

# Are You Seeking God's Approval or God's Blessing?

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of seeking God's approval over His blessings in a life dedicated to pleasing Him.*

**Duration:** 59:02

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:5, James 2:20

**Topics:** "Approval", "Seeking God's Approval", "Living a Righteous Life"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the distinction of CFC from other churches, highlighting that it was founded to restore God's original standards, particularly in overcoming sin rather than merely seeking blessings. He challenges the congregation to reflect on whether they are pursuing God's approval or just His blessings, urging them to prioritize a life that pleases God over one that seeks material prosperity. Poonen uses the example of Enoch, who walked with God and was taken up to heaven, to illustrate the importance of living a life that is pleasing to God. He stresses that true faith is demonstrated through works and that believers should focus on their spiritual growth and readiness for Christ's return. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to follow Jesus and to live a life of righteousness, rather than merely seeking blessings.

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## Transcript

Brothers and sisters, I'm very happy to be able to speak to you again and we've been thinking this month about how CFC is distinct from all the other churches. Why another church? Why did God start another church 48 years ago in Bangalore when there were so many churches already? Very important to understand that because many of you who joined this church must know why God started this church because if you don't understand that you may join it like you join a club and you go to a club because you get some benefits there and there are some good people, it's a good place for your children to go. That is not why CFC, God started CFC.

It's not another club. Whenever God sees standards declining in Christendom, He always starts something new. What for? To restore God's original standard for His church.

So that is why God raised up CFC 48 years ago and in a lot of Christendom standards were declining, particularly in the area of money. Every church was emphasizing money, money, money, pay your tithe, pastor has to be paid, letters had to be sent to America asking for money. We decided, Brother Ian and I,

when we started, but only two of us, two of us and our families, that we are going to be completely different.

We will never ask for money. We will never take, pass an offering bag around. Neither of us will receive a salary and neither of us have received a salary for 48 years, not only from CFC or from any other church.

And that is unique. We have more than 230 elders who don't receive a salary and to the hundred churches, which group in the world has got so many churches with so many leaders who nobody receives a salary. Every work is done voluntarily, joyfully, not for one or two days, for years.

That is why God raised up and we want to keep that testimony till Jesus comes. So it also applies to people in the church that you're not all full-time workers. So the question of receiving a salary doesn't arise.

You work and earn your living, that's fine. But then there are certain standards, like we believe in overcoming sin, not just having our sin forgiven, but overcoming sin. And that is another difference because hardly any church preaches about overcoming sin.

And I want to put it another way also. There are Christians who want God to bless them. And so they go to churches, which will emphasize God will bless you.

He'll bless you financially. He'll bless you with healing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. That sounds wonderful.

But that is an Old Testament gospel. That's what God promised them in the Old Testament. I'll give you plenty of prosperity.

In those days there were sheep and camels and gold and silver. I'll give it to you. And they served God.

When they disobeyed God, they were defeated by their enemies and they became poor and their fields would not produce crops. So that's why they obeyed God. Today also there are people who come to God for blessing.

The prayer is mainly bless us, bless us, bless us. Sometimes it is only bless me, bless me, bless me and my family. But we are teaching not to seek for God's blessing.

No. But to seek for God's approval. Lord, you must say about us that you are happy with our lives.

Whether you bless us or not is unimportant. We don't want money. We don't want prosperity.

We are happy even if you don't give us a house to live in or we live in a rented place. Perfectly okay. So this is a question that I would ask all of you who are coming to CFC.

Are you in your personal life seeking for God's approval of your life or just His blessing? You know there are people who go to particularly government offices and government banks where you have the minimum work you have to do. From you come at a certain time, you take your coffee break and you go away at a certain time. Yeah and they get their salary.

They are not interested in the prosperity of that company or any such thing. I am appointed to come at so and so time and go at so and so time. Now if you come to the Lord like that, you are not a New Testament

Christian.

You are an Old Testament person and you will have a pretty miserable life. And whether you go to heaven or hell, I don't know. I am not here to tell you.

One thing I will tell you. If your aim is to please God, you will definitely spend eternity with Jesus Christ. I want to show you the example of one man.

There are examples given us in the Old Testament in Genesis chapter 5. In Genesis 5, we read about a man called Enoch. Sorry Genesis 4, no Genesis 5 and verse 21. Enoch lived 65 years and he became the father of Methuselah.

So something happened at that time. He was not a person who cared much about God. But when he got a son, you know what the name Methuselah means? Genesis 5 and verse 21.

The word Methuselah means when he dies, the flood will come. And if you look through that and count his age and count down to chapter 6, you will find exactly the year in which Methuselah died, the flood came and Noah's people were in the ark and Methuselah died. But when a child is born, you don't know how long he's going to live.

Methuselah lived for 969 years. But when a child is born, you don't know he's going to live for 969 years. But Enoch was told by God, name him Methuselah.

When he dies, the world will be judged with the flood. So can you imagine how Enoch felt every time the child was sick? Oh, now the flood will come. Or he had a cough or fell down somewhere and got injured, some sickness.

Can you imagine if you had a child and you were told that when this child dies, the world is going to be destroyed? Every time the child is sick, you will get scared. What is the result? The result was from that day, we read in Genesis 5 and verse 24, Enoch walked with God for 300 years. It was after Methuselah was born.

So that crisis and the name God gave to his son made him realize this world is going to be judged. I want to live for heaven and for God. And we read in Hebrews, I want you to turn to Hebrews in chapter 11.

If you turn to Hebrews chapter 11, we read there, Hebrews 11 and verse 5. By faith, Enoch was taken up to heaven so that he never died. He was the first person from Adam's time who never died. He walked with God for 300 years.

God said, come home with me. God took him up. But before he died, Hebrews 11, 5 says, he had a testimony.

The testimony was not he was blessed by God. Listen to this. Not God blessed him.

No. His testimony was he was pleasing to God. One day we will be taken up.

Christ will come. Just like Enoch was taken up, I'm going to be taken up. You're going to be taken up.

But before that day comes, will you have this testimony, Hebrews 11, 5, that my life on earth was pleasing to God? That is what CFC stands for. And I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, come to CFC if that is

your goal. If your goal is only to be blessed by God, my dear brother and sister, I humbly request you please go to some other church.

You'll never find a church in Bangalore where people tell you to go to some other church. We are the only ones. Because we don't want people to come here and waste our time.

And we don't want to fool people, making them think you're going to heaven just because you accepted Christ as your savior, you're going to heaven, you don't have to do anything else. No. We are here to prepare people for eternity.

We believe salvation is by faith. But James chapter 2 says a faith which does not produce works is a dead faith. So we don't preach a dead faith.

Faith without works is dead. James chapter 2 says that many times. If you're not familiar with that verse, please turn with me.

It's the very next book, James chapter 2. He says you speak about faith, I speak about works. Verse 18. Someone will say, you have faith, I have works.

Show me your faith without your works. I'll show you my faith by my works. And verse 22, you see that faith was working with Abraham's works.

Verse 21, Abraham our father was justified by works when he offered up Isaac. Abraham's faith was seen in the fact that when God asked him to give up Isaac, he gave him up. What about you? When God asks you to give up something, will you give it up? That is faith that produces works.

Some of you, God has told you many times to give up your pornography, which is ruining you. Have you given it up or give up getting shouting at your wife or your husband? Have you given it up? Do you want to give it up? Faith without works is dead. It says in verse 20, you know what God calls such people? Foolish people.

Now, I'm not here to call anybody a fool, but please read James 2.20. Look how the Holy Spirit says, the Holy Spirit is saying, you foolish fellow. Oh, imagine calling people who come to a church, you foolish fellow. I'm not saying it, please.

You read in James chapter 2.20, you foolish fellow. Don't you know that if your faith does not produce works, it is useless? What is the use of having a cell phone that doesn't work? Oh, you say there's an Apple phone, but there's nothing inside, it's hollow. It doesn't work, useless.

As you see, Abraham offered up his son, and by that he proved his faith was genuine. And you see that faith, verse 22, was working with his works, and as a result of the works, his faith was perfected. That is what we preach in CFC.

Faith without works is dead. You see the same thing in Ephesians. I'm showing you these verses so that you realize it's not just what we are preaching, but what the Word of God says.

Ephesians 2, verse 8. By grace are you saved through faith, not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

You say, ah, Brother Zach, see, it says got nothing to do with works. No, no, no, no. That's not what it says.

Not as a result of works. That means you did not get forgiveness of your sins by doing some work. He's talking about being saved from the judgment of sin.

How are you saved from the judgment of sin? A million works will not save you. Christ died for your sins. Otherwise you'll boast.

Ephesians 2, 9. Not as a result of your works. But once you're saved, how do we know your salvation is genuine? That you're not fooling yourself. Next verse.

Verse 10. Middle. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has already prepared that after we have accepted Christ, we should walk in them.

That is how you prove that you are a genuine child of God. Has your life changed? I remember my life changed completely. Turned around when I was converted at the age of 19 and a half.

And I'll give you one example. I used to go to movies. I used to call my friends.

I was in the naval base. I used to call my friends to go with me to the movies. But one day I accepted Christ and my desire to go for the movies disappeared.

I did not want to go to the cinema anymore. But two of my friends came that evening and said in the naval base cinema theater there's a news cinema. Come.

Come. Let's go and watch it. What could I say? I did not have the courage to say no.

I'm a Christian now. I don't go. I just accepted Christ a few days earlier.

And I was the one who used to call them. Now they're calling me. So you know what I did? I went along with them.

As I walked along the road, inwardly there was a cry in my heart. Lord, please save me from this. Do something.

Save me. I don't want to go to the cinema. And we had to walk about half a mile to the cinema theater.

And I was always crying out in that entire 10-15 minutes as we walked. Deliver me. Deliver me.

And we came to the cinema theater. There was a big notice there. We did not get the reel for today's cinema.

So it is canceled. Sorry to disappoint you. Disappoint.

I was delighted. Inwardly I said hallelujah. What all God will do for one child of God who cried out saying I don't want to go to the cinema.

The entire naval base could not see the cinema that day. That is my God. That's what he did for me.

He'd do amazing things for you. If you really turn to him, I'll tell you that. But the Lord told me another thing.

Next time I'm not going to cancel the cinema for you. You have to say yourself. You're not coming.

Then only you'll be bold. So God doesn't always do miracles. He wants us to be bold.

I was so encouraged by this experience that I said Lord I'm definitely going to say to them boldly I'm a Christian now and I don't go to all these wretched movies. So what I'm trying to say is Enoch pleased God. And that's how he was taken up.

And that's what we read in Hebrews. Let's go back to Hebrews in chapter 11. We read there about Enoch was taken up.

He had a witness. Verse 5. Before being taken up he pleased God. Then it says verse 6. Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Because God, verse 6, you must believe that God is a rewarder not of everybody. No, no, no, no, no. Of those who diligently seeking.

The King James version makes it very clear. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seeking. What for? Not for his blessing but for his approval.

There are two types of Christians as I said. One who are seeking God's blessing and the other who are seeking for God's approval. Which group are you in? Almost every church in Bangalore will tell you how to get God's blessing.

How many will tell you how to get God's approval? The entire Old Testament is full of examples of Israelites who wanted God's blessing. But when Jesus came to them, he did not seek God's blessing. No.

He was blessed more than anybody else who walked on this earth. Not blessed with money and property and all that. He never had money.

He didn't have property. But he was blessed in another way. He was blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit and he was able to please his father.

When he was 30 years old, we don't know much about what happened in those 30 years except we read in Luke chapter 2 that he discussed scripture in the temple with the priests. That he obeyed his earthly mother Mary and her husband Joseph, earthly father. He obeyed them.

And for 30 years, what did Jesus do? I will tell you in one sentence. You know we talk about following Jesus. There are songs we sing, follow, follow, I will follow anywhere, everywhere I will follow on.

But what does it mean to follow Jesus? To live as he lived. To do what he did. Let me show you how Jesus lived for 30 years.

People say these are the silent years. Nothing is told us about how he lived. The three and a half years of his ministry, a lot of things revealed to us.

But the 30 years of his home, what he does at home, you say what is it? I'll show you. Please turn with me to Genesis, sorry Matthew and Matthew's Gospel and chapter 3. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3. I want you to turn there and see. Jesus went to be baptized by John.

There was no sin in Jesus. But he wanted to identify himself with the few people who were obeying God at that time on earth. Not all the Jews went to John the Baptist for baptism.

Only a few who were wholehearted went to him for baptism. And Jesus stood in the queue, in the line with all of them and said, I'm also going to be baptized. He was no sin in his life.

He was being baptized in order to please his father. And as he was baptized, read that in Matthew 3.16, when he came up from the water, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came as a dove lighting on him. And a voice from the heaven came and said here, now you know what Jesus did for 30 years in Nazareth.

The voice said, this is my beloved son, Matthew 3.17, in whom I am well pleased. The father in heaven said, I'm very happy with the way Jesus lived for 30 years. There I know what he did for 30 years.

Because the father's testimony was all 30 years he pleased me. What did Enoch do? He pleased God before he was taken up. What is the testimony Jesus got when he was baptized? The father was pleased with him.

What is the testimony you should get when Christ comes back? Not that God blessed me, but that God has been pleased with my life. That is what we are preaching in CFC. How you can please God.

Turn now to Matthew's Gospel and Chapter 5, where Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount. I want to show you something here. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us to love our enemies, Matthew 5.44, because you can be the sons of your father, Matthew 5.45. Your father in heaven, what does God do? Listen, read carefully, Matthew 5.45. He makes the son to rise on the evil and the good.

He sends a rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Just that one verse, Matthew 5.45. In those days, almost everybody was a farmer. They didn't have offices like today where we go to work.

Everybody was a farmer. They had land and crops. And the most important thing they needed was rain and sunshine.

Not only rain, but sunshine. Not only sunshine, but rain. And so Jesus speaks about these two things.

How to get rain and sunshine from God? You don't have to please God. Read Matthew 5.45. He makes the son to rise on that evil farmer's land and the good farmer's land. So if you want the son to rise on your land as a farmer, what should you be? You must be either evil or good.

Everybody qualifies. Everybody sitting here is either evil or good. You qualify to get God's blessing.

What about rain? God sends the rain, verse 45, on the righteous and the unrighteous. So if you want rain from heaven for your farm, what should you be? Either righteous or unrighteous. Anybody disqualified? You see something there.

God's blessing can be received when you're evil or good, whether you're righteous or unrighteous. So don't glory in the fact that God has blessed me. He gave me a new job.

He gave me this good house. He has blessed my children. My children are doing well in their studies.

Aha. What is that proof? It proves you're either evil or good. It proves that you're either righteous or unrighteous.

It doesn't prove anything about your life. It does prove that God is a good God. God is good to evil people.

God is good to unrighteous people. And that is where so many creatures are deceiving you. They tell you, see how God has blessed you.

Aha, that must be, God must be happy with you. Tell them to read Matthew 5, 45 and look at the number of people who are blessed in the world. The non-Christians also say that God has blessed us.

I've heard Muslims say, see Allah, they call their God Allah. Allah has blessed us more than other people in the world. How has Saudi Arabia become one of the richest countries in the world? How do Saudi Arabia leaders are so multi-billionaires? Because they have oil.

And they say, Allah gave us oil. And the whole world comes to us for oil. God has blessed us.

It's an understanding of blessing. In the Old Testament, that was the mark of God's blessing, that God blessed His people with prosperity. But I did not become a Christian to be blessed by God.

When my sins were forgiven through Jesus' death on the cross, I said, Lord, you have blessed me enough. More than enough. Such a wretched sinner like me, you completely forgave and said, I will not remember your sin anymore.

Oh, thank you. Thank you. I don't want any more blessing.

I just want to please you from now on. I made that decision 64 years ago, July 1959. And God is my witness.

I didn't do it always perfectly, but I tried. And I'm still trying to please Him. And my prayer was not, oh Lord, bless me, bless me, bless me.

Of course, we do ask God to bless us and there's nothing wrong in that. But the primary blessing I want in my life is that I want to be free from sin. Yeah.

If you're dying of cancer, serious cancer, what do you pray to God? Give me a better car. Give me a better house. Give me more money.

No, you pray that you should be healed from cancer. It's like that. I had sin in my life.

Well, she was praying, give me money and good job and all that. Lord, save me from sin that's destroying me more than any cancer can destroy me. That is what we preach in CFC.

God gives blessing to good people and evil people, righteous and unrighteous people. But there's another group of people like Jesus. He did not seek to get blessing from the father.

30 years, he sought to please the father. And therefore, God said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And if you turn with me to 1 John and chapter 3, turn now to 1, first episode of John and chapter 3. We read here, first of all, I'll start in chapter 2. 1 John chapter 2, he's talking to the believers, little children, on John 2, 28.

When Christ appears, we should have confidence before him and not shrink away from him in shame when he comes. Little children means he's talking to believers. And he's telling believers, my dear believers, among you believers, among all of you sitting in CFC, there are two groups of believers here.

All are believers, but there are two groups. If Christ were to come right now, some of you will have boldness. Say, yes, Lord, thank you for coming.

We are ready to meet you. And you'll be taken up to be with the Lord forever. But there'll be another group sitting in CFC who will shrink away.

Oh, Lord, please, please, please. There are things I have to settle in my life. I shouted at my wife this morning.

I have not apologized. I shouted at my husband. I didn't apologize.

Lord, please don't come now. I'm not ready. I did so many things wrong, Lord.

There are big debts I have to repay. I've not repaid it yet. Please wait another two, three years.

God is not going to wait. There will be two groups of believers when Christ comes again. Those who have boldness and say, yes, Lord, like Enoch, taken up.

And others who shrink away from him in shame. Why? Because they sought God's blessing, not his approval. In CFC, we are preparing people to be raptured, to be taken up when Christ comes.

You will hear things here that will prepare you for that rapture. You go to other churches, they'll only collect your money and never tell you how you can be ready for the coming of the Lord. But we preach righteousness.

Verse 29, 1 John 2 29. If you know that Jesus is righteous, you know how you can find out who's born again and who's not. The one who practices righteousness is born of God.

If you know that Jesus is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is the only one who is born of God. One who plays the fool with sin is fooling himself that he's born again. He's not born again.

I'm not talking about somebody who slips and gets up, but who indulges in it again and again and again and is never convicted, never repents, never apologizes to God or to man. It says here in verse chapter 3 and verse 2. Now we are children of God, we are accepted Christ as our Savior. But he does not yet appear at 1 John 3 to what we will be.

We know that when he appears, we will be like him. That is our goal, because we'll see him as he is. So, and it says in verse 3, everyone who has this hope, what is the hope? That we will be like him when we see him, verse 2, will purify himself continually until he reaches Christ's standard of purity.

That's what we preach in CH3. To purify yourself every day. When do you stop? You stop when you reach, when you become like Jesus 100%.

That'll be when he comes. And so, people ask, what is the hope of the Christian? You go and ask any Christian in all these other dead churches. Brother, what is your hope? They say, I'm hoping Christ is

coming back and I'll be with him.

Is that the hope mentioned here? You ask me, what is my hope? My hope is not Christ is coming back and I'm going to meet him. No. My hope is, verse 2, I will be like him when he comes.

Not I will see him. I will be like him when I see him. That is my hope.

First you're just seeing him if I'm defeated by sin and no desire to be like him. For all eternity I'm going to be like Jesus Christ and that is my hope. Not I'm going to live a comfortable life free from sin and free from the problems of earth when he comes.

That is what we are preparing people in CH3 for. So my brothers, sister, if you are only interested in going to heaven, this is not the church for you. No.

Please go somewhere. There are many churches preaching how to go to heaven. But if you are interested in pleasing God, like Enoch, you want your faith to have works.

And when Christ comes again, you want to be like him. You're pressing on like you see now what is written on the front of our pulpit here. The front of this pulpit is saying, let us press on to perfection.

You know, some people tell us, oh brother Zach, your church is always, you people think you're perfect. I said, no. Did you read what's written on our pulpit? It's written on our pulpit, we are going to, we are pressing on to perfection.

We have not finished this marathon race. We are running this marathon race. We have not reached the finishing line.

It's you guys who don't talk about perfection. You think you're perfect. We don't think we are perfect.

We are far from perfection, but we are running the race, seeking to become perfect like Jesus Christ, so that our heavenly father will say about us also, this is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter in whom I'm well pleased. So many times in my life I've cried out to God, Lord, will you say about me, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. I don't want anything on earth or heaven other than that.

I don't want anything on earth other than you telling me you're pleased with me. And in eternity, I don't want any mansion or anything. I want to hear from you that you're pleased with me.

The words you spoke to Jesus, father, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. That's what I want you to speak to me. And I'm willing to pay any price for it.

Anything you tell me to give up something which is not even sinful, but which is hindering my spiritual growth, I'll give it up. I don't want to waste my money. I want to be very faithful with my time and my money because I want to please God.

I don't want to just go to heaven when I die. How is it with you, my brothers and sisters? Think about it. We must be ready for Christ's coming.

And how shall we be ready? Turn with me now to Revelation and chapter 14. Revelation chapter 14. Here we read of a group of people who followed the lamb, followed the lamb wherever he went.

It's a wonderful passage, Revelation chapter 14. Please turn with me there and read it. I'm reading from Revelation 14 and verses 1 to 5. Revelation chapter 14 and verse 1. Then I looked and I saw the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, standing on Mount Zion.

And with Christ were 144,000, having his name and the name of his Father written on their forehead. Now, the book of Revelation is full of symbols, S-Y-M-B-O-L, pictures. So this is not an actual number, but compared to the great multitude.

So you turn with me to Revelation chapter 7 first. Revelation and chapter 7, we read about another big crowd. Revelation and chapter 7 and verse 9. And the Lamb broke the seventh seal I saw underneath the altar, the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God.

And it says here, there was given to them a white robe, verse 11. Oh, just hang on. Yeah.

And they were told they should rest for a little while until the number of their fellow servants, their brethren, who were to be killed, even as they had been, would also be completed. So here is a great multitude we read. Revelation 7. I'm sorry, I was in the wrong chapter.

Revelation chapter 7 and verse 9. That's the verse. I looked and behold a great multitude. That's the verse I wanted.

I'm sorry, I was in the wrong chapter. Revelation 7, 9, I looked and a great multitude which no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, tongues standing before the throne and singing. And what were they saying? Our salvation is due to our God who sits on the throne.

And they, their robes, it says in verse 14, they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Great multitude, cannot even count. That means millions and millions of people.

Yeah. Heaven will be full of millions and millions and millions of people. You know, I think many of them will be the babies who died.

Billions of babies have been aborted through abortion, been killed. They're there in this crowd because they never committed any sin and they died. It's a great multitude of people whom God blessed.

People who are ignorant of God's ways but who lived according to their conscience. God blessed them, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The only thing they can say is, verse 14, we have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

That is their testimony. My sins have all been forgiven. My heart is clean.

Good. But when you go to Revelation 14, Revelation 14, you read of another group of people. This is not a million, these are not millions of people.

Revelation and chapter 14 and verse 1. Here the number is very small number, 144,000. Think of this big crowd of millions and the small group of 144,000. That big crowd is those who got God's blessing.

Many Old Testament people, many children, many aborted children, millions, millions, millions. But this group is a small group. They've got Jesus' name on their forehead and the Father's name on their forehead.

You know what that means? Haven't you seen some Hindus who have a mark on their forehead, red lines? They are proclaiming something. I don't know exactly what it means. Maybe I'm a worshipper of some particular God.

And they are not ashamed of it. Even in the offices, they go and proclaim on their forehead, I'm a worshipper of this God. Christians are ashamed to be seen hanging up a Christian calendar in their office.

They say, oh, if I hang it there, the boss will get upset. He won't give me a promotion. I won't get my increase in salary.

But the Hindus are not afraid. Yeah, right on their forehead. Yeah, Christians are on their forehead.

I belong to Jesus Christ. That's the meaning of that. I'm not ashamed to let everybody know I belong to Jesus Christ.

Are you going to persecute me because of that? Well, I'm good. You will not give me a promotion because I'm a disciple of Jesus? Okay, don't give me. I'll seek God's kingdom first and God will add all other things to me.

You know, I was in the Navy. I came first in my class and everybody thought I'll become the admiral. But I accepted Christ after that.

And I knew I will not get promotion as others will get. Because I was running into problems with my senior officers. I said certain things.

Sir, I'm a Christian. I cannot do that. And they gave me a bad report.

How will I get a promotion? Once they transferred me in half an hour, they transferred me to another place because I do another job. Because I could not write something wrong as a Christian. And I had many experiences like that.

I was only 24 years old. And another time, the second in command of the ship was a strong Hindu. He hated me because I would always do what was righteous.

And some crooked things that he was doing, I could not permit. So he tried to punish me by taking me over the commanding officer. God protected me.

I don't have to go into all those details. But chance of going up to higher levels in the Navy, gone. It's okay.

God called me for something much higher than that. He gave me the biggest promotion. One day he said he quit the Navy and served me.

I'm so happy that happened. I remember that day so well. 6th of May, 1964.

Next year in May, it'll be 60 years since God called me to leave my job to serve him, to please him. And I decided to please him. I'd worked for about only eight years in the Navy.

I'd accumulated a lot of money. I took all that money and gave it away for God's work. And I left with zero in my bank account.

And I said, Lord, I'm going to trust you. I know you'll take care of me. Why? Because God says those who seek the kingdom of God first, all the other things will be added to them.

And I can testify today, God has added all the other things to me. He's given me health and strength, a family, children, grandchildren, name it. He's never let me down.

But my testimony is not my sins are washed in the blood of the Lamb. It's more than that. Listen to this man's testimony, this group's testimony.

Number one, verse four, they have not been defiled with women. And the women mentioned in Revelation is Babylon. Babylon is called the harlot, the false Christianity.

These people did not join the false Christians that were only interested in God's blessing. That's the meaning of not defiled with women. They kept themselves pure from that.

Instead, verse four, they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Their aim in life is not just to go to heaven, but to follow Jesus on earth. And it says next, they were purchased from among men to be firstfruits to God in the Lamb.

You know, like in a fruit tree, there are some fruits that come very early, mangoes, the first mangoes. It's like that God has got certain people whom he calls the firstfruits. Those who have faithfully sought to please him in their daily life.

Maybe they suffered some consequences because of that on earth. That didn't bother them. Another thing, they did not tell lies, verse five.

One way of telling a lie is by giving a false impression to people that you're a spiritual person when you're not. You know, that is the first sin in the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts 5, we read about Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their house for, let's say, 100,000 rupees, but gave only 50,000 and pretended they were giving the whole thing.

Now that God did not even want 100,000 rupees from them, but they pretended they are giving everything. And Peter exposed them, both husband and wife, and they died. These people, there was no hypocrisy in their life.

There was no pretense. They were not trying to show they were spiritual when they were not inwardly. They were blameless.

That's a small number. And I'll tell you this, the number of people who seek to please God, this is a very small number. I remember when I saw the huge crowd in CFC once, I said, Lord, how many people are disciples in this? There are 600 people here.

And I say there are 600 in CFC. I said, the angels may be counting and saying, let me count. Zach, there are only 35 here.

Only 35 in this church? I can see 600. Yeah, they are coming to be blessed. There are 35 who are wholeheartedly following the Lord.

I don't know, it's just my imagination. I'm not saying that the Lord told me that. But I felt that the Lord could say like that.

I don't know the exact number. I don't know your odds. But I'll tell you one thing.

There are most people sitting here have come to be blessed by God. But I thank God there are a few who want to please God. And that is the number that must increase in CFC.

You're welcome to come, but let your aim be to please God. So I want to say one last thing before I close. And that's in Luke chapter 9. How to please God? How can we follow him? Luke 9 verse 23.

If anyone, anyone means anyone, anyone sitting here, he says, you want to come after me? You want to follow in my footsteps? You want to live as I lived those 30 years in Nazareth? You have to say no to yourself. First, number one. From childhood, we have learned to say yes to ourselves.

What is a child? Have you ever put your finger into the hand of a little child? Put your finger into the hands of a little child? He grasps it. Every child in the world is like that. You put your finger there, he'll grip it.

This grasping tendency begins from birth. And then as he grows up, he'll pick up anything. He'll pick up mud, everything.

Grasp, grasp. He'll take things from his brothers. He won't ask for anything.

He'll grab, grab, grab. And that's how our children fight. Mummy, he grabbed my toy.

He grabbed. This grabbing is there in all of us. And the Lord says, you want to follow me? You have to open your palm and deny yourself.

Don't try to grab. Die. Take up your cross means die to yourself daily and follow me.

So the 144,000 who followed the Lamb wherever he went, how did they follow? He said they took up their cross and followed. That's the only way to follow. That's the only way to please God.

Jesus pleased his father by taking up the cross every day for 33 and a half years and then finally dying on a wooden cross. But there was an inward cross that he took up every day. I don't have time to show you all those places.

You read in one example, Matthew chapter 12, when the Pharisees said, this man is the prince of devils. He died to himself. And he said, you are forgiven.

You read that Matthew chapter 12. You're forgiven. That's how he lived.

He never sought for anything for himself. He denied himself to please his father. And he did it daily.

He cannot tell me here in Luke 9 23 to do it daily if he did not do it himself. My life has been so exciting. I'll tell you that honestly.

It says in Proverbs 14 14 in the Living Bible, the godly man's life is exciting. And I can raise my hand and say, God, my life has been exciting. It's really been exciting.

And it gets more and more exciting as time goes on. And that's because I have understood how to die to myself every day and to follow Jesus. See, sometimes people come to have a dispute with me about something.

I keep quiet. I said, let them think they have won the argument. I will not argue because Ephesians 6 verse 12 says, we do not fight with human beings.

We do not wrestle with flesh and blood. It's a wonderful verse. Ephesians 6 verse 12.

We do not wrestle with flesh and blood. Instead, we wrestle against all these evil satanic powers. That's my goal.

I'll never fight with a human being. I never fought for property, money, or for my reputation or anything. I will not fight.

Even for doctrine, I will not fight. I'll proclaim the doctrine if you don't want to hear it, fine. Because I made it a principle in my life.

The Lord told me, if you want power over Satan, refuse to fight with human beings. If somebody comes to you, fight with you, die. Dying.

Can a dead man fight back? No. That's the meaning of dying to yourself. When your husband is angry and comes, shouts at you, die.

What response does a dead man, dead woman give? When your wife comes and yells at you in anger, die. You say, that way she'll rule the house. No, no, no, no.

Don't give her the authority in the house. You run the house, but you're not going to get angry at her. Forgive her and keep the headship of the house.

Sure. You must take up the cross every day. And the Lord said, if you want to overcome Satan, decide that you will never fight with human beings.

Act like a dead man when people come to fight with you. And I tried to follow that. And I'll tell you the result.

In so many years, we have encountered various demons. Demon-possessed people come. And I just tell them, in the name of Jesus Christ, get out of him.

Let me give you my testimony. Every single time, every single time, the demon has left. And I did not have to say it a second time.

I did not have to shout and scream like you see some people doing. I remember I was once invited to deliver somebody who was demon-possessed in one house. And when I went there, there was some Pentecostal man there.

And he was yelling and screaming and shouting. And I told his brother who took me, I said, I don't know who's demon-possessed here. Is it this person or that person? You please tell him to keep quiet and take him out.

Then we'll cast out the demon from this person. So they took him out. And that poor sister there, I said, in Jesus' name, come out of her.

At first I told her, accept Jesus as your savior. And from her mouth came a voice, tell her to accept Christ, not me. Aha, the demon was telling me.

I said, you demon, get out in the name of Jesus. Left. But if I was fighting with flesh and blood, if I was fighting with my wife at home, or if I was fighting with my people who stole something from me, that demon would have laughed at me.

He said, aha, you have no power over me. My brother, sister, God wants you to have power over demons. The Bible says, God will crush Satan under your feet.

Romans 16 20. Don't you want that? That the devil is afraid of you instead of you being afraid of the devil? That's the type of believers we are trying to build up in CFC. Determine that you will die to yourself, that you won't run after him, seeking to please man, or seeking to please God.

Deny yourself. Take some responsibility in CFC. Don't just come here to sit there and listen to messages.

Go to the elders and say, I want to do some work here in the church. Tell me what I can do. You don't take my money, at least tell me what I can do to help in any way.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that God will bless all of you. I pray that you'll have a very good life, that you'll be able to bring up your children in godly ways to please him. That's my sincere prayer.

Seek to please God and don't just look for his blessing. Thank you for listening. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. This is not a very high standard. You could start in the kindergarten.

Say, Lord, I know very little. Okay, start with ABC. Two plus two is four, kindergarten.

The Lord will show you one step at a time. But say, Lord Jesus, you died for me on the cross. You took all the punishment of my sin.

Thank you. I want to respond to you, not by asking you to bless me some more, but to give my life to you. How can I serve you? How can I live for you? How can I be a blessing in this church? Please show me, Lord.

I want to live for you. I want to please you. Show me what it means to take up my cross every day and follow in your footsteps.

I want to forgive everybody who's hurt me. I want to ask forgiveness from everyone whom I've hurt. Please guide me, Lord, and fill me with the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, I believe there are some here definitely who are praying that prayer. I pray you will answer that prayer and show them the way of the cross and lead them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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