

# A Contented Life Within Our Boundaries

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's kingdom first, which involves allowing God to govern every area of our lives. It highlights the need to live by the principles of God's kingdom, even when faced with doubts or challenges. The speaker encourages complete surrender to God, trusting that He will never allow us to be tested beyond our ability, and that all circumstances work together for our good to make us more like Christ.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Romans 8:28, James 4:17, Colossians 3:15

**Topics:** "Seeking God's Kingdom", "Complete Surrender"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I never understood for many years what it meant to seek the kingdom of God first. So, as I understand it now, see, the thing is we don't use the word kingdom nowadays. Whereas in those days, every country was a kingdom, a king over it.

Today we use the word government more than a kingdom. So I understood it a little better when I think of the Lord saying, let God govern your life. The government of God, be under the government of God in every area.

And when we think of the standards that God has given us in His word, there is where we can fear that we might lose something on this earth if we allow the principles of God's kingdom to run every area of our lives. For example, if we forgive everyone who hurts us and look as if people will just take advantage of us in different situations, if we are true Christians, we live by the principles of what Jesus taught. So deep down in our hearts, we can hear all these wonderful things and have a little doubt, does it really work like that in my office and different situations I face? Can I really live by the principles of Christ? And those are the places where we have the opportunity to prove that it does work.

That if we put God first in every area of our life and live 100% by the principles Jesus taught to walk as He walked on this earth, that of course people will take advantage of us, there's no doubt, as they took

advantage of Christ. I mean, Judas Iscariot, for example, was stealing so much of the money from, money given for Christ was stolen by Judas. People took advantage of him, but he didn't starve.

And if we believe what the Bible says in a verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, this is the thing that really hurt me and I had to ask myself whether I really believed it. And I do. That's where we know that God is in control.

In 1 Corinthians 10, 13, in the middle of that verse it says, God will not allow any circumstance to come into your life where the trial or the temptation will be too much for you to bear. He will ensure that in some way that pressure will get reduced on you. It's impossible to live as a Christian on this earth if we don't believe that verse.

We will somewhere or the other compromise and behave like a worldly person and say, well in this particular circumstance I can't do what the Bible says. I can't live like Jesus told me to live in this particular circumstance. But if you believe this verse, a couple of other verses too, but first this one, that I can never, never, never in my workplace or with my relatives or neighbors or all the people I have to deal with ever face a situation, ever, ever, where God will allow me to be tested beyond my ability at that particular stage of my spiritual development.

You see our spiritual development is like going from one grade to another in school. And just like at each stage we get examinations. In India, we call it class, not grade, first standard, second standard, third standard.

There are examinations which we have to pass before we go to the next standard, or the next grade. So in no class will a teacher ever give us a question paper that is beyond our level or something that we have not been taught. Never, never, never.

It will always be to the level to which we have been taught. And if it is something in the question paper, we can be absolutely sure it is something we have taught. So here I see that God will not allow me to be tested beyond my ability.

Think if I can look into the entire future and say, I don't care whether it is next year or 10 years or 20 years from now, I can never face a situation where God is not controlling and ensuring that the people who are around me and the circumstances that I may face, and we don't even know what we face in the future, if we believe in a God who runs this universe, and who is intensely, personally interested in every one of his children, controlling every detail of their circumstance, and ensuring that they will never be tested by anything beyond their ability. I mean think of any situation some of you may be facing right now, or that you faced in the past and you found a little unbelief coming in that, well will this get too much for me? Will it become too much for me next week or next month? I say if you trust in God, impossible. If your life is completely surrendered to the Lord like Jesus was, you know the thing about Jesus' life was he did not want anything outside of God's will for his life.

Nothing. He was quite happy to be in the circumstances in which the Father arranged for him, and he was perfectly happy there. We don't know what all difficulties he faced in Nazareth, living, you can imagine, the Bible doesn't reveal it, but I found in different situations in my own life, you know like Jesus said the Holy Spirit will take of the things of mine and show it to you, and I have understood that verse in John 16 to mean that the things that are not written in the Bible, but something about Jesus' private life, inner life, inner attitudes, the Holy Spirit will take and reveal to us in that particular time when we are facing some

situation, and he'll tell us this is how Jesus reacted in this situation, and then I get a new revelation of Christ in that situation.

If I believe, then I can walk as he walked, and I'm eager to walk as he walked, and I'm really seeking the Holy Spirit of God to show me exactly what Jesus would do in this particular situation. He would never be anxious. He would never be tense.

He would never try to get his own back on anybody. He would never take revenge on anyone. He would never be unbelieving and tense, wondering whether things will go beyond his control.

Never. And it's a way of life that won't come straight away, and I want to encourage all of you to pursue this, because the Bible says as we approach the end of time, things will be more and more difficult for Christians, and that's going to be in every country. See what Jesus said about the last days in Luke chapter 21.

Luke 21. He said in the last days, nation will rise against nation. It's verse 10 onwards, and there will be great earthquakes and things like that, and they'll lay hands on you and persecute you, et cetera.

Maybe it's another passage. He says, yeah, I think it's here somewhere. Men's hearts will fail them for fear when they see the things that are happening around them.

And he wanted this in verse 26. Men's hearts will faint from fear, the expectation of things which are coming upon the world. I really believe it's going to be like that in the coming days.

Men fainting from fear because they're wondering what's going to happen next time. That time, verse 28, when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near, the coming of Christ is near. So there's never a time when I should have my head hanging down, wondering in fear or doubt or uncertainty.

And I want to say that to the weakest person here. Some of you may say, well, I'm very weak. Some of you may have, you know, probably some sickness, which I'm believers like that.

They don't know how it's going to develop. Is it going to become something worse and incapacitate me and make me helpless? I have to believe that God will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability. He is my father, and he understands.

We've got to keep on reminding ourselves, God is my father. He will never let me down. He knows.

He knows the things I don't know. He knows all the details of the future. And he knows if I'm going to be helpless or weak one day, God will take care of me.

You know, many of you are young. And even for an older person, I remember once the Lord giving me this verse from Isaiah 46. As I myself grew older, here's a word the Lord said to me in Isaiah 46 and verse 4. He said, even to your old age, I am the same.

I'm not going to change. I am the same, the Lord says. To your gray hairs, I'll bear you.

I've done it, and I'll carry you. Verse 3, the middle. From your birth, I bore you and I carry you.

It's wonderful to know that. From birth to gray hairs and old age, the Lord says, I'm the same. I'm going to take care of you.

All of us are in between, birth and old age. There will never be a time when the Lord is not going to bear us. See, that's the difference between a true believer and all the nominal Christians in the world.

There's an inner rest and peace in their heart. They're absolutely confident there's a Father in heaven who's caring for every detail of their life. And when you read the life of Jesus like that, I think of instances where they wanted to try and kill him, and they couldn't do it.

And the only reason given is his hour had not come. That's all. They couldn't kill him when he was a baby.

Because before the soldiers came to kill him, the Lord had already taken care of that and taken him away from there. And at other times, his hour had not come, and something or the other happened, and they wouldn't be able to capture him. But when the time came, then the Lord allowed them to capture him and whip him and kill him.

And I must believe what the Bible says. In 1 John 2, verse 6, it says that he who says he's a Christian, the Bible says, must live as Jesus lived. Now, you read a verse like that and say, that's impossible.

That's a great temptation when you read many verses in the Bible. I used to read a lot of verses in the Bible and just go over it as it would definitely apply to me. Anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Jesus lived, walk as Jesus walked.

1 John 2, verse 6. Is that possible? You look at it and say, either possible or not possible. I say, Lord, by your help, possible. I'm not going to go into the PhD class straight away.

I'm going to start kindergarten and first grade and second grade, little by little. God leads us step by step. And you don't have to compare yourself with others who are in a higher grade.

And we're not to judge others who are in a lower grade. One of the things I discovered is that God judges us according to the grade we are in. So, there are certain things which may be sin for me, but which is not sin for that brother.

I don't know whether you understand that. See, like a person who is studying multiplication and long division in a higher grade, that kid in the first grade, he doesn't even bother about it. I mean, if he's given a division or multiplication to someone and he can't do it, he does not get zero for it.

It's not even counted. But you in that grade, you know you've been taught that. You need to be able to do that.

So, I see that spiritually also. There are things the Lord has taught me, and I see sin at a higher level, more serious, than another brother who doesn't see that as sin. Do you know the differences in making husband-wife relationships? If a husband will recognize that thing is sin for me, but it is not sin for my wife, she probably doesn't see it as sin.

She may be in another grade or in that subject. God has taught me something and I have not taught her. So, I may judge her, why is she doing that? God doesn't.

You know that so many believers judge others in areas where God doesn't judge that person because God judges that person according to his level, whereas we judge people according to our level. That's one of the main reasons why we should not judge. We must recognize one simple truth that every believer is at a different level, and it's not just ten grades in Christian life, there are probably a thousand grades in the Christian life, and each person is at a different level.

That's helped me tremendously to know that God judges me according to the light I have. And he will judge that person according to the light he has, not according to the light I have. Whereas we have this tendency to judge people according to the light we have.

It's very easy to be merciful. Mercy is one of the great requirements in the Christian life. And God is merciful to those who are merciful to others, and it's very easy to be merciful to others when I recognize that that may not be sin for that person.

That person is doing that thing which I would never dream of doing it. He probably doesn't see it at all. And let me not judge him.

And I believe there's this judgmental spirit that hinders our own spiritual growth. Instead of judging ourselves, we judge a whole lot of people around us concerning what they're doing wrong. But I believe we need to see that it is wrong, but we're not here to judge or condemn them.

I was recently writing something in an article, and I was thinking a little more of this verse which says in Matthew 7, Judge not that you be not judged. And it's, you know, when you compare scripture with scripture, like when the devil told Jesus, it is written, his angels will take care of you. Jesus said it is also written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.

He balanced one scripture with another. Many people know Matthew 7, 1. Don't judge because you'll be judged by the same standard with which you have judged others. But the same Jesus who said that also said in John 7 that you must judge.

So it is written, do not judge. It is also written, you must judge. Have you seen that? In John chapter 7, John's Gospel chapter 7 and 24.

Do not judge, but judge. That's the balance. John 7, 24.

So what he's forbidding is don't judge according to the appearance. No, it's not a period after that. But, comma, but judge with righteous judgment.

Do you know that every Christian is supposed to judge? If you don't judge, you're disobeying that scripture. And if you judge according to the outward appearance, you're disobeying the scripture. We're not supposed to judge according to the outward appearance, but we are supposed to judge with righteous judgment.

So when I looked up this word judge in the Amplified Bible, it's one of the advantages of reading different translations, there it says don't condemn and don't sentence a person, like a judge sitting in a court, you know. He condemns a person and sentences him to prison or in the hang or whatever it is. Don't condemn and sentence a person.

That's not your job. God is the judge who condemns and sentences people. But we must judge in the sense that we must discern what is right and what is wrong.

There are people who say, for example, when they do some stupid thing and call it the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And they say, I don't agree with that. I don't believe that's the Holy Spirit at all.

It's just your own emotion and your own excitement. They say, don't judge. Don't speak against the Holy Spirit.

But the Bible says in 1 John chapter 4 that don't believe every spirit. But test it. It's a clear command that when I see something when somebody claims to be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, I don't just swallow it.

You'll never grow spiritually if you swallow everything around you that people say this is from the Holy Spirit. I have to test it. 1 John 4, 1. Don't believe every spirit.

Don't believe all these manifestations that you see which claim to be from the Holy Spirit. Test the spirits to see whether it's from God or not. Because there are many false prophets who got out into the world.

And that happened even in the first century. But the Spirit of God confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and that is from God. So what I see from that verse is the Holy Spirit will show me Jesus there in that situation.

So that's the meaning of verse 1 and 2. I'm not going to believe every spirit. But I know that Jesus came in the flesh and He was filled with the Holy Spirit. So I know what a spiritual life is by looking at what I've seen in Jesus in the Gospels.

And then I look at this particular manifestation and I ask myself Can I imagine Jesus doing this? If I say yes, it's of the Holy Spirit. If I say no, I cannot in the wildest imagination imagine Jesus doing this. It's not of the Holy Spirit.

I must reject it. And I mustn't be afraid of anybody telling me, oh don't blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. Because there are millions of Christians who are being fooled by all these preachers today.

We must judge. And we must discern. We don't condemn.

I mean that preacher who is leading people astray. You see it's wrong and you say it's wrong. And I'm not here to condemn him or sentence him.

That's God's business. But I will say that he's fooling the people. He's deceiving the people.

He's swindling the people with their money. But I'm not here to sentence him. I'm not a judge sitting on the judge's seat to condemn him or sentence him.

My calling is to be merciful. But coming back to what John says about walking as Jesus walked. In 1 John chapter 3, it says here an amazing verse.

Sorry, 1 John 4 verse 17, the last part. It's been a verse that has helped me a lot in my life. The last part of verse 17.

It's almost an unbelievable verse. As Jesus is, so are we in this world. This is what the Holy Spirit does in us.

If I'm really seeking God's will in my life, like Jesus did, his only aim in life was to finish the plan with which the Father sent him to earth. And if my only desire is like his, to fulfill the plan with which the Father sent me to this earth, I have no other desire other than that. That's what it means to seek God's kingdom, to be completely under God's rule, that I have no ambition, for example, to make more money than God intended that I should earn on this earth.

Imagine how restful your life would be if you can say, Lord, I have no desire to earn more money than you intended that I should earn on this earth. You know, the rat race that there is all around us, that people want to earn more and more and more and more, never ends. To be at rest in that.

I know that if I live in your will, you will allow me to earn enough to take care of myself and my family. I've proved that for 50 years now. And it's really true.

You don't have to get into this rat race. You say, Lord, I'll be content with what you give. It's a lot of people who are not content that have unrest.

If you look at unrest in your heart, ask yourself whether you are content as Jesus was, whatever the father arranged for him. It's not just that he was born in a cow shed, which is a reproach to be born in a cow shed. I've never met a person in my life who was born in such lowly circumstances.

That's how the father planned for him. Think that a God in heaven who had planned Jesus' birth from 4,000 years, not only 4,000 years, from eternity, could not arrange a room for Mary to deliver. It's so difficult for God to arrange the room in Bethlehem.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for God to do that. But he didn't do it. Because God's plan was that my son should be born in the lowliest circumstance of all.

So low that nobody would ever be born in such a low condition as him. Because he had come underneath everybody to lift everybody up. You know, when God decides that he's got a plan for your life and he sees that you're one of those completely submitted to him, he'll allow you to go through some very humiliating circumstances, which he will not allow somebody else to go through, because that guy is not so keen on fulfilling God's plan for his life.

But if you are, he will lead you to some of these depths, so that he can raise you to great heights. So Jesus accepted that. I thought also the statement of Nathanael concerning the place where Jesus grew up, Nazareth.

In John 1, when Nathanael was—Philip found Nathanael in verse 45. And, you know, every Jew was expecting the Messiah to come. And when Philip told Nathanael in John 1, 45, We have found the Messiah, the one whom Moses for 1,500 years had been waiting for the Messiah, he's finally appeared.

And it's Jesus of Nazareth. And Nathanael immediately says, in verse 46, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? I thought about that sentence. Why does he say that? They would never say that about Jerusalem.

Can any good thing come out of Jerusalem? Not even about Bethlehem, because that was the city of David. But Nazareth, I think Nazareth must have had a very bad reputation for some reason or the other. I don't know.

I think if you were born in some town with a very bad reputation, maybe for immorality or crime or whatever it is, or you were born in some ghetto, God allowed Jesus to grow up in such a place. And he was perfectly happy. He was never going to compare himself to anybody else.

He was content. And I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, have you learned to be content with your circumstances, or are you always wishing for something better, something more, something that will give you a little more respect and honor before others? Jesus never had it. It was prophesied about him in Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah 53.

The last part of verse 2, he had no appearance that we should be attracted to him. I don't know what that means. A lot of people think that Jesus must have been the most handsome person in the whole world and more good-looking than any film star.

I don't know. Is that required to be a spiritual man? He had no appearance that we should be attracted to him. I take these verses really, and I say, Lord, I don't want people to be attracted to me by my physical appearance.

I don't want to be like some film star type of preacher. There are film star type of preachers, and I don't want to be like one of them because I don't think Jesus was like that. They were not attracted to him because it says there's nothing in him that we should be attracted to.

And yet there's so much of that image of Christianity that is in the world to make it presentable. The only people who are attracted to Jesus are those who wanted to live a godly life, nothing else. And it says here he was despised and forsaken by men.

The last part of verse 3, he was despised and he esteemed him not. The question is, am I content with that? Am I content with whatever lot God puts me in and not compare myself with it? I wish I had what that person had or what that person had. I wish my children were like so-and-so's children.

It's amazing how much unrest believers get into by comparing themselves to somebody else. And in the church, I want my children to be like that one, or I want to be like that person, and I want to be like this person, and I'm not content with the way God has made me. I have read that history, it's not in the Bible, but history tells us that the apostle Paul was 4 feet 7 inches tall.

Do you know how much that is? I think almost every adult here is taller than that. He was a very short man. He was completely bald, with a hooked nose, with an eye disease with his eye frequently, you know, tearing.

He was not at all an attractive person. Some of the world's famous evangelists are like film stars, not Paul. That was not what attracted people to Paul.

There was a godliness about that man. The only people who would be attracted to him would be people who wanted godliness. What about his speech? I want to tell you something about his speech, which he himself says, in 2 Corinthians, and see what he says about it.

I'm trying to remove all these wrong conceptions of what it means to be a spiritual Christian from our mind. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10, the Corinthians were saying about Paul, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 10. This is the apostle Paul.

They say his letters are weighty and strong. Boy, he writes strong letters. But his personal presence is unimpressive.

I'm not impressed by his personal presence. And his speech is contemptible. He's not a cultured type of speaker.

You know these cultured people who always speak very cultured and graciously and don't offend anybody? Jesus was offending people all the time. Paul was like that too. Sometimes we have a wrong understanding of the most godly man in the first century, what he was like.

Why did God make him like that? Didn't God know that he was going to be the greatest apostle of his time? Why didn't he give him a more impressive personality and a tall, why didn't he make him a tall, good-looking person? God didn't want anybody to be attracted to his physical appearance because that was not what Christianity was all about. It was character. And even though most of us agree that it's character that matters, yet we can be so concerned about are we impressing people with our appearance and our language and this, that, and the other.

It's a deception. And the more we are occupied with that, we'll be discontent with the way God has made us. God decided everything about us, our appearance and our intelligence and everything before we were born.

We had to accept ourselves and be content. Then only can we say, I'm seeking God's kingdom first. I want God to be completely in control over me.

In Hebrews 13, it says, verse 5, Make sure that your character is free from the love of money. That's not easy to obey, I'll tell you that. Be honest.

If you're honest, you'll admit there's a love of money inside your heart, which is gone if you have cleansed yourself from it. But every human being is born with a love of money. I've never seen a beggar in my life who doesn't love money.

I've never seen a homeless man who doesn't love money, and I've never seen a rich businessman who doesn't love money. It's there in everybody, except those who have cleansed themselves from it. It's like in every man, there's a tremendous sexual passion, and if it's uncontrolled, it'll become uncontrolled lust.

And the only person who's free from it, the only man who's free from it, is the man who's cleansed himself from it. If he hasn't cleansed himself from it, he's full of sexual lust. And he's fooling himself if he thinks he's a disciple of Jesus.

Far from it. How can a disciple of Jesus be filled with sexual lust? Impure sexual lust. Everybody has it, except those who've cleansed themselves from it.

You acknowledge it. Lord, it's in me, I want to be free from it. Lord, I've got the love of money, I want to be free from it.

Because I want to walk as Jesus walked. As Jesus is, so am I in this world. You see, the wonderful thing is that if I take this seriously, there'll be a spiritual authority in my life, which even the devil will be scared of.

I don't know whether you believe that it's possible for a Christian to live in such a way that the devil himself is scared of him. That's what I got from that verse. As Jesus is, so am I in this world.

And I said, Lord, I want to walk like you to the best of my ability. I want to be free from everything that you tell me to be free from. I'll acknowledge it is there.

I want you to cleanse me from it. I want you to bring me to rest. So that I can live as Jesus lived on this earth.

You know, at each grade, progressively, it's not that all of a sudden you become like that. But I believe that the devil is scared of me. Now that's not arrogance.

It's because I believe the Bible. It says, as Jesus is, so am I in this world. 1 John 4, 17.

And I asked myself, was the devil scared of Jesus? Of course he was. He was mortally scared of me. All the demons would be saying, hey, he's coming here.

He's coming here. Be careful now. I want the demons to say that about me.

He's coming here. He's coming. Be careful.

You should be like that, brothers. You shouldn't be timid and afraid. The devil can't harm us one bit.

He was defeated on the cross. None of you must be scared of the devil. He cannot do anything to you.

He cannot mess up your life. If you walk in humility and say, Lord, I believe it. You will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability.

And I'm perfectly content with the way you've made me. I must look into the mirror and say, I'm perfectly content with the color of my skin, my appearance, and my features. I have no complaint at all.

Have you ever said that? Have you ever looked into the mirror and said, Lord, I have zero complaint about my color of my skin or my appearance or my features or my height or whatever it is or my weight. I'm perfectly okay. I have no complaint.

I accept the way you've made me. The important thing for me is to walk like Jesus walked. Otherwise, you know, we believe in doctrine.

The doctrine we can say I'm better than other denominations who don't have this doctrine. We can speak high-sounding things. But if you're not content with the way God has made you and the measure of ability he has given you to earn money, it's very limited.

God's on a small financial circle around you, and you can never earn more than that. I said, Lord, I'm quite happy to be here. I've learned that God taught me through the years.

And at one time, it was a very small circle. I said, I will never go outside that circle. I decided, my wife and I decided we will never be in debt for a single day of our lives.

And we've never been in debt, even when we had little. Because we were content with the circle God drew around as a financial circle. And we never coveted what somebody else's circle was bigger.

Okay, God bless him. I don't want what he has. It was Almighty God who decided the circle inside which I must live.

And if you live in that circle, two things will happen. Let me show you two verses. First of all in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17.

Acts of the Apostles in chapter 17. It speaks about the boundaries God has drawn around us in verse 26. Acts 17, 26.

God made from one man every nation of mankind. And he has determined the appointed time and the boundaries of their habitation. I believe God allowed me to be born on earth in the 20th century.

That's the appointed time. And he determined the boundary. Everything about my habitation and my life and my circumstances and my finances, there is a boundary that God has drawn around me.

The measure of intelligence I have, measurability I have, etc. And you, every child of God, and how much I can earn, the circumstances he arranges for me to go to different places. Maybe some can earn more.

That's fine. I don't envy them. I don't judge them.

And I'll tell you why. This is the one verse about the boundary. The other verse is in Ecclesiastes in chapter 10.

Ecclesiastes in chapter 10. It says here in verse 8, Ecclesiastes 10 verse 8, the last part. If you break through a wall, a serpent may bite you.

The boundary is a wall that God has drawn around me. And if I break through it saying, I'm not content with this, I want to go outside, then don't be surprised if the devil bites you. That's the reason why I decided I would never borrow money in my life.

If God wanted me to have more, he would give me more. And the picture I got in my mind was, I can't imagine Jesus going to somebody and saying, Hey, my heavenly father has let me down, so can you please give me a little money today? I can't imagine Jesus telling somebody, my heavenly father let me down, and I need a little money. Can you help me out? And I said, Lord, I'm supposed to be a representative of you on this earth.

I would never do it. I'd rather starve than bring reproach on your name by giving people the impression that the heavenly father let down one of his children. He would never let me down.

He may allow me to go through very trying circumstances. And I learned a great deal in the times of my poverty. And I also had to learn when God had given me abundance.

You need to learn both ways. I'm not saying you learn only when you're poor. You learn a lot of lessons when God gives you more as well.

But in everything in life, to say, Lord, I want to walk as you walk. As you are, so am I in this world. Think if you take that word seriously.

As Jesus is, so am I in this world. If he was despised, I'm quite happy to be despised. If he was ill-treated, that's fine with me.

And the boundaries that the father drew around Jesus, I sometimes use my imagination to think of how it was for Jesus in his home. With imperfect parents, those who would marry you imperfect, and with imperfect brothers and sisters who would irritate and trouble him. It says his brothers didn't believe in him.

It's quite a verse, you know, in John chapter 7. He had four brothers and two sisters, as far as we know. Born of Mary, living in the same house. And it was a poor carpenter's house.

I'm absolutely sure all the five brothers slept in one room on the floor. Because I've seen how people live in poor homes in India, poor carpenters. That's how Jesus lived.

And it says in John 7, his brothers did not believe in him. And I can imagine when his younger brothers were born to Mary, as they grew up, Mary must have told them, listen, your older brother is not an ordinary man. I was a virgin when he was born, the Holy Spirit came upon me.

It's Almighty God who came as a man. That's your older brother, Jesus. If they believed their mother Mary, they would have respected him tremendously.

They didn't. It says they didn't even believe him. They just said, mom, don't try and fool us.

No human being is born that way. They didn't believe him. They despised him.

But he didn't bother them. He didn't go around trying to convince them that he was. He didn't do miracles to prove to them that, hey, you know, I'm a son of God.

He had absolutely no desire to prove himself to anybody. If he did a miracle for someone, it was to bless that person, not to prove anything about himself. If a demon shouted out, you're the son of God, he should keep quiet.

He did not want a testimony from a demon. Imagine if you were casting out a demon, and the demon said, you're a holy child of God. Would you shut up that demon? Because demons are liars.

What does that testimony worth? So I find so many things I can learn from Jesus if I really want to be like him. And I see that's what it means to seek God's kingdom first, to let God rule my life completely in every area, to be content with the boundaries God has thrown around me, to be absolutely sure that I will never, never, never be tested in a single area now or in the next 100 years as long as I live in it, which is too much for me to bear. But you give me grace at that time to overcome every circumstance.

There's not a single temptation I can face in life where I can be tempted beyond my ability. You know, some people think that if I confess like that, the devil will really rig up some terrific temptation for me to knock me down and make me lose my testimony. Really? You think the devil is more powerful than God when I confess God's word? That I cannot be tempted beyond my ability.

Yeah, that's really true. And coupled with that, you see, these are familiar verses. There's a very well-known verse in Romans 8 and verse 28, which we all know.

Romans 8, 28 says, We know that God causes, just like He doesn't allow us to be tempted beyond our ability, He causes all the things that are happening to me not to work individually for my good. Individually,

they may not work for my good. But coupled with all the other things that God permits, they work together for my good.

And the only requirement is that I love God, number one, and I have no desire to do anything but His purpose for my life. That's all it says there. If I say, Lord, I love you more than anything else on this earth, and I only want to fulfill your purpose for my life, I have no other ambition.

I have the absolute assurance, and I can tell you that from 59 years of being a believer, that it's absolutely true. Every single thing God will make, together with other things, work for my good. And the good, this is very important, and the good is mentioned in the next verse.

Romans 8, 28 must always be taken together with verse 29, which is that He has destined from the beginning, predestined, that I should become like Jesus Christ. He has predestined that His children should become like Jesus in their character. So that is the good.

The good is not that I'll get a better salary or that you'll marry a prettier woman or a richer man. That's not the good. God doesn't think at those levels.

He's thinking of that which is going to eternally satisfy me. Money won't satisfy you eternally. That's only temporary.

Marrying a pretty woman or a rich man is not going to help you eternally. The thing that will help you the most in eternity is that you'll become like Christ. That is the good that God is planning.

Everything that happens to me is going to make me a little more like Christ. Now, if you really believe that, I believe it. With all my heart, more and more as I've grown in Christian life, I've come to complete rest in this.

Nothing can happen to me that God does not permit. He will not allow me to be tempted beyond my ability. And all the things that do come will be designed to make me more Christ-like.

So why should I resist it? It's a wonderful way to live on this earth. I will always be at rest. You really believe what Jesus said.

Don't be anxious about anything. Because the hairs on your head are numbered. He cares for you more than He cares for the birds in the air.

He's got no plan for the birds in the air. He just gives them food and clothing. And food and cares for them.

But for us, Jesus used that example of the birds and the flowers that He would give us food and clothing like that. But more than that, everything is planned to make us more like Christ. And that's why I can be content.

I must be content with the boundary God has drawn around me. And say, Lord, I never want to break that wall and go outside in any situation. In a church, for example, if God has not given me more ability than some of the others, okay, that's my boundary.

Fine. I'm quite happy to fulfill it. I don't want to sit there sour that I don't have as much gift as somebody else.

No. I believe that every member of the body of Christ has a gift from God. If you don't have a gift from God, I would say you're not a member of the body of Christ.

Definitely not. I mean, if I've got an artificial head, that's not connected to my head. That can't do anything.

So if you're an artificial member of the church, not really born again, not really connected by the Holy Spirit to the head, Jesus Christ, then I agree, you have no gift. You're sitting here and imagining that you're a child of God when you're not. But if you're really born again, the Holy Spirit has come into your heart and made you a new man.

And one of the marks of a new man is, I don't want to sin again. I believe that's one of the primary marks of a new person. When a person comes to me for baptism, I ask them one question.

Do you want to sin even once for the rest of your life? Do you want to sin even once? If you can say, no, I never want to sin again. You're born again. The question is not, will you sin again? That's not my question.

Nobody can answer that. Do you want to? It's that want to, which is the difference between the old man and the new man. And the Bible speaks of the old man and the new man.

The old man is the one who wants to sin, especially when other people are not looking to do something unrighteous. The new man is the one who never wants to sin. Whether people are looking or not makes no difference at all.

I don't want to sin. That's how I knew I was born again. But I sinned many times after I was born again.

But I never wanted to. And the proof of it, there was remorse in me every time I fell. It's like the cat falling into the muck and the pig falling into the muck.

The pig just enjoys it. The cat jumps out immediately. Cats and pigs may fall into the muck, but the cat will jump out immediately.

That's the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. It's not that the believer may not fall into sin, but he wants to get out immediately. That's the test.

And I hope it helps you to see whether you're really born again or not. What's your attitude when you fall into sin? If a cat falls into the muck and looks around to see if anybody is watching it and then enjoys it, it's not a cat. It's a pig with a cat's claw.

And when you fall into sin, the only thing you want to find out is, did anybody see me? You're not really born. Let me tell you the truth. If it matters to you that other people saw you, falling into sin, and that's what bothers you, more than the fact that God, who sees you all the time, saw it, I would ask you to go and check up whether you're really born again or not.

If you're born again, it wouldn't make the slightest difference whether other people saw you or not. Lord, you saw me in those secret times when nobody saw you. I don't want to sin.

I don't want to sin when nobody's watching. And if I slip up, there's remorse. These are one of the clearest indications that from the moment you're converted, a new nature comes in.

The pig becomes a cat. It wants to be clean. And if I live like this, I believe that we can fulfill our purpose on this earth.

And I want to say that every person who's born again has got some gift to fulfill, some function to fulfill in the body of Christ. It's like every part of this body is connected to the head. The fingers, even the nails, every little thing, the smallest little thing you can think of, even the hair on our head, everything has got a function.

There's nothing God created in our body without a function. And so when we are called the body of Jesus Christ, it's a very meaningful title. It means that every member in that body has got a function to fulfill.

And so you need to ask the Lord. That's the next thing I began to ask the Lord soon after I was baptized. I said, Lord, what's my function? I don't want to sit like one who warms the chairs every Sunday in the service and get up and go away.

There's something I have to do for the body of Christ. It may not be some public ministry. Something I have to do for the body of Christ.

I want to find out what it is. And if you have a passion for that, Lord, what is my function? I want to fulfill it. It may not be spectacular.

It may not be big. It may be very small. But some of the very small parts of the body have got a very important function.

And I often say that if you don't know what it is, we can all start with one thing that every one of us can do, and that is to encourage one another. The Bible says encourage one another, Hebrews 3.13. And that is the easiest thing which even a new believer can do. Somebody you meet, just speak a word of encouragement to that person.

Do not judge. We don't know what pressures they're going through. We don't know what grade they're in.

Judge yourself. That is enough. In 1 Peter, in Chapter 4, I see this as one of the marks of a really wholehearted Christian who is a member of God's family.

1 Peter 4. It says here, those who are of God's household. It speaks of the family of God in 1 Peter 4.17. And it says, in the household of God, judgment begins with us first. I've taken that very seriously.

I'm part of the household of God, and I'm not called to judge other people first. I'm called to judge myself first. And God is my witness.

Every single thing I preach is what I judge myself first in. I will not preach about something I have not judged myself in. Then I'll be a hypocrite.

And if you have judged yourself in some area, you can bless other people in that area. In the household of God, we judge ourselves first. And we are merciful to others.

And it's very easy to be merciful to others if you say, Well, I don't know what grade that person is studying in. Maybe that thing which looks so terribly sinful for me is not sinful for him. I found it very easy, once I understood this, that we are all in different levels.

If a person does that, for me it's sin. For him it is not. Let me show you a verse in scripture that proves that.

James chapter 4. James 4. What is the definition of sin here? 4.17. James 4.17. To the one who knows the right thing to do, and then does not do it, it is sin. You know what you should be doing in that situation and you don't do it. That's sin.

But that brother and sister does not know. They haven't come to that level. They haven't studied subtraction and division and multiplication.

They are still in 2 plus 2 level. So it's not wrong for them. It's not sin for them.

They don't know. They haven't come to that grade. So I can be merciful to them.

It's very easy. If we keep these things in mind, I believe we can build a wonderful body here. The body of Jesus Christ.

We don't become busybodies in other people's affairs. We judge ourselves. And we never stop judging ourselves.

God is my witness that I judge myself every single day of my life. And that brings some spiritual progress. Maybe a little bit.

It's small. But I want to live like that. Because that's the mark of God's house.

I want to stay within my boundary. Recognize that other people are not at the same level as me in understanding what sin is. But in the measure in which God has shown me sin, I have to judge myself and always be at rest.

To me, whenever there is unrest in my heart, that's the mark of my having gone either outside my boundary or allowed something to come in which has disturbed me. Let me show you that verse in Colossians, in chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3, it says in verse 15, Let the peace of Christ in the margin of my Bible says, Be the referee in your heart to which you are called in one body. In our relationship in the body of Christ, it says in verse 15, The peace of Christ is the referee.

Anything that you do or say or think that disturbs the peace in your heart is wrong. The referee is blowing the whistle and saying, You've committed a foul, whether it's basketball or soccer or football or anything. The referee blows the whistle.

There's no use arguing with the referee. The peace has gone in your heart and you know it. There's some unrest in your heart.

Just humble yourself and say, Something is wrong in me. The referee has blown the whistle. And I must fix that.

I must take the ball to the exact spot where the foul was committed. I must say, Lord, where did I commit that foul? Why did you blow the whistle? The peace seems to have gone from my heart. Show me where the foul was committed.

And the referee will point you to the exact spot where the foul was committed. Set it right. And you can move on.

It's been so blessed for me to follow this rule. Never, never to proceed where the referee has blown the whistle. Get back and set that right.

And if in a particular situation you find that the way somebody is behaving or the way somebody is speaking to you agitates you, that's the best time to zip your mouth. So don't open it. I would not even speak in a meeting if I'm in unrest in my heart.

Because something I say will be the result of that unrest. I made that a rule in my life. If you're at unrest in your home, husband, wife, something your partner did, something your children did brought unrest, the world won't collapse if you keep your mouth shut for a little while.

Just come to rest in your heart and then open your mouth and speak. Do not open your mouth till the foul has been set right, that peace has come back to your heart. It's a very simple rule.

And then you will see that life becomes more peaceful for you at home. You'll be a blessing in the church. You will grow spiritually.

All good things will come out of it. Because you are seeking God's kingdom first. In other words, you are allowing God to be, you're coming under God's government.

You're obeying the laws of this government. And one of the laws is, when your peace is disturbed, something's wrong. That's a problem.

Let's pray. Father, we pray that you help us to understand the principles of your word. Give by them.

Give us grace, we pray. In Jesus' name.

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