

# Accepted by God and Keeping A Good Conscience

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of being accepted in Christ by faith, not by works, and the need to maintain a clear conscience by addressing and settling matters of offense with others. It highlights the significance of walking in the light, keeping the conscience sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, and the danger of suppressing the voice of conscience, leading to spiritual deadness. The message urges believers to prioritize fellowship with God, honesty, and continual growth in Christ-likeness.*

**Scripture:** Romans 5:1, Ephesians 1:6, Romans 3:23, Luke 11:34, Matthew 5:23, 1 John 1:7, Matthew 12:32, Luke 19:1, Colossians 1:28

**Topics:** "Faith in Christ", "Maintaining a Clear Conscience"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want to begin with a verse in Romans in chapter 5. In this church we often speak about pressing on to perfection. Like Paul said, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And to get there we emphasize we need to take up the cross every day and die to ourselves and follow the Lord.

But as we pursue that way it's very easy to begin to feel condemned and not accepted by the Lord. So I thought there's a need to go back to foundations to be absolutely sure that Christ has accepted me, Christ has accepted you. In the King James version of the Bible there's a phrase in Ephesians 1 which says accepted in the beloved.

I like that phrase. The beloved is God's beloved son and he has accepted us in him. So here it says having been justified, Romans 5.1, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is a foundation. Very often we can confuse foundation with superstructure. If you are having a problem with the superstructure it doesn't mean the foundation is wrong or gone.

So I want to just make sure that everyone in this church who's a part of this church is absolutely clear on the foundation. That I'm not accepted by Christ because of my good works because that way we'll be going to the religions of all the heathen. They teach that.

That in the final day God will weigh all our good works with our bad works and if the good works are heavier you get into God's kingdom and if the bad works are heavier you go to hell. That's the basic teaching of every false religion and sometimes unconsciously we Christians can slip into that. The devil would like to make us slip into that and we can think that our acceptance before God is based on our works.

So if you turn back to Romans chapter 3, Romans by the way is a very systematic book which explains the gospel. It says in verse 23, all have sinned, Romans 3.23, and fall short of the glory of God. That's the basic standard.

It doesn't matter who we are and everybody's in the same boat. Verse 10 says there's no one righteous not even one. I think part of this problem arises because in the beginning before we were really born again we used to compare ourselves with other Christians and think we were a little better than them because we did not commit as many sins as that guy committed.

So we're a little better than them. That sort of remains with us. But it's a wonderful day in our life when we recognize some of the truths mentioned in Romans 3. Verse 10 for example, there's not a single person in the world who's righteous, not even one.

No matter how good you were, you were no better than the worst terrorist. I sometimes say that to myself. I name the worst terrorist I've heard of from the news and I say Lord I know he's a child of Adam.

I'm a child of Adam. There is absolutely no difference between me and him. You believe that? You really believe that there's no difference between you and the worst terrorist in the world or the most wicked man or the greatest adulterer or thief or murderer or what you call it.

There's zero difference between you and him. I'll tell you it made a difference in my life when I accepted that. Was he born from some other seed? No.

He came from Adam. I came from Adam. What is it that made the difference? The difference is that somehow he got some bad parents, bad circumstances, was born into a religion that taught him all types of wrong things and somehow by the mercy of God I was born to some good parents and I was born into a Christian faith and I learned certain things that protected me from becoming, otherwise I'd have been a terrorist.

I am absolutely convinced about it. That has liberated me. You probably need to be liberated.

Stand before God and say Lord I would have been the worst terrorist on earth, the worst murderer on earth. Somehow circumstances, not my goodness, circumstances, my parents, my surroundings protected me from that. If you don't begin there, you'll always compare yourself with others.

I can say before God today, I do not compare myself with anybody because I began there. So I would encourage you to begin at rock bottom. If you've never done it, do it now.

And that's also the reason why very often in families, sometimes the husband looks down on his wife, the wife looks down on her husband, saying he's like that and I'm like this and he's not like me. Really? Did he come from some other seed or did he come from Adam also? Did she come from Adam? There is absolutely no difference. There is no difference at all.

So that's what it says here. There is no one, verse 11, who understands, there's no one who seeks after God. Everybody has turned aside.

Everybody has become useless. I want to ask you, did you start here? I believe many of us have not started in Romans chapter 3. So we try to jump into Romans 6, 14, sin shall not have dominion over you. No.

Please start in Romans 3 and say this is what I was. Useless, as it says in verse 2, never doing good. My throat, verse 13, was an open grave with my tongues I kept deceiving.

The poison of poisonous serpents was under my lips. My mouth was full of cursing and bitterness. My feet were swift to shed blood.

That means, shed blood means criticize others, backbite against others, speak evil of others. That's shedding blood. And the path of destruction and misery are in their paths.

It means I created a lot of chaos. And the path of peace I have not known. That's why you get angry.

That's why you get upset. The path of peace I just haven't understood. And all this is because there is no fear of God in my eyes.

Now I see that very often we have skipped over these passages and think that we can be coming to the life in Christ without knowing where we started. I found myself, it was very good for me to start here, come back to this place. The reason I say that is, there is a lot of self-righteousness in all of us.

That's what makes us compare ourselves with other people in the church and say, well, I'm not as bad as that person. And that's why there's no spiritual growth in your life. Maybe you are a good person, but you were good 10 years ago at the same level.

It's like saying I get 100% but you are getting 100% in the kindergarten. You got to move on and start getting 100% in the 1st grade, in the 2nd grade. Don't be satisfied that according to the level of your conscience, my brothers and sisters, you are clear.

Your level of your conscience must be becoming more and more sensitive. And for myself, spiritual growth is seen in discovering sins that I never knew I had. There are certain attitudes I had, which I never even discovered till now, were sinful.

That is spiritual growth. How do you discover whether a student is going from one grade to another in school? He is discovering something he never knew. He only knew addition and subtraction.

And now, oh, he learns multiplication. He never knew anything about it. And then he goes on to learn algebra and then he goes on to learn geometry.

Always in a school, they are discovering new things they never knew. And people go to college and university and then they discover still newer things. And the people who finish graduation, they say, hey, there's still more I haven't discovered.

And I believe the wisest, cleverest man is the one who says, there's a world of knowledge which I still haven't discovered. It's much more true in the Christian life. Do you believe there's a world of sin in your self-life which you have not discovered? It doesn't look ugly like so many other sins the world calls ugly.

Murder, hatred, bitterness, theft. Those are all ugly ones. There are more refined type of sins within you which you don't call sin, but which are not Christ-like.

And if you don't have a passion to become more and more like Jesus every day, you'll never discover them. I know in my life, I've often said that after I was born again, for 16 years after I was born again, I was absolutely sure my sins were forgiven and Christ was in my heart. I was even preaching.

But I was not growing in Christ-likeness. Why is that? I was, you know, in the eyes of others, a reasonably good person. I wasn't stealing any money or killing anyone or committing adultery or any such thing.

My life was decent according to the average Christian standards, but I was not growing in likeness to Christ. How do I know that? I was not discovering more and more of the hidden sins in my life. Can you think of some hidden sin you discovered in the last one year in your life which you never knew before was sinful? Let's say you're sitting in the same grade, same class as you were last year.

You've not been promoted. And the reason is you didn't want to be promoted. You were satisfied with whatever you knew about yourself and maybe also in addition, the church you sit in, everybody has a good opinion about you.

Aha! What more do I need? People in the church think pretty well about me. That's the worst possible thing that can happen to us. I keep going before God and say, Lord, a lot of people in the world think very highly of me, but that doesn't make the slightest difference.

I have not yet become 100% like Christ. I keep saying that to myself and I want to be. I want to discover something every year, if possible every month, at least every year, something new where I have to become a little more Christ-like.

Maybe in my manner of speech, maybe in my attitudes, maybe in my thoughts, maybe a little deeper humility or something or the other. And if you have a passion for that, I tell you, God will honor it. And you will grow in leaps and bounds.

But to get there, we must begin with this. In that process, it's very easy to condemn myself. Because when I discover something, oh boy, you know, something which other people don't even consider sin, I discover in my life and I say, oh Lord, what a wretched man I am.

You know, when Paul said in Romans 7, what a wretched man I am, he wasn't thinking that he was committing adultery or theft or no, he was discovering deeper things in his life which you and I probably don't even know exist within us. And that's exactly how I felt sometimes when I, oh Lord, what a wretched thought that was. Not an evil thought or an adulterous thought, no, no, no.

Those were gone years ago. Others, some little pride, especially pride. Have you ever been convicted of having a proud thought where you compared yourself with somebody else? Well, I tell you, go along that way, pursue it.

Because pride is like an onion. Don't think you got to the bottom of it because you discovered one layer and you peeled it off. There's a lot more underneath.

And a more mature person than you will be able to see it in you, which you don't see yourself. And you'll never see it if you don't say, Lord, I'm determined to run this race of cleansing myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. That's what the Bible says.

Let us cleanse ourselves. So to get there, that's why I'm trying to lay this clear foundation so that in our pursuit of godliness, we never condemn ourselves. No.

So let me show you that in Romans chapter 7. In Romans 6.14 it says, Sin shall not be master over you. Yeah, here's a person who's come, as I told you in Romans, he's going step by step, seeking to live a life where sin does not rule him. But in spite of that, he discovers that in his flesh, verse Romans 7.18, I discovered that there's nothing good dwells in me.

This is the mighty Apostle Paul. Remember, this is the man who said in Philippians 3, I've kept the law. Here's a man who never worshipped idols, never committed adultery once in his life, never killed anybody, never stole anything, lived a very upright life according to the law, kept the commandments of the law far more upright than most Christians, even most believers.

And he says yet, I find nothing good dwells in my flesh. How did he discover that? Because he was determined to be 100% like Jesus Christ. I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters, that's the only person who will discover that there's nothing good in his flesh.

And then he'll realize that he won't despise the other person because he realizes he's got the same flesh as me. I mean, God's been merciful to me, bringing me to Christ and giving me the Holy Spirit to show me what's in my flesh, but otherwise his flesh is the same as mine. Don't you find one of the biggest sins among believers is this inner despising of somebody? Maybe in the church or maybe somewhere else.

I'm not talking about disagreeing. I disagree with thousands of people in the world. I disagree with thousands of Christians concerning many things.

I'm not talking about that, that we have to disagree if we love scripture. Anything is contrary to scripture, I disagree with it. I'm talking about an inner slightly despising someone in a very subtle way within us, in the way we speak about someone, talk about someone.

There's a little despising saying that I'm not as bad as that guy. I'm a little better, really. I'm not saying that we don't express disagreement.

I express disagreement publicly about many people I disagree with. But if ever that thought comes into me, I'm a little better than that person. That's why God chose me or God's made me superior to them.

No, that will ruin me. In my flesh dwells nothing good. Romans 7.18. Remember, this is after Romans 6.14. Sin shall not have dominion over me.

Yeah, I understood that. I've come to a certain life of victory. But after that, I discovered sometimes, sometimes, verse 15, Romans 7.15, I'm doing what I don't understand.

I'm not practicing what I want to do, but I'm doing what I hate. I do it, and afterwards I hate myself and say, why did I do that? Have you ever felt like that? Good. Good that you hate what you did.

That means you're on the way of progress. But on the other hand, if you look back and say, well, yeah, there was a reason why I did it. This is the reason and that, and you justify yourself.

You remember what Jesus said about the Pharisees. Very important verse to remember. We come back to Romans 7. In Luke chapter 16, it's a very important verse for you to remember.

Luke chapter 16 and verse 15. You are they who justify yourselves in the sight of men. You are those who justify yourselves.

There was a reason why I did that. Always, even when you do something wrong, yeah, but there was a reason. You tell your husband or wife, there's a reason why I spoke like that.

It was needed. Remember, hear the word of Jesus at that time, speaking to you directly. You are one who justifies yourself.

You're being a Pharisee now. And remember, that is, verse 15, detestable in the sight of God. God detests, God doesn't detest you, but he detests that attitude in you where you're trying to justify yourself.

Don't justify yourself opening your mouth and don't justify yourself in your thoughts and say, oh, there was a reason why. The world is full of people who justify themselves. There was a reason why I said that.

There's a reason why I did that. You keep on going like that, you'll never grow. I'll tell you that.

You'll be sitting in kindergarten all your life. And I want you to grow. So, there's nothing good in my flesh and I will not justify myself when the Lord shows me something.

I'll say, Lord, you're absolutely right. Like that verse in Romans 3, it's a great verse, Romans 3, 4. Always say this whenever you find yourself in such a situation. I'm giving you verses of scripture to quote in such situations.

Romans 3, 4. Let God be true and I a liar. Can you say that? In some situation where you're convicted of the Holy Spirit and you're tempted to justify yourself. No, no, no, there was a reason why I did that.

There's a reason why I had to speak like that to my wife or my husband or to him or to that person. Let God be true and me a liar. And when I say, let God be true, it is that still small voice of conscience within me which is saying, you were wrong.

You were wrong. And I'm trying to shut that up. Shut up, shut up.

I'm telling my conscience. I'm not telling God to shut up. I'm telling my conscience to shut up.

No, no, no, there was a reason for that. Be very careful, my dear brothers and sisters, because if you go that way, you're doomed to remain in the same level forever. Ten years from now, you'll be in the same grade as you are today spiritually.

I don't want to be there. I don't want to be in the same grade spiritually even next year as I am today. The Lord's helped me to overcome so many sins and I'm not satisfied.

For one reason, I'm not yet fully like Christ. The areas in my inner life, I don't see and I can't overcome what I don't see. I've been greatly helped by studying the Old Testament example of the children of Israel occupying the land of Canaan.

You know that's quoted often in the New Testament. And that's why it's a good example to read. You must read the Old Testament if you want to understand the New Testament properly.

And one of the great stories in the Old Testament is the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, going through the waters of the Red Sea, wandering in the wilderness, entering the land of Canaan. That means living in Egypt was our life of sin. They put a blood of the Lamb and we escaped.

That is we trusted in the blood of Christ and we were forgiven. Going through the Red Sea is a picture of being baptized. We were baptized, came out, a cloud came down upon us, which is a picture of the Holy Spirit coming inside.

It's all New Testament picture there. Children wandering in the wilderness, that is forgiven, baptized in water, receiving the Holy Spirit, but constantly defeated year after year after year, always grumbling, always complaining. They need not have been like that.

Do you know that God took the Israelites to the borders of Canaan two years after they left the Red Sea? Two years. They could have gone in. But they didn't.

They thought they were strong. They didn't trust in God. They were afraid.

How can I overcome that giant? And how can I overcome that giant? All those people came back and said, there are too many giants there. You can never overcome anger. You'll never overcome anger in your whole life.

Have you heard that? That's the voice of the ten spies who came back and told Israel, the giants are too big. There were two people, Joshua and Caleb said, no, we can overcome that giant. You can never overcome dirty thoughts.

Have you heard that? That's the voice of ten spies saying, you'll never enter the promised land. And they listened to them and they wandered forever and ever and ever. If they had listened to Joshua and Caleb, they'd have said, we can conquer that.

Is that giant more powerful than our God? Is that dirty lust more powerful than the Holy Spirit? No. That's all you've got to believe. I'm not asking whether you're stronger.

Joshua and Caleb did not look at their own muscles and say, we're stronger than those giants. They said, no, we're just as weak as them. We were like grasshoppers before them.

Do you feel like a grasshopper before some of the sins that rule you? Okay. But they trusted in God. But they are grasshoppers compared to God.

And if God helps me, I'll overcome them. And finally, God punished them by wandering, wandering, wandering for 40 years. They could have gone in two years.

It's true with so many Christians. They could have come into a life of victory in two years, but they don't. Because they look into themselves.

They're justifying themselves. They don't acknowledge their sin. They're always judging other people.

What a miserable life. Not perfect, but slowly going up. Not sitting in the same class or the same grade every year.

That's all I can say. And I still haven't reached perfection. I want everyone in this church to press on to perfection.

First of all, be absolutely sure that your acceptance before God is not based on your works. It's based on the fact that Christ died and took the punishment for all your sins. And He's declared you righteous.

Starting from there. It means you've been admitted into the school, but now you're in the kindergarten. You don't need to be readmitted into the school.

You have been admitted into the school. Don't forget that. But God wants you to grow.

Don't confuse birth with growth. The child is born. It may not grow.

It should grow. So that's important. So in that process, the Holy Spirit very gently keeps speaking in our conscience.

That's why I say the most important thing is our conscience. Never, never ignore your conscience. Let me show you what Jesus said about that in Luke's Gospel.

Turn with me to Luke's Gospel and chapter 12. Here, just a minute. Sorry, Luke 11 and verse 34.

Verse 34. The I referring to the conscience. Just like our physical eye, we see something.

The equivalent of that in your spirit is conscience. It sees something. That I is the lamp of your body.

It's different from your mind. See, man is three parts. Body, soul and spirit.

Body we know. The soul is our mind and our feelings. That's not where God dwells.

There's something deeper than that. The spirit where there is conscience. Conscience is more sensitive than your mind.

Conscience is where God speaks to you. Your mind is alert right now as I'm speaking. I hope it's alert.

What I'm saying is going through your body, through your ear, into your soul, into your mind. But it must sink into your spirit. Your conscience must become alert.

And conscience is primarily not telling you how to make money or how to do your problems on earth. It's primarily dealing with sin. That's the only thing conscience deals with.

And that's called the I. And if your conscience is absolutely clear, verse 34, your whole body will be full of light. That means the life of Christ. The life of Christ does not come by your understanding in your mind all that you hear.

And that's why you see so many people who come to church year after year after year. They hear so many messages. They listen to messages on YouTube.

Their mind is full of it. They don't grow spiritually. Why? Because you don't grow by increasing knowledge in your mind.

That's the soul. The conscience determines whether you grow spiritually or not. So your knowledge of scripture and coming here and knowing so much.

See people who come to this church probably know much more of the scripture than a lot of people outside. And yet some of those people may be more spiritual than you. Why? They may not know as much as you.

But their conscience, they probably are more sensitive than you. For example, a Roman Catholic. I met some very godly Roman Catholics.

Their doctrine is all wrong. Their mind is wrong. But they are sensitive to God in their conscience.

And they grow spiritually. So the eye is the lamp of your body. It's the main thing, dear brothers and sisters.

Value your conscience. When a child is born, you see what happens to your conscience. Think of this.

When a baby is born, it's got a conscience. As it grows, that conscience tells him, even when he's three or four years old, you're telling a lie. You look into the face of a four-year-old child and you ask him, did you do this? Something wrong that he did.

And when he says, no, mommy, I didn't do it, you can see in his face that he's telling a lie. You can see it. Don't you parents know that? When a child is telling his lie, you can see it in his face.

But you wait till that child is 18 years old and he'll convince you absolutely that he didn't do it, when he did something wrong. What happened? How did he become so perfect to hide his sin? In 14 years, he killed his conscience. Don't blame him.

You and I have done that. When at times we are convicted, we told our conscience, shut up, I'm not going to listen to you. Another time the conscience convicts us, we say, keep quiet.

And we've become perfect in deceiving people, keeping a face that looks innocent and pure, when there's deep impurity and lying inside. But a discerning person can see through it. You know the Bible speaks about eyes full of adultery in 2nd Peter 2. The more you grow in discernment, you can look at a man and see whether there's adultery in his eyes.

I believe all young women must be alert to that. So many men can behave so nicely, there can be adultery in their eyes. You can make out.

They cannot hide it. A man who's constantly, listen to me, a man who's constantly, secretly living in adulterous thoughts, it will come through his eyes and he cannot hide it. It will be there.

He may not realize it himself. And most people don't discern it because they themselves have got adulterous eyes. But a man who's walking with God will see through that person and see.

He won't tell him. I've had people come to our church in India and one look at them and they know there's something wrong. I say, sorry brother, you need to repent.

You're not born again. You've got all the right doctrines, you believe, you say the right words, but you are not born again. I've had to tell that to some people who sat in our church for some time.

Pride. That's another thing which is in the eyes. Proverbs chapter 6 says, haughty eyes.

H-A-U-G-H-T-Y. That is proud eyes. There are two things that the Bible speaks about eyes.

One is 2 Peter 2. Adulterous eyes, eyes full of adultery. And the other is proud eyes. Proverbs chapter 6. Pride is another thing.

You can't hide. If you walk with God and you have discernment, you'll be able to see pride in a person very quickly. You'll see it in his eyes.

Likewise adultery. So my brothers and sisters, I want to say this that we may think that we are fooling people, that we are very spiritual. You're fooling all the undiscerning people.

What do you gain by that? What do you gain by the fact that a whole lot of people in the church think you're a fine godly person? Do you gain anything by that if you're not actually growing in godliness? And those of us who are leaders like myself, I have to be in greater danger. Because everybody thinks, admires me. And I say, Lord, I don't want to care for that one bit.

I don't want to care for the admiration or the praise of men one bit. Otherwise I will fool myself. But I would say that to all of you.

Don't let what people think about you, that you're a very humble person, you're a very nice person. Don't let that go to your head. It will destroy you.

Live before the face of God. Perfectly happy on one side that God has accepted me in Christ. No doubt about it.

Because I'm in Christ. But at the same time, not happy because I'm not yet like Christ. I often say that my life is a life of dissatisfied satisfaction.

And only a true disciple of Jesus can understand. Dissatisfied satisfaction. Complete satisfaction.

That Christ has accepted me. I can stand before God today and face Him face to face. But I'm dissatisfied that I'm not yet like Christ.

It's a dissatisfied satisfaction. And it will be like that in a true disciple until we stand before the Lord. But before He comes, this is my passion.

This is what I desire in every church that I preach in. I want, you know what Paul says, to present every man perfect in Christ. He says that in one of his letters, Colossians.

My goal is to present every man perfect in Christ. A true servant of God will have that desire. The worst sinner.

If he's honest. If he's not willing to be honest, there's not much hope for him. Turn with me to 1 John and chapter 1. A verse we all know very well.

1 John chapter 1 and verse 7. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus will cleanse me from all sin. Please memorize that verse.

If we walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. Teach your children that.

If we walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. What is the condition? Only one condition.

What is the result? Fellowship with God. All sin cleansed away in the blood of Christ. And what is the condition? Only one.

Not 25 conditions. Isn't that wonderful? I can have fellowship with God. I can have my sins cleansed with one condition.

Walk in the light. So we need to understand what that means. Remember what we read earlier in Luke? Let's turn back to... Now you got this verse clear, 1 John 1.7? Now turn back to the verse I showed you in Luke 11.

You'll understand it better. Luke 11, verse 34. Let me paraphrase it.

The conscience is the lamp. And if your conscience is clear, your whole body is full of light. Remember that word light.

So how do I walk in the light? By keeping my conscience absolutely clear always. Being absolutely honest with God. Let me tell you a comforting word.

God does not require perfection from you. He requires honesty. Look at all the people who came to Jesus.

They were not perfect. Classic example is Zacchaeus. Tax collector who cheated so many people.

But he had a longing to see Jesus. He climbed up on a tree we read in Luke 19. And Jesus, the Holy Spirit spoke to him.

There's a man sitting on that tree. He's a sinner but he's seeking the truth. Jesus said, come down Zacchaeus.

I want to stay with you today. And all the people criticized him. This man who's a tax collector, cheater.

Jesus going to his house. Yeah, Jesus said I came for sinners. I didn't come for holy people.

I came to save sinners. And Zacchaeus is a sinner. I've come to save him.

And the light of God shone into Zacchaeus' conscience. You read that in Luke 19. And convicted him.

Jesus is like that. The light of Jesus is so strong. Suddenly reminded Zacchaeus of all the people he had cheated.

And as he came near the house, it says Zacchaeus stopped. You read. Take time to read Luke 19.

Stopped. And told Lord you can't enter my house. This house is being built with money that I cheated from so many people.

You're a holy person. You can't come here. Let me tell you something.

I want to set something right before you enter my house. You know Jesus said he wanted to stay in the house that night. I promise you Lord I'm going to pay back all the money I took from people with interest.

And just in case I'm not sure I'll make the interest. I'll pay back four times what I took. Boy, that man was free from the love of money.

He didn't calculate and say exactly 10% or 11%. I said give four times back. Make them happy, the people I cheated.

And then there are so many other people I don't even know where they are. I don't know their address. How can I return it? Okay, but I can't keep that money.

I'll give it to the poor. There was very little left in his bank account. But his heart was full.

I remember a similar day in my life. I hadn't cheated so many people. But I had cheated the government in my unconverted days.

And when I got converted when I was 20 years old. I was reminded. And I calculated what I owed to the government.

And it took me four months. I was earning a good salary as a naval officer. It took me four months to earn that much money.

And I took it one day and gave it back. Emptied my bank account and my heart was full. I cleared my conscience.

And I tried from then onwards to keep my conscience clear. I didn't always succeed. With other areas I was faithful with money.

But in other areas I struggled. But I learnt that the voice of conscience is very very important. So, does your conscience right now remind you of something you need to settle with somebody? Let me tell you another verse.

It's the secret of fellowship. Remember what we read in 1 John 1.7. If we walk in the light we can have fellowship with God. There's absolutely nothing better on earth than fellowship with God.

I'll tell you that from many years of my own experience. Absolutely nothing to equal fellowship with God. The richest man in the world is not happier than I am.

Fellowship with God is the greatest thing. And all God says is walk in the light. Keep your conscience clear.

Okay, Matthew chapter 5. Matthew 5 verse 23. If you're presenting your offering at the altar. What is the offering today? Prayer.

Let me paraphrase it today. You're coming to God and you're praying something. You're either saying thank you Lord, praise you Lord.

That's an offering. Or asking for something. And there you suddenly remember.

That means your conscience tells you something. This is conscience again. You hurt your brother.

You hurt your husband. You hurt your wife. You hurt that sister in the church.

You hurt that unconverted neighbor. Unconverted. You hurt that person in the office the way you spoke to him.

Stop praying. Leave your offering there. Verse 24 means stop praying.

Did you know there's a verse in the Bible where Jesus tells you to stop praying? He who told people to pray always. At this point he says no. No, no, no, no.

Stop. Not one more word. Stop.

Stop this long prayer you came to God to pray. Keep your mouth shut. Go first.

First. That word first is very important. Verse 24.

Go to that person you hurt. Be reconciled. Ask his forgiveness.

Phone him up. Write him a letter. And if he's around go and speak to him face to face.

Somebody in your home. Maybe it's your son to whom you spoke so rudely. There's no need to speak so rudely.

Go and ask his forgiveness. Do you ever ask forgiveness from your children? Do you have such a right over them that you don't have to ask forgiveness from them? If you didn't hurt them it's okay. Discipline is alright.

But to be rude to them? That's not okay. Christians should never be rude. Strong discipline.

I brought up all my sons with discipline. I believed it very strongly. But sometimes I got angry and I had to apologize for that.

Be reconciled. Then come to God and say, Lord, I said it right. Now here's my prayer.

Maybe there are four or five people you have to be reconciled with. I'm telling you the secret of constant fellowship with God. Firmly establish that Christ has accepted me.

But yet, many people have been accepted by Christ. They are not in fellowship with God. Because their light is not shining.

Their conscience is telling them, telling them, telling them. Now I'll tell you one sad thing. If you don't listen to the voice of conscience, it will gradually die.

And one day it will stop speaking. That's deadly. You know what Jesus said about, if you sin against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven.

There's a verse like that, Matthew 12. It's a serious thing. Matthew 12, 32.

You speak a word against Jesus, the Son of Man, it can be forgiven. But you speak against the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven. Not in this world or in the future.

What is that sin? It is, I believe it is having suppressed the voice of the Holy Spirit in our conscience again and again and again. Shut up, shut up, shut up. I don't want to listen to you.

No, go and set that right. No, I'm not going to set it right. No, no, no.

Go and ask His forgiveness. No, I'm not going to ask. It's His fault.

Justifying yourself, justifying yourself. Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up. And I'll tell you one day, it will shut up.

I can think of one person I like that, not many people like that, but I can definitely think of one person like that who was namesake Christian I knew in the Navy. He would go to different, the ship would go to different ports, he would go out and commit adultery with some prostitutes or something and come back with a cheerful face. I'd tell him, hey listen, aren't you convicted? No.

I'm a Christian, you know, my name is a Christian name. Boy, I'll never forget it till today. A man I saw, when 60 years ago, I felt sorry.

He could not be convicted of sin because he had killed the voice of conscience so many times. It can happen. I'm not the judge.

I don't know whether he sinned against the Holy Spirit so he could not be forgiven in this life or the next, but I believe that verse is true, that a person can come to the place where he kills the voice of conscience so much, the Holy Spirit stops speaking. He can do the most terrible things after that, not even feel convicted. It's terrible.

I think some, some terrorists get to that place. Knowingly, they kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, it doesn't disturb them. So dear brothers and sisters, it's a wonderful life that Jesus purchased for us on the cross at such tremendous cost, giving his life, being, facing hell, not only so that I might never go to hell, that's a minimum, but that I might become like him and dwell with him for all eternity.

What a blessing. Settle matters, I would say. Do you owe money to the government? Have you cheated someone? Decide today, you're going to settle it, however long it takes.

It's not worth going to hell just to keep a little money in your bank account. Have you hurt somebody? Ask the person's forgiveness. It's not worth being lost.

It's not worth God not listening to your prayer. What did he say? Go first, settle it, then come with your offering. So even though you're accepted in Christ, wonderful, if you have a passion to become like Christ, I'm telling you the way.

May all of us take it seriously. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, help us to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

We've all failed so many times. You often feel, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death. But we can say, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, it can be true for everyone here, Lord. I pray that not a single person who has heard my message tonight, this message tonight, this morning, not a single person who has heard this message this morning, will be lost. I pray your Holy Spirit will keep on reminding them until they have surrendered to that voice and obeyed it.

I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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