort, some of them stay up late at night, past midnight, to join us? What are they hungry for? What are you hungry for, brothers and sisters, who join us online? I believe it's they want life.

They want a taste of the life that can be evident even over the internet. I believe it. I've seen it working in my own life, how I've received over the internet, life in other people that has blessed me.

Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 4. Paul experienced this. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 4. He talks about the God of this world blinding the minds of the unbelieving so they might not see the light. What was it that they're blinded to? The light of the gospel of what? Jesus will forgive you from your sins and take you to heaven? You'll never find that in the Bible.

Most people think that the devil has blinded the eyes of the people in this world. It says verse 4. The God of this world, that's Satan, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving to see that Jesus wants to take you to heaven. That's not there.

No. What is it? To see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ himself. It's like, to use the example of the mango again, it's like the God of this world has blinded the eyes of the people in this world, the unbelieving, to see how wonderful this tastes.

And no matter how much we describe it, do you think that a million more sermons will help the people in the world taste and see that the Lord is good? No. You think that if we had three meetings a week, five meetings a week, more descriptions of how good a mango is, will that work? No. All it takes is having heard one message from somebody in whom is life, speaking about how good that tastes, and going home and saying, Lord, I haven't tasted it.

I've heard that brother describe how good it tastes, but I haven't tasted it myself. And the proof is that I'm still defeated in how I speak to my wife. I'm still weighed down by bad moods.

I still find that there's unrest in different circumstances. Lord, I want a taste of it. Will you give me a taste of this life that you have, that I can have it too? The devil has blinded the eyes of who? He doesn't say un-Christians.

The unbelieving. That means it could be Christians. Are there Christian unbelievers? Sadly, yes.

Christian unbelievers. Unbelief just means you don't have faith. That means you're going on day after day after day, not having seen the glory of Christ, content to live a miserable, grumbling, complaining, defeated Christian life.

Attending RLCF. That's the unbeliever. And the devil is blinded.

Oh, that the scales of your eyes will be peeled back, that you'll taste and see. Who is the image of God? Verse 5. And he says, we don't preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus is Lord, and ourselves as bondservants for Jesus' sake. And so he goes on to describe what this life looks like.

We are afflicted, verse 8, in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not despairing. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Struck down, but not destroyed. Look at that life. Pushed down, struck down, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, one thing after another.

Is this the life that you want? Do you believe that if you lived such a life, you may have the life of Christ, actually? Why? Because in the midst of that, there's no complaint. You know what I see Paul saying in this contrast? Afflicted, but not crushed. Crushed means I've given up.

Perplexed, but not despairing. Again, I see that Paul's describing his life in such a way that he's facing one trial after another. Left hook, right jab.

Right hook, left jab. This one after the other. The devil's attacking him, attacking him, attacking him.

He says, but I'm not staying down. I'm not staying down. I'm trusting him.

I don't have a complaint against God. My hope is in God. And this is the mark of the life of Christ in him.

And so what does he do? Verse 10, always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. How are we going to manifest the life of Jesus? We've always preached taking up our cross. Always taking up our cross and following Jesus.

Every day. What does it mean then, like we read in Hebrews 12 verse 2, to fix our eyes on Jesus. Every day when you wake up, say, Lord Jesus, I want to take up my cross today and follow you.

Because I want the life of yours to shine like a light. There's a cross in front of me that I want to take up. Help me to take up that cross and follow you.

Help me to fix my eyes on you who took up your cross. You know, you read the rest of that verse, who for the joy set before him endured the cross. When I fix my eyes on Jesus, I see that he endured the cross.

I say, Lord Jesus, I want to endure my cross as well. Help me set a joy before me so that I too will be able to endure my cross today that I might have the life of Christ in me. We also, carrying about our cross every day, you could say, verse 10, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifest.

When will RLCF stop being a witness? When will your marriage and your home and your individual life stop being a witness? I want to tell you very plainly, the day you stop carrying your cross. Because it's very simple. It's like math.

A plus B equals C. Take up your cross. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Take up your cross.

You will have the life. It's very plainly written. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Take up your cross. You will have life. It's that simple.

And the devil will try to tell you, well, no, 2 plus 2 equals 1. Or 2 plus 1 equals 4. He'll say, you don't have to take up your cross. You've got this fixing your eyes on Jesus, but why don't you just talk about the promises. Don't speak about his commands.

2 plus 1 equals 4. Yes, it does. And you'll find all the Christians saying, 2 plus 1 equals 4. 2 plus 1 equals 4. 2 plus 1 equals 4. And then you go back to God's word and you find, no, I'm finding in my life. 2 plus 1 equals 3. I don't have an overcoming life.

And then you say, Lord, let me go back to what you told me. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Take up your cross every day.

The life of Jesus will be manifest in your life. That's the promise. If you get 2 and you get 2, you will have 4. That's it.

You don't have to make it up. You don't have to try to manufacture it. Simply fix your eyes on Jesus.

Take up your cross. You will have the life of Christ in you. And the result of that, look at that.

Verse 12. When this death works in me and the life of Jesus is manifest in me, it's also manifest in others. So death working in us, Paul says, results in life in others.

How are we going to draw people to Jesus, to the life that's in him? Take up your cross. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Take up your cross.

Follow him. You will see the life of Jesus manifest in you and manifest in others. Yeah.

And let me close with this. You go back a few verses. Chapter 3. You know, Paul talks there in verse 4 about the God of this world blinding the eyes of the unbelievers.

And I talked about how we as Christians can also have our eyes blinded. It's like a veil. He describes it like a veil.

Verse 15. Do you find, you know, it talks about the Old Testament there that when Moses is read for the Jews, a veil lies over their heart. You know, you could read even the New Testament and hear about the new covenant and a veil could be lying over your heart as well.

The God of this world has blinded you sitting in the new covenant in RLCF with a veil over your heart. Do you feel like that? Is there a veil over your heart? Is it true, verse 15, that to this day, whenever the Bible is read or the new covenant is taught, a veil lies over your heart? Then what is the answer, verse 16? Oh, what a wonderful word. Turn to the Holy Spirit.

But whenever a person turns to the Lord, and he says the Lord is the Spirit, verse 17, whenever a person turns to the Spirit, the veil is taken away. There is liberty. Whenever a person turns to the Holy Spirit, it's very simple.

Do you find that there's a veil? There's a lack of the life of Christ and it's power in your life. There's a veil preventing. The truth is there and the life is somewhere here, but there's a veil covering it, preventing it.

You know, I think of it like weed block. What does weed block do? It prevents weeds from coming up because there's a block over it. Now imagine if you put that similar block over your garden bed.

You took weed block and put it over your garden bed. The same thing is going to happen. That little seed that wants to sprout is blocked from coming out.

And do you feel like there's a weed block over your garden bed? There hasn't been the tomatoes and the fruit that should be coming out. There hasn't been the rest in those circumstances. The storm is raging around you and you're in a panic around it.

You're not there. It's because perhaps there's weed block over your garden bed. Turn to the Holy Spirit.

He will take that veil away. He'll take that weed block away and the life will come up. Turn to the Holy Spirit and you'll find freedom.

You'll find liberty. You'll find life and peace. Cry out to the Holy Spirit, dear brothers and sisters.

I'm not preaching anything new. I hope you know that. If you've been in this church, every verse I turn to, we have preached before.

I just sought from the burden of my own heart because I'm longing for this more. I found a little bit of weed block in a corner in my garden bed this week. I said, Lord, I don't want it.

And He's taken it away. I've turned to the Holy Spirit and He's peeled it away. And He's going to bring forth that fruit in my life and in yours.

There's a verse I read recently that I hadn't paid attention to closely before and just thought I would close with that. John 15 verse 26. Jesus says, When the Holy Spirit, that is the Helper, comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, it's the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father.

The Spirit of Truth, again, you've probably heard it before, means it's a spirit that testifies what you're seeing on the outside is real on the inside. The opposite of that is the spirit of hypocrisy, which Pharisees have, the devil has. The Spirit of Truth is what's on the inside is what you see on the outside.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. It makes it so that our outside and inside correspond. He goes on to say, He will testify about me, but you will also testify about me, verse 27, because you've been with me from the beginning.

And so make that, that's the essence of what I was sharing and what we heard even from the other brothers today. You know this verse, one last verse, 1 John chapter 5 verse 8. You know, we saw in verse 4 about the faith that overcomes the world. And it says, verses 7 and 8 talk about the three that testify in heaven, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And the three that testify on earth we see in verse 8 are the Spirit and the water and the blood. And again, it's not, I don't want to make this a theological lesson, but what I understand that to mean, how does the Holy Spirit testify on earth? We're told in heaven that He testifies through the Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 1 John 5 verse 7. Verse 8 says, how is that testimony here on this earth? It's through the Holy Spirit manifest in those who have died, represented by baptism in water, and those who have the life, the blood, the life in them. The blood is a picture of the life we read in the book of Leviticus.

So there too you see that what God is looking for is a testimony on earth of the Holy Spirit lived out through those who have died and have the life of Christ in them. May that be so in our lives. Thank you dear brothers and sisters and children even who might have joined us online today.

We praise the Lord for the opportunity for you to be with us even though we can't see you. We know that many of you have joined and we praise the Lord for that. We look forward to seeing you next Sunday, God

willing, or you being with us next Sunday.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that you're a loving God. Every day of our lives you planned out and you've made a plan that you're committed to fulfilling.

And whatever we might be going through, anyone listening to this prayer, anyone, whatever they might be going through, we believe that you're going to turn it into good. You cause all things to work together for good. That good that we might be conformed into the image of your son Jesus.

So Lord, I pray this week will not just be a week of going by and having heard another sermon and living the same life, but that we will come up higher. You will raise the standard of our life. We can't do it on our own, Lord.

We fall on our face and acknowledge it's impossible. But we're asking you in faith, having heard your call this morning, that you will lift up the standard of our life higher than it was last week. Let it be so, Lord, we pray every day, today a little bit higher by your grace, by your strength lifting us up than we were yesterday.

We believe you will do it. Thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

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