

# A Life That Pleases God

by Zac Poonen

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*The core message of this sermon is that our ambition in life should be to please God, just like Jesus, and that this ambition should drive our actions and decisions.*

**Duration:** 1:13:46

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:5-6, Luke 2:51, John 6:38, Romans 6:4, Romans 15:3, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 5:7

**Topics:** "Obedient Living", "Faithfulness"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that pleases God, focusing on the example of Jesus in his early years. It highlights the significance of submitting to imperfect authority, being willing to be misunderstood for the sake of obedience, and resisting temptation without sin. The message underscores the value of faithfulness in the seemingly small and hidden aspects of life, rather than seeking prominence or recognition in ministry.

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## Transcript

I want to turn to 2nd Corinthians in chapter 5. Here we have Paul writing about his own goal in life. And you know, whenever you see a man who's been very successful in living a godly life and living a useful life for the Kingdom of God, like the Apostle Paul, it's good to find out what was it that drove him and made him accomplish that. Because Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ.

So I'll tell you my personal testimony. I have studied the life of Jesus and the life of Paul more than any other life in the Bible. So, I mean, we have great examples in Joseph and David and Daniel, and those are all good for Bible studies.

But you can get a lot of interesting points from Bible studies of characters in the Old Testament. And there are a few good qualities we can pick out. But nobody in the Old Testament said, follow me.

Not even one. So when I look at Old Testament Bible studies of the lives of Abraham, Isaac, it's all great. But I see when it comes to Jesus and Paul, I have a clear command from the Holy Spirit through them saying, follow me.

And that's the reason why I've studied those lives. And I would encourage you to do so. You'll find it's extremely profitable.

And the reason why God gave us Paul also, in addition to Jesus, is because there's a natural tendency in all Christians to feel, even though we believe very strongly Christ came in the flesh, there's an inward reluctance to believe that we can ever walk as he walked. There's, we hear about it, but inwardly there's a mental block in our mind which says, no, no, we can't walk like him. And so God given us Paul's example.

So what about him? So here we see in 2 Corinthians 5, the thing that drove Paul in his life, he calls it his ambition in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 9. He's talking about in the chapter about being at home in heaven, or absent from heaven on this earth. Heaven is our home. So he says, whether we are at home, verse 9 in the middle, or that's in heaven, or away from home, absent here on earth, our ambition is to be pleasing to him.

And I can say that any Christian who has the same ambition will be able to fulfill God's will in his life, just like Paul. And when he comes to the end of his life, he speaks in verse 10 about standing at the judgment seat of Christ. You know, there are two judgment seats in the Bible.

One is called the judgment seat of God, the Father. That is in Revelation chapter 20, where no believers are standing there. It's only those whose names are not in the book of life who stand there to be judged.

And they're also going to be judged, we read, according to their works, because there are degrees of punishment in hell. Hell is not the same for everyone. There are lots of people who go to hell, but the degree of punishment is not the same in hell, just like the degree of reward is not the same in heaven.

Now, these are concepts which the only way we know it is because Jesus said so. He once said that he who knew his master's will and did not do it would be punished with more stripes than he who did not know his master's will and did not do it. But here, the judgment seat of Christ refers to us, believers, stand at the judgment seat of Christ, verse 10, to be rewarded for the deeds done in the body according to what he's done, whether good or bad.

And that brings, verse 11, a certain fear of the Lord. So it's because of that ultimate destination at which we're going to stand that Paul says, I've got an ambition in life to be pleasing to him so that when I stand before the Lord in the final day, I can get his commendation. I'll just show you the other passage so that you know it in case you did not know.

It's Revelation chapter 20. It's the other judgment seat. It's called the judgment of the great white throne in Revelation 20 and verse 11.

And here it speaks about Revelation 20, 11, a great white throne, judgment seat of the throne of God and the dead, verse 12, the great and the small. The books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things written in the books according to their deeds.

And the sea gave up the dead and death and hell gave up the dead and they were all thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone's name was not found, verse 15 in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

So even though when an unbeliever dies, he goes straight away to hell, Jesus said that in the story of the rich man. But it's only his spirit that goes to hell because his body is buried on the earth. But in that day, it says the people who are in hell, their spirit is going to come back into their body and there's going to be a resurrection.

It's not only Christians are going to be raised from the dead. Every human being that ever existed and died is going to be raised from the dead. That's what it says here.

I saw the dead, verse 12, the great and the small, standing before the throne of God. And the books were opened, means the record of their life, which is in their memory, was opened and they were judged by what their own memory recorded from the day they were born to the day they died. Every thought, attitude, motive, word, they cannot argue with it because it's their own memory.

I believe that God's going to judge us by our own memory, not by somebody saying he did this or he said that. Those things we can argue against, but you cannot argue against your own memory. That'll be your memory giving a record of your life and every mouth will be shut.

What is good or bad will all be seen there. And this is talking about the unbelievers who are judged according to the books and then they were thrown back, not into hell, but into the lake of fire, which is a bigger version of hell. But a similar judgment is there.

We read in 2nd Corinthians 5, verse 10, for Christians. And that is for rewards. The other one is for degrees of punishment and here it is for degrees of reward.

And Paul says, my ambition is when I get to heaven or here on earth to be pleasing to him. And like you've heard me say this once before, that I'm sure every one of us, those of us who do get to heaven, when we get there, we'll have only one ambition. Whatever multitudes of ambitions you may have had on the earth, when you get to heaven, you'll have only one ambition.

That is to please God. There's no other ambition. And Paul says, that's my ambition on earth as well.

So it's like going along a straight line and then I die and I get into heaven. I'm going to continue on the straight path. Same ambition, no change.

Whereas people who have had other ambitions on earth are going to find, hey, in heaven you've got to alter your ambition. And how is it going to be when we get there? So it's wonderful to have the same ambition on this earth that we'll have when we get to heaven. That's the way to ensure that you have no regret when you stand before the Lord.

Just make sure that whatever ambition you think you'll have in heaven, make sure you have the same ambition here on this earth. There are many things we have to do on this earth which we don't do in heaven. You know, we have to earn our living, we've got to go to school, we've got to get educated, find a job, find a house and so many things.

We don't do all that up there. But ambition is a driving force in our life behind all these things we do. So we're not talking about different things.

We're not talking mostly about actions here. There are many different actions we do on earth which you'll never do in heaven. But the question is, what is the driving force in your life? I want you to understand one thing, that the thing that determines whether you're a saint or a sinner is not the things you do, but what is the driving ambition of your life.

What is the goal you're living for? If the goal you're living for is only to please God, that's the mark of a saint. You may make a few mistakes here and there, that's okay. That doesn't determine.

Very often we judge people by the mistakes they make here or the good things they do there. Somebody does a good thing or isn't he a good man? He's a non-christian but he's a good man. Or a fellow calls himself a believer but he slipped up here.

God doesn't judge like that. God judges by what is the ambition of this man. What is he seeking to live for? That's what comforts us.

And if your fundamental goal is to please God, I'll tell you something, God will ignore these little mistakes and slip-ups you make along the way. But on the other hand, if your fundamental goal is not to please God but some other earthly ambition, then even if you do a lot of good things like coming to church and giving money to God and helping the poor, you'll find it doesn't count with God at all because your driving ambition is something else. So the goal for which you're living determines whether you're a godly man or an ungodly man.

It's very important to understand that because that is a word of encouragement for those who got the right goal and certainly it's a word of condemnation for those who try to please God by doing a few good things here and there. And so I was reading this verse the other day, it's a very familiar verse in Matthew chapter 3, an ambition to please God. I was reading how when Jesus was baptized, you know, I was saying how you read scripture and suddenly it hits you in a new way.

So I was reading Matthew chapter 3 where Jesus was baptized, Matthew 3.16, and he went up from the water and the Spirit of God came descending upon him and a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Now when you read something like that, how does it hit you? Well, for one thing, it makes us admire Jesus. But I'll tell you how it hit me the other day.

I said, Lord, Father, will you be able to say that about me? Will you be able to look at my life and say, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased? And I said, Father, if you can't say that about me, I'm ashamed of myself to call myself a child of God. What am I living for? If you can't look at my life and say, I'm well pleased with you. And I want to say that to each of you sitting here, my brothers and sisters.

If that's not the goal of your life, you're just a religious person, not a spiritual person. You could end up as a Pharisee and get a big shock when Christ comes back and discover that you're not what you thought you were. So this fits in with what Paul's ambition was.

I have one ambition in life to please God. And that's not going to change when I go to heaven. It's exactly the same.

And then when I look at Jesus' life and see how the Father was so well pleased with him, and I asked this question, Father, can you say the same thing about me? And I think the answer I get is, there's no partiality with God. The Bible says that Jesus is my elder brother and we are his younger brothers. We're all children of God.

He's the eldest brother. It's an amazing thing that the Bible says that Jesus is our elder brother. It says that in Romans 8.29 that he might be the first born among many brothers.

And on the day of his resurrection, he told Mary Magdalene, go and tell my brothers. He called his disciples his brothers. So those of you who have children, if you're a good father, you will never show partiality to any of your children.

You will treat all of them exactly alike. If you do more for your eldest child, some people are like that. I'm sorry to say, particularly in many Indian homes, their favorite is their eldest son.

You are an ungodly man, an ungodly woman. I'll tell you that to your face because God is not partial. And if you are partial towards the boys rather than to the girls, you are an ungodly person.

I have no hesitation in saying that. If you do more for one of your children than for the others, you are an ungodly person. A godly person will treat all his children equally.

The clever one is not his favorite. The boy is not his favorite over the girls. The eldest is not his favorite over the younger ones.

And the youngest sometimes, that's not his favorite either. All are exactly the same. We don't start like that.

We have a partiality towards some of our children. We've got to crucify that and say, Lord, I want to be like you. It's all right for ungodly people to show partiality.

But if you say you're a child of God and you want to be like Jesus himself, like God our father, then there should be no partiality. So I believe there's no partiality with God. So if Jesus is my elder brother, he will not show partiality to him.

In other words, he'll do for me whatever he did for him. That's my understanding of my heavenly father. That's what gave me the faith many, many years ago that what God did for Jesus, he'll do for me.

Just this one truth that there is no partiality with God. So I see that if the father could say about Jesus, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased, it's not an impossible goal for us to expect that God can say that about us as well. Why not? Provided I fulfill the same conditions, because God has certain laws.

For example, he gives grace only to the humble. He's never going to change that law. He detests proud people.

He opposes proud people. I'll tell you something very reverently, that if Jesus ever became proud, the father would have opposed him. And that, I say that just so that some of us don't think we are special favorites, because we've known God for so many years, that once in a while, if we get proud, God won't oppose us.

I want to tell you, he will oppose you, because that's his nature. He opposes the proud. And it doesn't matter one bit to him, whether you've been a believer for 60, 70 years.

If you're proud, he'll oppose you. If you're humble, he'll give you grace. So, I see that the reason why Jesus never sinned, was because he was always under grace.

Sin shall not have dominion over you when you're under grace. And which means he was always humble. He always decided, I am never, never going to allow my mind to have high thoughts about myself.

I'm never going to exalt myself over any other human being. That's why he became a servant and took the low place and refused to be a king. I mean, his last day of his life, he was at the feet of his disciples, washing their feet.

That was his whole way of life. And that's why the father was pleased with him. So, if we are really longing that our heavenly father will say about us, about you, this is my beloved daughter in whom I'm well pleased.

I mean, just think for a moment to hear those words from God. This is my beloved child, personally to you. Boy, to me, I cannot think of anything on earth that would mean more to me than that.

Is that how you feel about it? So then, when we look at Jesus' life during those 30 years, you know, very often we hear something like that and we think that, well then, I've got to do a lot of things in order to please God, like witness to others and read the Bible every day. And do you know that Jesus never had a Bible to read every day? That's, it's good to read the Bible every day because I read the Bible mainly to see what the life of Jesus is like, to tell you honestly. Not to get so many laws and all that, but the Bible says that the Holy Spirit in a mirror shows us the glory of Jesus.

So, the only reason I read the Bible is to see what Jesus is like. And I say, I want to be like that. But Jesus himself never had a Bible.

Paul never had a Bible either. They could go to the synagogue or whatever, the scroll, which is very, very expensive because it is made out of parchment, and read. And then they had to keep it in their mind.

The only way they could read the Bible was bring it back from their memory, whatever they had read. Please remember that. That is one reason why we encourage people to memorize Scripture.

Not the exact words. It doesn't matter. I don't remember the exact words of so many verses, but I seek to memorize whatever Scripture teaches.

And I would encourage you to really get to know the Bible. I mean, the way I do it, I say, supposing one day I'm locked up in prison for preaching the gospel and they don't give me a Bible, I should be able to read the Bible in my mind every day without a physical Bible in my hand. I mean, if you had the Bible in your hand for 10 years, you should be knowing it enough to be able to remember most of it, at least the important parts of it, the promises, the commandments.

So I want to encourage you to do that. Take Scripture seriously. But what was it that Jesus did which enabled him to be pleasing to the Father in those 30 years? He never did a miracle in those 30 years.

Now remember, this is not at the end of his life. This is at the beginning of his ministry that the Father said, I am well pleased with you. And I never get tired of emphasizing.

He had never preached a sermon, never cast out a demon, never did a miracle. And yet the Father said he was pleased with him because many of us who don't have these gifts think, well, I can't preach and I can't travel. Well, Jesus never preached or traveled.

As far as we know, all 30 years he lived in one small little village called Nazareth. He traveled less in 30 years than almost everybody here. All of us have traveled more than Jesus traveled in 30 years.

So it's got nothing to do with traveling. All of us have met more people in our life than Jesus met in 30 years. The people that Jesus met were almost entirely people from his own village.

Three times a year they used to go to Jerusalem and meet a few people. That was for a few days. But otherwise, it was just in a small village that he lived all his life.

And he was pleasing to the Father. So nobody has an excuse saying, I can't do this, or I can't do that. I haven't gone here.

I haven't gone there. If you look at Jesus' life, let me show you in Luke's Gospel chapter 2, a few things about what made him pleasing to the Father. There's very little written about his life in those first 30 years, but the few things that are written, we can learn something.

In Luke chapter 2, he was 12 years old and he went to the temple. We read in Luke 2:42, he became 12 and he went to the feast. And when Joseph and Mary were returning, he stayed behind in Jerusalem.

He stayed behind while all the other boys were, I don't know, playing around. He stayed behind. It was his choice, but his parents were unaware of it.

The parents found him after three days, verse 46. You know, they had traveled quite a bit of time, maybe more than a day they traveled, and they suddenly looked for him and didn't find him. They were all traveling as a community of a whole lot of people, like going for a conference, a whole group of people.

And they assumed, even for 36 hours, they assumed he must be somewhere else with one of the other boys. And it's only after 36 hours they discovered, hey, he's not here. And they walked back in 36 hours and discovered that Jesus was in the temple.

This shows us one thing that it took a long time for them to walk from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Remember that whenever you read in the Bible that Jesus walked from Galilee to Jerusalem, that wasn't a couple of hours, it was one and a half days at least. But these folks walked one and a half days and one and a half days back.

Little things like this show us how Jesus lived. Anyway, when they came to the temple, they found him, verse 46, in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed.

First of all, at his understanding of scripture and his answers. So, the first thing I learned about Jesus' life, which made him pleasing to the Father, was that he had a tremendous knowledge of scripture, even though he didn't have a Bible at all. You want to be pleasing to the Father? You know, that's the first thing we read about Jesus in his life.

And that is something that every one of us can do, because we have more than Jesus had. We have the Bible in our own language. But as if Jesus wanted to read the Bible, he had to go to the local synagogue in Nazareth and ask the rabbi to turn the scroll and read one chapter to him, and he had to put it all in his memory.

Maybe ask him, Rabbi, can you please read that again? Or read that verse again, read that, please read that again. And he couldn't read too much, because then he'd forget it. And just read a little bit and think about that, and then go home and think about it, and maybe come back the next day.

Say, Rabbi, can you turn it to the next chapter? And please read a little more. And the rabbi must have been delighted, because I don't know how many boys would have come to him like that. Nine, ten-year-old boys coming and asking him to read the Bible to them.

It challenges me that a young, ten-year-old boy would go to someone and say, can you please read? I don't have a Bible at home. Can you please read the Bible for me, just one chapter or a little bit? And then that's enough. Can I come back tomorrow? Will you read something more to me? You know, like some illiterate boy who can't read or write, going to someone and asking to read the Bible.

Boy, I say, Lord, would I be like that? Do I love you enough to take the trouble to spend a little time, cut down some of my other activities in a day, just to travel all the way somewhere to somebody's house, in his case to the synagogue, and get someone to read the Bible, because I'm illiterate. And just to memorize it, to think about it during the day, so that I come back, maybe come back next day and say, Rabbi, can you please read that to me again? I forgot a little bit about what I read yesterday. This is the way Jesus studied the Bible.

I don't know when he started, maybe at the age of five, because it doesn't, you can't know scripture so well in one or two years. It takes years. And he went and he came back and he went and came back and meditated and meditated, and by the time he was 12 years old, all these scholars, he was sitting, it says, in the midst of teachers, in the midst of Bible teachers, and he was asking them questions which foxed them.

And when they said, we think it's like that, Jesus would say, hey, this is what that verse means. And they'd be amazed. They'd say, boy, we never thought of that.

But now we can see that that's right. And they're amazed that this 12 year old boy is giving an explanation to a verse, which these guys have been studying for 30-40 years. So it shows it's not a question of how long you study.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The Bible has been given to us so that we can see God. And in order to see God, you don't need a clever mind, you need a pure heart.

Blessed are the pure in heart. When they open the Bible, they don't get a doctrine, they see God. They see Jesus.

And that's possible for everyone else. Are you a mother with many children? No time to go outside the house, always busy? You can be like Jesus. You can be pleasing to the Father, just because you take a little time to read the scriptures.

It doesn't have to be early in the morning. I remember my wife could never read the Bible early in the morning when we had little children at home. It was already late at night after the children went to sleep.

It does require a little sacrifice, that's true. I mean, if you're not willing to sacrifice time to study the Bible, you'll never know it. It all depends on how much interest you have.

You know, when people say, I don't have time, because I'm so busy. What if your child was sick and admitted in the hospital? Would you suddenly make time to go and see your child in the hospital? Spend two or three hours a day just to do that? See, what we want to do, we can always make time for. It's what you don't want to do that you find some excuse, I'm very busy.

I've had people in CFC, some of them not here now, who said, brother, my work is so much, I don't find time to read the Bible every day. Okay, I'm not surprised when such people drop away finally, not at all surprised. So remember this, if you want the father one day to say to you, this is my beloved child, in

whom I'm well pleased, I'll tell you where to begin.

Make a little sacrifice every day to study the scriptures and say, Lord, I want to see you here in the scriptures. I don't want to just get a, Jesus certainly wasn't studying to prepare a sermon, or to prepare something to share at the next Wednesday meeting. No, He was not at all doing that.

We don't study the Bible in order to share with other people. No, we study the Bible to see Jesus, to know God. And if that's our goal, there's amazing things that the Lord will show to us, even in ordinary scripture.

When you read something, the Bible says, blessed are those who meditate on the word of the Lord, and in the New Testament, who seek for the revelation of the Holy Spirit on the word of God. I'll just give you one example. For example, this verse that we just read.

I mean, you've read it many times that Jesus, when he was 12 years old, stood in the midst of teachers, and they were amazed at his understanding. But have you ever thought, meditated on a little and asked the Lord how that happened, and how that can apply in your life? And that's all I did. I mean, I didn't do anything more than you.

I didn't read anything more than you. But I stopped there and I said, Lord, how can that apply in my life? Then I realized that he took pains to study the scriptures. And that's what made the father one day say, it's my beloved son.

I am well pleased. If a father, for example, writes a long letter to his son who's far away, and after a couple of weeks or a month, the father says, hey son, did you read my letter? And the son says, well, I didn't get time, dad. I read one or two sentences in it.

Do you think that son is a very devoted son of his father? If he's really a devoted son, and he knows the father's given a lot of good instructions in it, he'd read it as soon as he gets it. It's one of the first things I decided when I got converted. Before I was converted at 19 and a half, I had not read the Bible.

I'd go to church and hear the stories, but I'd never read through it. And I said, okay, the first thing I must do, I must read through this, which is God's Word, the only book God has written. And I read through it in six months.

It's the midst of my work. In the middle of my work, I took a little time every morning, and whenever I got spare time, and I finished the whole Bible in six months. I know you can do it.

I didn't understand everything, naturally, because I'd newly converted. But I decided then, I didn't know all this, that Jesus was like this and all, but somehow the Bible says, as a newborn babe cries for milk, we are really born again, you cry for the Word of God, it says in 1 Peter 2. You don't teach a child to cry for milk. It's automatic.

If it's a healthy child, it will cry for milk. If it doesn't cry for milk, it's a sick child. And every truly born again person who's a healthy child will want to know the Word of God.

And if you, a child, a person who says he's born again and does not want to know the Word of God, is a sick person, without a doubt. There are a lot of sick people around who say they are born again. So that's the first thing.

And I see there that Jesus, the way, the reason why he could answer people, those teachers, was because he didn't just read the scriptures. When the rabbi, as a little boy, when he was seven or eight years old, and the rabbi read the scripture to him in the synagogue, he thought about it. And he went home and thought about it.

And that's what we must do with the scriptures. Lord, what is there in it? What is the meaning of this? And if teachers who are 60, 70 years old can learn from a 12 year old, that's because the 60, 70 years old, I'm sure they were clever people. Jews are usually all very clever.

They read and understood it, but they hadn't revelation. Jesus had revelation, because his heart was pure. That's the first thing I learned from him, which is a great challenge to me.

And going on from there, I see another thing about his life. When, in verse 48, his mother asked him, son, why have you treated us like this? We've been searching for you all this time. And look at his answer.

Why were you looking for me? You thought you'd find me on the playground? Haven't you seen me all these years? Didn't you know? Didn't you know this? That I had to be in my father's house. Or I had to be about my father's business. Two translations possible.

So that's the second thing I see about Jesus that pleased the father. He longed to be in the father's house and to be interested in the things of the father at a very young age. A lot of people would rather be watching television or be in a cinema house.

Didn't you know that you'd find me in the cinema theater? Or didn't you know you'd find me in some restaurant having a good time? But for Jesus, it was, where did you expect to find me? In my father's house, about my father's business. And at a young age, that interest in the things of God, not just in the word of God, but in God's work. And he wasn't a preacher.

He wasn't going around ministering. But he was interested in the things of the father. He was interested today in God's houses with God's people.

He was interested to be with God's people more than he was with all his worldly friends. I'm sure there were a lot of worldly boys there in Nazareth and around there in those days, just like today, who had that dirty jokes. And do you think dirty jokes are only in the 20th century? You think there were no dirty jokes in the first century? Sure.

Or all the bad habits that young people have today, they had it in the first century too. But there was certain type of people Jesus associated himself with. That's what he says to, haven't you seen me all these years, mom? Where do you expect to find me? In my father's house.

That is the way we must bring up our children. Our children must love the church and the people in the church more than any other young people of their age. That is my longing from the time my children were small.

They must love the young people in the church more than anybody else. So that even when they come from their college on vacation, they want to be with the young people in the church and not with all their worldly friends. Are you training your children that way? If you love the church yourself, you'll do it.

But if you love the restaurants and movie theaters, that's where you'll take your children. That's where they'll be interested in. There are a lot of dangers when we have a lot of money.

I'll tell you that. One of the blessings that was ours when we were, when our children were small, was we, my wife and I never, and I didn't have much money then. We couldn't, we couldn't ever afford to go to a restaurant.

Of course, cinema theater is out of the question, not just because of money, because we were completely against it. Where do I want to take my children? I'll take them where I myself want to go. Is fellowship with the brothers and sisters in CFC just a Sunday morning affair for you? And the rest of the time, I mean, this is an obligation, like children have to go to school.

So this is, oh, I have to go Sunday. I have to go. Or is it something you love to be with God's people? You love to be in, like it says in the margin, the things of my father.

I'm interested in that. And you don't have to be very old to be there. Jesus was like that at the age of 12.

This is where I say, you know, if you haven't seen clearly that Jesus came in the flesh, you'll always at the back of your mind, you'll say, no, no, that's because he was God. That's exactly what the devil wants you to say. Oh, that's because he was God.

And so my children can't be like that at the age of 12. Sorry, sorry. You have not seen this mystery of godliness that Jesus came in the flesh.

Once you see it, you'll realize he was exactly like us. He was like us as a baby. He was like us when he was five years old.

He was like us when he was 10 years old. He was like us when he was 10 years old. And your children can be like that if you train them right.

So, and that's a good foundation you can lay with your children so that when they grow up, they also have this ambition to be pleasing to the father. So to know the scriptures, and then to be in the father's house and the father's business, that's the second thing that even though we're not engaged in any ministry, you see, as I said, Jesus was not engaged in any ministry or preaching or anything, but yet he was interested in things concerning the Lord's work, the father's business. So even if you're not in, you don't have a gift for any ministry, or you don't have a gift to preach, you don't have a gift to even sing or anything, I want to ask you a question.

How much are you interested in the spread of God's word, which has blessed you so much in this country? Those are the, that's the father's business. You know, if a responsible son, his father was a businessman who was trying to spread his stores in other parts of the country, this responsible son would say, Dad, how are things going? I mean, is our business prospering? Are you able to expand our business? Irresponsible son will only say, Dad, can you get me some toys or chocolates? So that's another thing I see about Jesus. He was interested, even though he was not preaching.

He was not casting out demons. He was not healing the sick. He was interested in things of the father.

You don't have to have any gift, but you can have an interest in wanting to know how is the work of the Lord spreading in this land of India, where I am, or at least, don't think of the land of India, at least, how is

the work of CFC spreading in different places? Do you have an interest to find out? I'm not trying to bring anybody under condemnation. I'm just saying that if we refocus our interests on some things that concern God, you would know whether you're a spiritual person or not. I'm just trying to look at the life of Jesus, because as I said, I said, Dad, can you say about me, this is my beloved child in whom I'm well pleased? If you have that longing, if you don't start with that longing, you won't be interested in anything I'm saying here.

But if you start with that longing, my heavenly father, can you say about me, this is my, you're my beloved child in whom I'm well pleased. If that's your longing, it is mine, and that was Paul's, my ambition is to please the father, then you will want to find out these things. Then I want you to see another thing about Jesus here, and that is in Luke chapter 2 and verse 51.

He came to Nazareth and he continued in subjection to Joseph and Mary, and thus he kept increasing in wisdom and stature, favor with God. So this pleasing God began right there at the age of 12. He kept increasing in favor with God.

God was delighted with these little things I mentioned, and this other thing we see here is that he was subject to authority. Now that's something which man does not like. Nobody likes to be subject to authority.

You think your two-year-old likes to be subject to your authority? The two-year-old is compelled to submit to your authority, but left to himself, he'd like to break away from your authority and do what he likes. It's there. Where did it come from in your two-year-old? It came from you, parents.

We were all like that when we were two years old. And where did we get it from? It came from Adam, who didn't want to subject himself to the authority of God, who said, don't eat from that tree. He said, no, I don't want to submit to that authority.

We've all got it. And where did Adam get it from? He got it from Satan, the highest angel. By the way, we don't know what his name is.

It's not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Lucifer is not his name. Lucifer is just a Latin word, which means morning star or something like that.

But whatever his name was, he was the highest angel in heaven. And he became Satan only because of one reason. Only one reason.

He did not want to submit to God's authority. If you want to know the root of sin, the origin of sin, it's here. I don't want to be submitted to anybody's authority.

Have you got that spirit? You've got the root of sin in your life. That's how the devil became the devil. And he infected Adam with that.

And every child of Adam, you and I and our children have got that. I don't want to be subject to anybody's authority. They go to school and they rebel against their teachers.

They go to work and they'll rebel against the people who work in the factory bosses and start trade unions to fight against the authorities and in the war and in politics, fight against government and go on marches. It's there all over and it's more and more in our day. And as I've repeated, I've said many times, Jesus

submitted to imperfect authority.

That's how he pleased the Father. There is no perfect authority in the whole world. No parent is perfect.

No elder is perfect. Your boss, by the way, is not perfect. But why is it you find many people are willing to submit to an imperfect boss year after year after year? But if an elder does one mistake, they question that.

How can I submit to him? He did this. Oh really? What about your boss who does 10 times worse things than that? How do you submit to him? I'll tell you. Because you get money and you lose your money if you don't submit to your boss.

But if you don't submit to the elders, you don't lose any money. Money is the driving force in your life that makes you submit to imperfect authority day after day after day after day, even though they make you work overtime and do so many things, unrighteous things and don't give you a promotion and you still submit because of money. But when it comes to elders, you have some questions.

When it comes to your parents, you say, well, they are like this, like that. Well, if you think of Joseph and Mary, I'm sure they were imperfect. I'm sure they fought with each other.

I have no doubt about it. All married couples, at least in their early days, fight with each other. And if they are not born again, they'll fight with each other till the end of their lives.

And even some born again people who don't have victory over sin keep on fighting till the end of their lives. It's not God's will. I believe if you get victory over sin, you'll start fighting at home completely.

Zero. But Joseph and Mary were not in the new covenant. They didn't have grace.

The day of grace had not yet come. They were not filled with the Holy Spirit. So they were imperfect.

And I can imagine many of their decisions were imperfect. And their talking to each other was imperfect. And sometimes they got angry with Jesus as well.

He never judged them. He submitted. And the father was watching this for 30 years.

This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. You know how much God values those who submit to imperfect authority? Not an imperfect authority you have chosen. No.

I was in many different churches. And as long as I was there, I submitted to imperfect authority. But when I realized that they were teaching things which are not in the scriptures, I left it.

That was not rebellion. No. There I was submitting to God and His word which they were contradicting.

Now you can't do that in a marriage. And you can't do that if you're a child at home. Because if God's kept you there.

But you can do that if you're in a church, you can leave it. If you're in an office, you can leave it. But you shouldn't stay there and create problems.

I don't believe in someone who stays in a church and keeps on, you know, festering rebellion and criticism and all that. I say if you're not happy with something in CFC, I have one bit of advice for you. Leave this

church and find another one.

And leave it tomorrow. Find another one where you won't have any problems. But don't sit and criticize authority.

God will never bless you for it. He will say about you, here is one who I don't know whether he's my child, with whom I'm thoroughly displeased. That's what he'll say.

Here is a person with whom I'm thoroughly displeased. You want God to say that about you? So I learned from Jesus that one thing that pleased the father was his submission to imperfect authority. And he wasn't criticizing them behind their back.

He wasn't talking to his brother and say, I see what dad did or see what mom did. See what these elders do or see what that person does. He wasn't like that.

The father would never have said that, that he was well pleased with him at the end of his life. These are lessons for us to learn, brothers and sisters. If you really want our heavenly father to say about you and me, I'm well pleased with you.

And I believe this is the reason also why God cannot commit spiritual authority to many people. As you know, I've had a little bit of experience now in working with elders in many, many churches, CFC churches. And I see a difference in them.

I see elders who have come to eldership very quickly and have never in their life been subject to any authority in their life. They came up very quickly and they never had anybody rub them the wrong way. They had a very easy way through life and whatever authority they submitted to anywhere was very pleasant and easy.

They were never broken. And yeah, well, in some churches we have to appoint them as elders because they are the best of the lot. You know, a one-eyed man is king among the blind.

So whether a blind people, you select a man with one eye and make him an elder. But you find that people are not broken in their life. They are never successful in exercising authority as elders.

God never backs them up. They may be able to preach, but God doesn't back up their authority because they themselves have never learned how it is to submit to imperfect authority and be broken. So if God allows you in a spiritual situation to face injustice from maybe elders, just jump up and praise the Lord.

Leap for joy like Jesus said. Oh Lord, this is great. You're giving me an education here.

Instead of complaining and grumbling and going around telling other people what you're suffering and all that rubbish, just leap for joy and say, Lord, you're giving me an education here. You're breaking me. And you'll be surprised one day, maybe a few years from now, maybe 10 years from now, God will give you spiritual authority and you'll have a wonderful ministry.

And I've seen other elders who've been through breaking, really been broken by being humbled and humiliated and all types of things. And when God gives them and they accept it, they don't complain. When God gives them authority, they can exercise it so well.

So I see that in Jesus' life. I don't know what all he went through in those 30 years at home, where all he had to deny himself because never to judge Joseph and Mary even once. Have you thought of it? And all the wrong things that Jesus saw in Joseph and Mary, if he had judged them once, once, he would have sinned.

He could not have been our Savior. There you see the amazing way he lived. Of course, immediately the devil says, ah, that's because he was God.

He did not live on earth as God. He lived in our flesh, tempted exactly like us, tempted when he was young in his Joseph and Mary's house, exactly like us when we are under imperfect authority. But he did not open his mouth.

He submitted to his father. And at the end of not the end of one or two days, I mean, if we endure that for six months, we think we have accomplished a great feat. Boy, six months I submitted to this terrible elder.

He's a submitted for 30 years. The father doesn't give his approval very quickly. He waits and sees.

30 years. At the end of it, the father says, I'm delighted. We don't realize the importance of this.

You know, we know terrible sins like adultery and murder and anger and sexual lust and all that. But we don't think of rebellion as a serious sin. It is.

It's the root of all sin. Rebellion against God, rebellion against authority. That's why a child is given only one commandment.

You know that. Obey your parents. Honor your father and mother.

There is no other commandment for a child. Why is that a child is given only one commandment? Because that's the root of sin. And that's why it's so important for us never, never, never to allow our children to rebel against their authority at home, to take that very seriously when they are rude to the parents, when they are rude to older people, even if they're rude to your servant at home who's older than them.

That's rebellion. I would never allow that to respect older people. Honor your father and mother.

If you drive that out, if that drive out that rebellion from the heart of your child and obedience that when the father mother says something that they obey. You don't take disobedience seriously. You're grooming a child for the devil and definitely not someone who will grow up to be useful in God's kingdom.

If you want your child to grow up to be useful for God in his kingdom, I'll give you one bit of advice. Teach them to honor their father and mother and everything that the father and mother says from the time they are one year old. Now, if you haven't done that, you can start now.

For those of you who have children at home, start now. Make sure that you teach them obedience. And if they wonder, hey, dad, mom, how come you become so strict with us? Say, well, we made a mistake till now, but we're rectifying it.

Tell them straight. We realize that we were not teaching. It's like if you taught you, tell them, it's like, you know, all these months I was teaching you that two plus two was five.

Now I've discovered that two plus two is four. So I'm just trying to teach you the right thing from now on. Something like that.

They'll understand it. It's very important. I see that in the life of Jesus that he submitted.

And as he submitted, it says in verse 52, he kept increasing in wisdom, verse 52, in favor with God and man. Then I want to say one more thing. There are many things we could see, but you know, do you see what a lot we can get from a small part of scripture like these four or five verses in Luke chapter two? If you meditate on it, and if you meditate on it, because you're eager to be pleasing to the Father.

Okay, here's one more thing. If you turn to Matthew chapter three, once again, it says here that the people, verse five and six, Matthew three, verse five and six, that from Jerusalem, they were going out to him, to all Judea, all the district around Jordan. That means hundreds of people were going to John the Baptist, being baptized in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

And there were certain people John would not baptize, like the Pharisees and Sadducees. He said, get away from here, you brood of vipers, who asked you to come here? He was only baptizing people who confessed their sins. So if you went to the River Jordan, and you saw a big long line of people standing there, I mean, it's like a railway station, you see a line standing there, they're waiting to buy tickets.

You see a big long line standing at the River Jordan, you know, every one of them is a sinner. And why would Jesus want to go and stand in that line, to be baptized? First of all, people would misunderstand him. I mean, the devil would have told him, or his own reason would have said, hey, listen, if you go and stand here, a lot of people are going to think that there's some secret sin in your life also.

There was no sin in his life, conscious or unconscious, or secret or visible. But he, maybe his reason would have said, why don't you go and see John the Baptist at night or something, baptize secretly when nobody's around. No, he went during the daytime.

And he was willing to be misunderstood. Because the Father told him, go and stand in that line and get baptized. I learned something there.

If when I, when the Father asked me, when God asked me to do something, and I'm worried that somebody will misunderstand it, and I hesitate, or I want to do it at some other time when people will not misunderstand, I'm not going to be pleasing to the Father. I'm sure Jesus' reason, you see, he was tempted like us. Hey, if you stand there, they'll misunderstand you.

They're all sinners. Remember, they're all confessing their sins. You know what he told John the Baptist? John the Baptist himself said in verse 14, when Jesus came to him, standing in line.

Can you picture this in your mind? Long line of people standing there, one by one, and in the middle, Jesus standing, and everybody's saying, confessing their sins. John, I did all this, I did all this. Okay, I'm baptized.

Next fellow. John, I did all this. It says they were confessing their sins as they got baptized.

Okay, next. And Jesus walks up. And John immediately recognizes.

He says, I need to be baptized by you. And Jesus says, permitted, verse 15, at this time. For in this way, it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

There was a righteousness in his getting baptized. Today, there are so many people who have taken a baptism as a child and who question whether they should be baptized again or not, and all that type of stuff. But for Jesus, he saw something, his father had told him to do it.

It wasn't written in scripture. There was no scripture which says, Old Testament, which says, go and get baptized. That was not in the scroll that the rabbi read.

But he had it prompting in his heart, here is a man of God. He knew that John the Baptist was sent by the Father. And the ones who rejected John the Baptist were the people who said, no, this man is not sent by God.

And I'm just thinking now, if Jesus did not go there, people would have thought, hey, Jesus doesn't accept this guy. So probably he's not a man of God at all. But Jesus was willing to be misunderstood.

So I'm going to stand in line and accept the fact that this is a man sent by God. And that's one of the things he was proving by getting baptized. This is a man sent by God.

And he went there, there was no need for him to be baptized. We know what baptism means. But for Jesus, I'll tell you what baptism meant.

The others who got baptized were confessing their sins. But for Jesus, it was something more than that. Jesus said in John 6.38, and there you'll understand the meaning of baptism for Jesus Christ.

It was not confessing his sins because he had no sin. But John 6.38 is the meaning of baptism for Jesus Christ. Jesus said, I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

All his life, he lived by one principle, I will never do my own will. A lot of things I want to do, but I'm not going to do it. I'll do what pleases the Father.

That's how we had lived for 30 years. Never pleasing himself. You read that also in Romans 15 and verse 3. Romans 15 verse 3, Christ never pleased himself.

See, we have a choice. Either I please the Father or I please myself. And Jesus knew that if he pleased himself, he wouldn't please the Father.

So he never did his own will. So for Jesus, baptism meant, here I'm going down in the water to show that I have died to my own will in everything. And he was raised up by John the Baptist.

See, I'm living only to please the Father. For us, it is identification with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection. For Jesus, it was, I'm dying to my own will and I've done it all my life and I'm going to do it till the end of my life.

I die to my own will and I'm willing to let other people crucify me. I'm willing to let other people bury me, do whatever they want to me, kill me. Because that's, you know, you put a man underwater, you're actually killing him.

And Jesus was saying also, I'm willing to let other people treat me badly because I know my Father will raise me up. That was Jesus, the meaning of baptism for Jesus Christ. And he was willing to be misunderstood because other people didn't know that meaning.

I mean, we know that meaning only because after the Day of Pentecost, Romans 6 has been written and John 6, 38 has been written and Romans 15, 3 has been written. We understand it. But the people then didn't understand it and didn't make a difference to Jesus Christ.

So I see there another thing that the Father was delighted with in Jesus' case, that when he was prompted to do something, it didn't bother him that other people would misunderstand him. If that is what the Father wanted him to do, he's going to do it. So there are a lot of things we learn from the life of Jesus as to what was pleasing to the Father.

And one last thing, which we all know and that's why I don't want to spend too much time on it. What did he do in those 30 years? Hebrews 4, verse 15. He was tempted in every point as we are and did not sin.

That's the other thing we know about what Jesus did in 30 years. He was tempted in every way a two-year-old can be, a five-year-old can be, a 10-year-old can be, a young 15-year-old. Is there a 15-year-old boy here? Is there a 19-year-old, a 25-year-old? Jesus was tempted like you.

Exactly. And with greater pressure than you, because he came from heaven. From purity he came to this sin-cursed earth, and the pressure therefore was greater than you face, having been born in an impure earth.

And he resisted it. It wasn't easy. He had to pray.

We read at times he prayed with loud crying and tears. Hebrews 5 and 7. I'm sure even as a young man when he was tempted, he would go off somewhere and pray and ask the Father for help. You know the pressures young teenagers and young in their 20s face.

And he had to resist it. And the Father saw it day after day after day after day after day. For 30 years the Father said, I'm delighted.

Never did a miracle, never preached a sermon, never wrote a book, never did what today we call ministry. Today Christians appreciate a man who's accomplished something for God. Oh, he's had a great ministry.

Well, what to do? We are like that. But I'll tell you something that when Christ comes back, it's not just people who had a great ministry who are going to be appreciated. In fact, Jesus said many who are first will be last.

And you'll discover many, many people whom you admired for their great ministry and what all they accomplished for God will be lost. Some of them won't even be in God's kingdom because he is not evaluating ministry. Jesus had no ministry in 30 years.

And yet the Father said, I'm pleased with him. And Paul says, my ambition is to be well pleasing to him because that's what's going to matter at the judgment seat of Christ. And I learned from the life of Jesus that ministry is not the matter there.

The life we live. And why did he say many who are first will be last and last who are first? See, we can sometimes despise a person because they've got no ministry. They're not in the forefront of the church doing this, that and the other and seen by everybody.

But they may be so utterly faithful in their home. Maybe some sister who's God fearing and really seeking to pray for her children and bring up her children in the fear of God who's submissive to a hard-hearted

husband or whatever it is. And God sees that.

God says, I'm so delighted in that daughter of mine who's living in such a godly way and doing it only because she wants to please me. That's all. And you see that person coming up in front in the day of judgment and say, wow, who is that? I didn't care much for her in the church.

You didn't. God did because he was watching their hidden life. I want to say that for all your encouragement, brothers and sisters.

Many who are first in this church will be last. Not all. Jesus didn't say everyone who is first will be last, but he said many who are first will be last.

He didn't say everyone who's last will be first, but he said many who are last will be first. So I'm not saying that everyone who's last in this church will be first or everyone who's first in the church will be last, but I do believe that many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first because God sees in some people the desire for prominence. I've seen so many elders in CFC churches who want to be known as elders.

I'm not an ordinary brother. I'm a rabbi just by the way. It's there.

God sees it. You think such people are going to be first in the day of judgment? No, they'll be at the end of the line if at all they enter God's kingdom. God sees those who are faithful in the little things, who have no desire to be great in the eyes of men, no desire to impress or please people, who would rather be unknown and do things in secret without their left hand knowing what their right hand did and only to please God, and who are submitting to authority quietly even if it's painful.

Say, Lord, I accept it. For studying his word in secret, wanting to know what God's will is and to please him. Blessed are you if you're like that.

Don't be discouraged. You have a great reward coming up very soon when Christ returns. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, help us to value the things that you value, to appreciate the things that you do. We're told to run the race looking unto Jesus and we want to see Jesus in the first 30 years of his life more than in the remaining three and a half years. Run the race seeing the way he lived.

Help us, each one. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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