

Being a Witness for Christ with Compassion

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of compassion and love in our interactions with others, highlighting the need to go beyond legalism and embrace the spirit of Christ. It encourages a deep understanding of God's mercy and grace, urging believers to have a heart of compassion towards sinners and to focus on increasing in love for all people. The message underscores the balance between truth and grace, urging a simplicity in faith and a sweetness in the expression of God's holiness.

Duration: 1:05:53

Scripture: Matthew 9:9, Luke 5:27, Acts 1:8, Psalm 139:23, John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, Romans 5:5, John 1:14

Topics: "Compassion", "Love in Action"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like to begin with a word in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 9. Can you hear me all right? Okay. Here we read about the call of Matthew, Matthew 9 verse 9, Jesus went from there and called Matthew who was sitting in a tax collector's booth and he said to him, follow me. And he got up and followed him.

In verse 10, it happened that as Jesus is reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came who were dining with Jesus and his disciples. The tax collectors were the biggest financial crooks in Israel. And Matthew was one of them.

But he got converted and decided to follow Jesus. And this feast mentioned in verse 10, if you turn to Luke 5, you read there, the same incident is given with a little more detail. Verse 27 onwards, Jesus called Levi, who was Matthew, and he left everything behind.

Immediately, imagine while he was writing his accounts, he was so gripped by the call of Jesus. He must have heard Jesus somewhere earlier. He just dropped everything and followed him.

He didn't even complete the day's work. And this Matthew verse 29 gave a big reception, verse Luke 5, 29, in his house. And there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people.

See, these are people whom Matthew was gripped by the truth and he wanted to invite all his friends, all his fellow tax collectors. And there were a lot of other people who were just maybe a lot of immoral women who these tax collectors were fooling around with. And they were all at the table.

And Matthew had a great burden that these people should hear the gospel that he had. I've seen very few people like this. There are some who, you know, are saved from a life of sin and shame and they are immediately gripped to reach out to the same message to all the others who are their colleagues and friends.

So that's exactly what Matthew was doing. And these others were there to criticize them. They didn't have the same burden that Matthew had.

Why did Matthew invite all these sinners? Because he knew what a sinner he was and he was converted. And the Pharisees looked at this. Turn back to Matthew 9. The Pharisees saw this and they said to his disciples, why is your teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners? They were concerned about that.

And then Jesus heard this. He immediately rose up to the defense of Matthew. It's amazing to see how the Lord stands up for his children.

I mean, Jesus knew why Matthew had invited all these people. Because he wanted them to be changed by the same gospel that had changed him. And Jesus came to earth for sinners.

But people who have no burden to reach the lost feel happy only if they're in a meeting where everybody's a believer or they're all decent upright people. But it's amazing how Jesus was so often with people who are despised and sinners because he wanted to reach them. I find a lot of believers, when they get converted, they seem to lose their burden to reach the lost.

I mean, there are a few, very, very few who continue to have that burden. I believe that every Christian should have a burden to reach those who are unconverted, just like Matthew had. As soon as he was converted, he immediately thought, let me have a big feast here for all my unconverted colleagues.

Let me invite Jesus to speak to them. I very rarely found people who have that burden. For example, if Matthew had told all those people, listen, we're going to have a meeting, all your tax collectors and sinners come, nobody would have come.

But he arranged a feast. Yeah, everybody loves to go to a feast. And at the feast, he gets Jesus to speak to them.

What a wonderful way to reach the lost. As I said, very, very, very few believers I've met who have that type of burden to even arrange a feast to reach the lost. And then the Pharisees are like some believers who ask, why are you having meetings with these people? Why are you inviting these people? Why don't you have a feast for all the believers? But Jesus defended Matthew.

Matthew's decision was right. And we, when we are in the same spirit of Christ, we will see the same thing. Jesus said, all those healthy people whom you invite to the feast, they don't need a doctor.

It's not the healthy people who go to a hospital. It's the sick people, verse 12, who need a doctor. And there are many, many sick people around us.

They need a doctor. And as we have opportunity, we should seek to witness to them, invite them to our meetings. You think of when was the last time you invited an unbeliever to a Christian meeting? I think of some of the children I know back home in our Bangalore church who would invite some of their schoolmates to come for a meeting.

And I know two families that are very active members in CFC today in Bangalore, who the initial contact was to one of the school children, who passed it on to a friend who was from an unconverted family. So you see how the burden that Matthew had as soon as he was converted, he's the same night, he's converted in the morning, the same night, he has a great feast. And he says, this gospel has changed me.

I must pass it on to others. You know, it's like a person who discovered a cure for some terrible sickness he had, and some doctor of some medicine, the doctor prescribed, and he knows others who have the same sickness. And he wants those people to meet this doctor.

I mean, we would do that if it was a physical sickness. I wonder if we feel that way about the spiritual state we were in, from which the Lord saved us to have that burden. Now, I know there are some people who are gifted to be evangelists.

Not everybody is an evangelist. It says in Ephesians 4 that some are called to be evangelists. I don't deny that.

And naturally, those evangelists will have a much greater burden to reach the lost. And I'm not talking about full-time evangelists. We believe that every Christian must be a full-time witness for Christ.

But in Ephesians 4 and verse 11, it speaks of the five main gifts in the church, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or shepherds, and teachers. And when it comes to apostles and prophets and teachers, everybody recognizes we can't be that. The same with evangelists.

Not everybody can be an evangelist. It's a unique gift. But Jesus said that we are all to be witnesses.

There's a difference between being a witness, sharing what the Lord has done, and being an evangelist. And there's only one thing that prevents us from being witnesses, and I want to be very frank. I'll tell you what it is.

We're not filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 1, verse 8 says, let me read to you, Acts 1, 8. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And not you should be.

I mean, if it says you should be, that would be like an exhortation. It's like telling people you should be witnesses for me in different places. But that's not what he says.

You shall be means it'll be automatic. When the Spirit comes upon you, you'll be impelled or propelled to go out and be a witness. And it won't be just in your own little circle of Jerusalem.

It'll spread from there. It'll start in Jerusalem, like Matthew started with his own little group of immediate friends who were tax collectors, all his fellow sinners. He started there.

But then it will spread in concentric circles to Judea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. So that's a burden that everyone in this church must have. If you recognize that you are a rotten sinner whom Jesus picked up from the gutter and brought salvation to, and then you know there are a lot of people around you who are in that same gutter.

Now, I realize we need to have a lot of wisdom. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom. We're not to make ourselves offensive in the way we present the gospel.

But there must be a burden. And let's start with the burden. To me, every ministry comes out of a burden.

I see a burden like a mother carrying a baby in her womb. I remember when I first got converted way back in 1959, I hadn't even read through the Bible once. It was one of the first things I did was to read through the whole Bible.

I was just 19 and a half. And in six months, I read through the whole Bible. As I said, I want to complete the Bible because I'm a Christian now.

To tell you honestly, I find lots of Christians who haven't read through the Bible even once. I would ask all of you listening to me today, ask yourself one question. How long have you been converted? More than one year? And you haven't read through the Bible once? Two years? And you've still not read through the Bible once? I would suggest that you go before the Lord and confess your sin.

It is a sin that you have despised his word. There's one letter that God wrote from heaven for man. Supposing you were a faithful wife and your husband is far away.

And he sends you one letter. And you just read one page or something and toss it there. You have no time to read it.

It's too long a letter. But the husband took such a lot of trouble to write that letter to you. Wouldn't you read through every sentence of it? Even if there were things you didn't understand.

I did not understand 90% of what I read. Except the stories. But I read through the whole thing.

To me that was an expression of my valuing the fact that God Almighty decided to give me his word in my own language. And I respect that and I value it. And therefore I'm going to read it.

Even if I don't understand it. I'm going to read through the whole thing. And then after that I read slowly, slowly, slowly.

And I understood more and more and more and more. So what it says here is when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses. Not you should be.

Please remember this. What I'm telling you now is you should be witnesses. That's not what the Lord says.

The Lord says when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be propelled. It's something like you light a match to a jar of oil or petrol or something. You don't have to tell that.

No, you've got to burn. You don't have to tell that oil to burn. It's just automatic.

You light that oil, it burns like anything. You light that gas stove, immediately it burns. There's no need of exhortation.

That's exactly to me. That's how I see the Holy Spirit coming like a fire and just puts a burden. So that's what happened to me.

I remember those days. It's such a burden to share this wonderful gospel that had saved me way back in 1959. Then I began to fill my pocket with tracts.

Well, I didn't always do it wisely. But when I got an opportunity, I'd have something with me to give to someone. Say, would you like to read this? Things are a little different now.

We had to be wise in giving because a lot of people, Christianity has brought so much offense. And many people are not interested and they'll think you're just being a nuisance by trying to convert them. But I'm thinking now not of just going around giving tracts to everybody you meet in a bus or on the road or anything.

No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the people you know really well. Matthew didn't go out and call everybody from the streets, come to my house.

No. But his fellow tax collectors, they were not interested in the gospel. But he had a burden for those he was working with who were his colleagues who he knew very well for many years perhaps.

So think of people whom you know very well for many years. Let's start with that circle. And say, Lord, please fill me with the Holy Spirit in such a way that I can be a witness to them.

Not in an offensive way. I felt this very strongly when I was working in the Navy. Whether I was on a ship or a base, I said, Lord, I'm not going to go around everywhere preaching.

No, I couldn't do that. In fact, in the military, you can't go around doing it. But I said, I must try and make it obvious to everyone that I'm a different type of Christian than the average Christian they have met.

How you do that is up to you. But one of the ways we can do is to pray to the Lord to give an opening. It's one of the things I do.

Lord, you see, even though I'm living right now, I say, Lord, give me an opening with somebody here. Give me an opening. I'm available.

I'm sitting in a plane sometimes. I don't preach to the person sitting next to me automatically. He may just get offended and want to turn away.

But I say, Lord, if you give me an opening, I'll witness. Give me some opening with anybody, anywhere. My place of work or somewhere.

I want to be, I'm available. I want the Holy Spirit to always push me to be a witness. That's what I see in Pharisee's burden.

But there will be people to criticize. And who are the people who are criticizing Matthew here in Matthew chapter 9? Those who have no burden for the lost. So you can be sure that when you try to witness to somebody and maybe you make a mistake, they'll criticize you.

See, we told you that you shouldn't do it like that. And what do they themselves do? Nothing. It's better to do something and make a mistake rather than sit back and just find fault with others who are trying to be a witness for Christ.

So I want to encourage you, brothers. I'm not trying to say you should be witnesses. That's not what I say.

All I say is seek God for a genuine baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Then you won't need any exhortation from anybody. That promise will be fulfilled.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. And whether you like it or not, you will be witnesses for me. First in your immediate circle, Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and then finally to the outermost parts of the earth.

Maybe God perhaps wanted to widen the circle of some of you much wider than what it is right now to be his witnesses. But you did not allow the Holy Spirit to make you a witness in the small circle that you're in. And therefore it doesn't ever expand.

Imagine going through years and years and years and years and years, and God never expands the circle of your witness when it could be so much more. You say, well, I'm not an apostle or a prophet. No, you're not even an evangelist.

Fine. But what about being a witness? That is for every single Christian. You shall be my witnesses.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That's a command given to us just as much as the command which says don't lust after women or the command which says don't get angry. Husbands, live in an understanding way with your wife.

Yeah, that's a command. You shall be my witnesses to the outermost parts of the earth. It's God's will.

It's a promise that, see, we don't seek for the power of the Holy Spirit unless we have a sense of need. Need is the way by which God propels us to seek God, seeking for something. It's just like you go to a doctor only if you know you're sick.

If you're sick and you don't know it, you won't go to the doctor. If you're ignorant of your sickness, you may be terribly sick, but you don't go to the doctor until you're aware of it. And I wonder if you're aware that the lack of a burden to be a witness for Christ is a defect.

It's a sin. I see it like that, and I'm not judging anybody. I want to judge myself.

I say, Lord, make me more fervent to be a witness for you, not in an offensive way. It's like when Jesus said that your light shall shine before men. Light doesn't make a lot of noise, but you can go into a room and you know immediately whether there's light or not.

And if someone is working with you in an office or your relatives who frequently associate with you, they must see clearly that you are a different type of Christian than the average Christian they have met. That's very, very important. And it's a good thing for every one of you, my dear brothers and sisters, to ask yourself, your immediate circle first.

Remember Jerusalem first. You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth. In the immediate circle of people who know you, your family members and your office

goers whom you've been with for a long time, do they know that I'm a little different from all the others? Do they know that I'm the type of person who will not laugh at their dirty jokes and that I'm a little clean and upright? And not only clean and upright, which is a little easier to be, but considerate about others in the office who may be in need.

Very often the Lord reminds me of Joseph in the prison, the way he got out of that prison. You know the story. It started by an act of being considerate towards two discouraged prisoners sitting there.

Joseph saw two discouraged prisoners, Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer, sitting there. And sitting maybe with their head in their hands discouraged. Now Joseph himself had enough problems.

He had been in the prison for so long and he'd been falsely accused and his parents were far away and his family members were far away. He could have sat down and worried about his own problems, but he was concerned about these other guys. And he goes up to them and says, why are you looking so sad? That one sentence was what opened the door for him to get out of prison.

You read that story. If he had not said that, he'd have been in prison continuously. One sentence out of a concern, a burden.

These guys are looking so sad. Let me go and ask them why. And then they, you know the story, they told him what happened.

They had some dreams that discouraged them. And so he explained the dream to them. And that's how later on when Pharaoh's cupbearer went before Pharaoh, he could tell Pharaoh, hey, I know somebody who can interpret your dream.

And that was what opened the door for Joseph to go into Pharaoh's palace and become the second ruler in Egypt. So it's that concern that I see there, which made him a witness. And then a witness further in a much wider circle in Egypt to others.

So that's what I see here in Matthew. It's a great example. As soon as he was converted, he wanted to call his colleagues.

You see something similar also in John's gospel. In John's gospel, you read about, you know, John preaching to his disciples. And it says here in John chapter 1, verse 35, John was standing with two of his disciples.

And he looked at Jesus and said, there's the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard John speak and followed Jesus. And they went with Jesus, and they spent the day with him.

And one of the two, verse 40, was Andrew. He first went to his own brother. He said, my brother's got to hear this.

And he said, we found the Messiah. And, you know, if you read the other places where Peter was fishing and all, he was not immediately responsive, as I understand, to what Andrew said. Probably a bit questioning, is it really so? But he came along, and he turned out to be the greatest apostle of all.

So think of what would have been missed there if Andrew had not done that. He went and told Simon, he didn't go to preach to the world. He said, my brother, he's next to me.

I know we are good friends. Let me tell him. And then the same way, when you read about another disciple, who was John 143, the next day he promised to go, and he found Philip.

And Jesus said to him, follow me. And Philip, it says in verse 45, he said, hey, I've got a friend called Nathaniel. Nathaniel was a bit skeptical of all these people who claimed that they had found the Messiah.

He said, we found him whom the prophets spoke of. And Nathaniel said, no, no, no, it can't be. So Philip said, no, don't just say that.

Come and see. And he got converted immediately, as soon as he brought him to Jesus. So we find something about these early disciples.

They immediately said, hey, I found something in the Lord. I've got to pass this on to others. I know we have all found something in Christ.

Do you feel that it is such a tremendous value that we got of healing from some incurable sickness, and around us are people who have got that same incurable sickness, do we have a burden for them? That's the question. So coming back to Matthew chapter 9, we saw the same thing that Andrew did, the same thing that Philip did, and as a result, some others became, Nathaniel became a disciple of Jesus. That's how the early apostles were, not just that Jesus went and called them.

Jesus called one, and that chap would go and call another, and that chap would go and call another. That's how these first 12 were not all direct contacts of Jesus, as you can see here. So when Matthew did this, you see the Pharisees criticizing this and saying, hey, we are all holy people.

Why does your holy leader sit with tax collectors and sinners? And look at Jesus' reply in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 12. That's the other thing we need to bear in mind. One is that God wants to empower us by the Holy Spirit so that we become his witnesses to others in the circle we are in, not in an offensive way, but through our immediate circle.

All these folks, whether it's Matthew calling his immediate circle, Andrew calling his immediate brother, Philip calling his immediate friend, Nathaniel, it's that the ones who are closest to us are family members. Let's have a burden to share with them, even if it means some reproach comes on you. There is a reproach.

I know I have suffered a lot of reproach by seeking to be a witness for Christ to family members. So what? I mean, I continue to love them and act in a humble way towards them and help them. And they gradually have come to respect me, even if they don't turn.

I'm hoping that they will turn before they die and leave the earth. But I don't want to be responsible for having failed the Lord when he saved me of not doing my part of being a witness to those whom the Lord wants to reach through me. You heard me once mention in one meeting how there was a young brother in one of our village churches who doesn't speak a word of English.

He doesn't know English. But he's never learned. Now he may have learned a little bit attending a lot of my meetings.

But he wants to remember I've been testifying in a meeting, which I'll never forget. He quoted John at the end. It was a testimony meeting at the end of the conference where he said, John 3.16 says, God so loved

the world that he gave his only begotten son, and whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That was for the whole world of millions of people. But he said, in my case, I have a small world, a small world around me, he said, of my immediate relatives and colleagues, place of work, et cetera. And that's the world into which God has sent me, his beloved son.

He's referring to himself. God has sent me, God's beloved son, into this small world of very, very few people, the circle of people I know. And God so loved all those people.

God so loved that little world in which I'm in. He loves that little world also of the people who know me. And that's why he sent me, his son, into that little world so that some might come to everlasting life.

And God sent his son into the world, Jesus into the world. And how many people have come to everlasting life? Not even 10%. Ninety percent are lost.

We know that. So it doesn't matter if 90% of the people you are in touch with are lost, but at least there will be a 10%. There will be a remnant.

It's always a remnant that reaches out. And sometimes you'll be surprised to see people whom you least expect to turn to the Lord, and just because your life shone there, they got on to the Lord. And maybe on their deathbed they will turn, remembering that they knew one man who knew the Lord.

If you're really a wholehearted Christian, really sincerely, not seeking to be preached in an offensive way, I don't believe that, but living in such an upright way and sharing when you get opportunity, or by the way, by your light, first of all. And then I believe this, that a true Christian, one who's truly following the Lord, they will never forget you. They will remember you all their life.

I remember once I met a naval officer who was an admiral, a colleague of mine, 40 years earlier. And he came up to me at a retired naval officer's meeting and said, Zach, I can never forget you. They remembered that I was different from the average person.

I wouldn't drink along with them. I wouldn't be dancing there with all the others. That I was different.

And that's all. I mean, I didn't go around preaching, but people knew what I stood for. If I had a table in some office, if I worked in, there'd be always a Bible that I keep there so that people know that I'm a Christian in some way.

I can't preach, but nobody can stop me from keeping a Bible there. And in Indian, many Indian offices, they permit you to have a calendar on the wall. I would put a calendar with a Bible verse on the wall.

In some way, without causing offense, to just make it known that Jesus Christ is my Lord. I'm not the usual run-of-the-mill Christian. I'm a little different.

And there will always be people who criticize. There are Pharisees. All these 2,000 years, there have been Pharisees who find fault with you.

Just shut your ears to what they're saying. Then Jesus said, it's those who are healthy, who are sick, who need a physician. And listen to these words, very, very important words, Matthew 9, 13, that he speaks to those who are legalistically minded like the Pharisees.

And let's think of that also because there can be a tendency towards Phariseeism in all of us. See, the Pharisees, I read a little bit about how they started. I think it was around maybe 200 or 300 years before Christ's time, sometime after the time of Malachi.

Between Malachi and Christ, there are about 300 years. And during that period, you know, you read Malachi chapter 1, and you see Israel had drifted away tremendously. And at that time, there was a group of sincere people who wanted to restore the truth.

And, you know, just like we in CFC have come out of dead churches and tried to stand up for the truth in all of you in RLCF. So this group of Pharisees came out trying to stand for the Lord and started out very well, like all good movements, God-fearing people starts out very well. And then over a period of time, like in every movement, decline comes in.

They still hold to these doctrines. The doctrines that Pharisees held 300 years later in the time of Jesus was the same as the doctrines there the founders 300 years earlier in Malachi's time held. But the life was very different.

Those people who first started was because they wanted to have a concern that God's people are drifting away. We want to stand up for the truth. Just like CFC or RLCF is standing today.

But over a period of time, decline came in and that there's a doctrine that is more important to them and not the life. That's what happens in every movement, whether it's Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Brethren, anything, the doctrine becomes important. We evaluate people by the doctrine and not by life.

And that's why very often such people, one mark of such people is they despise people in other Christian groups. They say there can't be any Christians in other groups except in ours. That's a mark of a Pharisee.

I've come to see some very good Christians in other churches who are much better than some CFC Christians. I just face up to it. They love the Lord.

They seem to be witnesses for Christ. So the Pharisees became like that. The doctrine was right.

See what Jesus, look at the two certificates that Jesus gave to the Pharisees in Matthew 23. Matthew 23, by the way, is probably the one chapter. It reminds me of Isaiah chapter five.

In Isaiah chapter five, when you get time, you can look at it. Isaiah said, woe unto this group and woe unto this group and woe unto this group and woe unto this type of sinner, that type of sinner, the other type of sinner. Isaiah chapter five is full of that.

And Matthew 23 is also like that. Jesus said, woe unto you for this. Woe unto you because you do this.

Woe unto you because you're like this. Woe unto you because you're like the Pharisees. But in the midst of all the condemnation of the Pharisees, where he finally said that you will not, Matthew 23, 33, you will not escape the damnation of hell.

In the midst of all that, he pointed out two good things about the Pharisees. That's one thing about Jesus. Even among the worst people, you could find something good.

And sometimes you can be so prejudiced against some group that you never find anything good in them. See, for example, the Roman Catholics, and you find there's nothing good and there are some good

things in them. Sometimes many of them stand more for the truth of the Bible than many so-called Protestants.

Yeah. And they have a strong stand against many things that some Protestants don't have a strong stand against. So Matthew 23.

Number one, Jesus approved of the letter of their doctrine. The letter which they thought according to the letter of the law, they were right. See Matthew 23.

He told his disciples, verse three, Matthew 23, everything that they tell you to do, do. Do you think Jesus would say that about the Roman Catholics today? No. Everything they tell you to do, do.

Definitely not. He won't approve praying to Mary or praying for the dead. Would he say that about the Jehovah's Witnesses? Would he say that about the Methodists who practice infant baptism? Everything that they tell you to do, do.

Yeah. He's saying a hundred percent of that teaching is correct. How many Christian groups do you think today Jesus could give that certificate to? A hundred percent of their teaching is correct.

That's the certificate he gave to the Pharisees. Now you may say in RLCF, a hundred percent of the teaching is correct. Good.

But you could still be a Pharisee because the same certificate Jesus gave to the Pharisees. And one more, one more thing. Second certificate.

Matthew 23 and verse 25. You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but the inside is full of self-indulgence. So in a cup, there are two parts, outside and inside.

That speaks of outer life and inner life. And he says your inner life is full of corruption, corrupt. It's like a full of dead man's bones, he says in verse 27.

But what about the outer life? Good. You clean the outside of the cup. What a certificate to get from Jesus.

Your doctrines are all a hundred percent right. Your external life is absolutely upright. There are many Christians, even their external life is not upright.

They cheat. They tell lies. Forget about their thought, life, attitude, motives, and all that you can't see.

That's the inside of the cup. The outside of the cup. They speak graciously when they are with others.

The outside of the cup is clean. And we can be like the Pharisees. The doctrine, a hundred percent right.

External life, a hundred percent right. And yet a thorough Pharisee. I wonder if all of you dear brothers and sisters who have chosen to be with RLCF because of its values, because of the doctrines it preaches.

Do you feel possibly that you could be a Pharisee? Do you ever think like that? That with all my correct doctrines and a very good external life that others appreciate. After all, remember, all the people in your church can only see your external life. They don't know what your thoughts are like.

Even your wife doesn't know. They don't know what your inner attitudes are towards people. They don't even know the motives with which you do some good things.

What do they see? They see your doctrine. Praise God. Here's a church that has the right doctrine.

And they look at your life and say, what a good life. But it may be only on the outside. I'm pointing that out to say that in the best of churches, there can be Pharisees who don't even realize they're Pharisees.

So if you see the danger that you and I face of being a Pharisee, then you'll be alert to it. The greatest danger is the one you're not aware of. Or you think that, no, no, no, I'm not dangerous.

Supposing someone were to say to you, brother, sister, do you consider the possibility that you could be a Pharisee? Would you turn around and say, no, no, no, no, I'm not a Pharisee. I'm a humble follower of Jesus. Really? Yeah.

And here's one mark of the Pharisees. Let's get back to Matthew 9. Jesus told the Pharisees, go and learn this lesson. What is that lesson? I want you to have compassion, not all these sacrifices you make.

Now, sacrifice is good. The Lord calls us to sacrifice. And we follow the Lord.

We have to sacrifice. But the Lord says, more than all that, I want you to have compassion because I did not come to call the righteous people, but sinners. If I have the spirit of Christ.

The more I have it, I'll have that spirit. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. I may not be an evangelist, but I say, Lord, I want to be a witness.

By my life, wherever I am, in my office, with my relatives, even if I'm traveling somewhere or going to a store, the way I speak to people selling me something in a store, or the way I interact with people whenever I meet them on the road or in my neighborhood or anywhere, then they must see that I'm a gracious Christian. And I'm not offended by anything they say. I will not get hurt by anything they do because I'm different.

All my colleagues at work and my relatives say that I will not be one who gets upset with them, but I can forgive their mistakes and overlook. You see, this person is different. Not just that he's preaching something.

The sad thing is that a lot of Christians, they preach more than they live. And there are two voices that come from us. One is the voice of our life, and the other is the voice that comes from our words.

And like someone once said, I can't hear what you're saying with your lips, with your mouth, because your life speaks much louder than that. And that drowns out these holy words that you're speaking. That should never be any accusation that anybody makes against us, among our relatives or our place of work.

And so the Lord says we need to have compassion towards people we don't agree with. The Pharisees did not agree with these sinful people. All in the world is Jesus mingling with these people.

In fact, Jesus mingled with sinners so much that he had a title called Friend of Sinners. That's a wonderful title if people give you a title like that. This guy's a friend of sinners, man.

Not a friend of holy people. Jesus never had a title called Friend of Holy People. He was a friend of sinners.

And I want people to see that in me, that I'm not, particularly those who are close to me, place of work, or my relatives, they must see I don't look down on them because they disagree with me doctrinally, when a lot of our fellow relatives may be nominal Christians, who are in dead churches, not born again at all. It's very easy for us to have an attitude towards them or looking down upon them as you're not up to the mark. Well, you'll never bring them to the Lord that way.

But if they can see Christ in our actions and our attitudes, not despising them, let the world call us friends of sinners. It doesn't matter. I desire compassion.

Not all the sacrifices you make. I desire compassion. That word has been coming to my heart quite strongly.

And I want to share it with you. God desires that compassion is manifested in us. If you were to ask me, what is the greatest danger that churches like CFC and RLCF face? What do you think it is? Is it the danger of our permitting adultery or permitting divorce or permitting unrighteousness in financial matters? No, no, no, no, no.

Is there any danger we face particularly? What do you think? Have you thought of that? Because if you know there's a danger, you'll be careful. I mean, if your children go to school and you find that people are circulating drugs there in the guise of candy. Well, you're warning your children.

Don't just take any candy that somebody offers. There's a danger there. So if we are aware of a danger, we stand against it.

If you're not aware, we can fall into a lot of traps. So what is the greatest danger that believers like us in CFC, RLCF churches face? I would say is the danger of being a legalist. Legalism, which is going by the letter of the law and judging others by the letter of the law.

That's what Jesus was so different in that area. You see, I'll give you two classic examples of that. Turn to John chapter 8. We all know the story.

I desire compassion and not sacrifice. Remember, that's what Jesus said. I want compassion, not sacrifice.

So here's one example of that. The woman caught in adultery. You know the story.

The Pharisees came and they didn't just say that. They quoted God's word. Now remember, Jesus was always quoting God's word and the Pharisees knew that.

So they said, God's word says, John 8 verse 5. Women who are caught in adultery must be stoned to death. What do you say? They did not know that Jesus himself, when he was in heaven, gave that command to Moses. Who gave Moses that command? Yeah, from heaven.

Jesus gave that command before we came to earth. So he knew the law very well because he had himself had given it to Moses. Women who are caught in adultery must be stoned to death because that's the way you keep Israel pure from immorality.

So they said, Jesus, you're the one who says you keep God's word. What about this? Don't you know this word in scripture? What do you say we should do? And Jesus waited for an answer from his father. That's why he was scribbling on the ground, waiting for the father to give him a right word.

And the father gave him a right word. He did not speak till he got a right word. He took a little time.

He waited. And then he said, OK, he was without sin. The father said, tell them he was without sin.

Cast the first stone. And he said that. And they all went away because they knew that if any of them dared to pick up the stone, Jesus, who saw their inner life, would make a list of all their sins and they would be publicly humiliated.

So they dare not pick up a stone because they were scared. Jesus would. They knew that Jesus could see through them.

And so it says from the beginning of the oldest, John 8, verse 9, they all went away. But there was one man left who had never sinned. He was qualified to pick up a stone.

The command was what Jesus said was he who is without sin. Take a stone and throw it first and keep the law. I'm not saying don't keep the law.

And Jesus was without sin, obeying his own, practicing what he preached. He should have taken up the stone. And kept the law, which he himself had given Moses from heaven.

But he didn't do it. And he says, woman, nobody to condemn you. No.

OK. I also I'm without sin. But I also don't condemn you.

Where's the level? Go. Don't sin again. Did Jesus keep the law there? Did he obey the law of Moses, which he himself did? Did he practice what he preached? What he preached means what he told Moses from heaven.

Why didn't he do that? I desire compassion. And not sacrifice. You need to understand that.

It looks like a violation of the law. He was not violating the law. He was keeping the spirit of the law.

The Pharisees were legalists who keep the letter of the law. And when I say that in RLCF and CFC churches, we're in danger of being legalist. It means keeping the letter.

Taking that letter of the law and saying that was not doing it. You can have that attitude towards. Divorced people who comes supposing a divorced person comes to the church and you know that Jesus strong standards on divorce.

Yeah. And you can have a hard attitude towards them. What was Jesus attitude to the Samaritan woman who was divorced five times? I've often thought of that, you know, supposing a woman comes to your church to RLCF.

And she has been divorced five times. She's got rid of five husbands. And now she's sleeping with a man.

I wonder if our attitude would be the same as the attitude of Jesus was to that woman to such an extent that that woman. Jesus used her to bring the whole town of Samaria to hear the gospel. That's amazing.

It really humbles me. To see. The discernment Jesus had to know that this woman.

Though she has sinned so much. Is. A needy person was really seeking to know the truth.

That's a great thing. I don't want to miss out on that. I want to have discernment from God.

When I meet sinful people and others who come to the church. Lord, is this just an outright hypocrite? Or is this person who's coming to RLCF someone? Though he's a sinner. Though she's a sinner.

Yet one who is seeking. Ask God for discernment. It's a great need.

One more example. Luke chapter seven. We read of this woman.

Who came and anointed Jesus feet. With precious ointment. You know the story very well.

Luke chapter seven. A woman who was known to be a sinner. Luke 7:37.

That means she was a prostitute. And that's the meaning of that. An immoral woman.

For the margin of my Bible says. She was known to be a prostitute in the town. And she.

Brings a very expensive alabaster vial of perfume. Where did she get the money for that? Where did she earn the money? From her prostitution. And in Deuteronomy it says.

You must not bring the hire of a prostitute. Into the house of God. That's a law.

And Jesus knew that. Just like he knew the other law. That woman got an adultery must be stoned.

Here's another law that Jesus knew. That. A hire of a prostitute must never be brought into the house of God.

And here is this prostitute. Using the hire that she earned through. Many years of prostitution buys a very expensive vial of perfume.

And. Jesus knew it even if everybody didn't. And she anointed his feet.

Did Jesus accept it? He certainly did. Not only accepted it. He praised that woman.

He said this woman. Is a terrible sinner. But.

She's been forgiven so much. Verse 47. Luke 7:47.

So she loves so much. So I ignore. The law.

Which says. The hire of a prostitute must not be brought to the house of God. There the house of God was Jesus himself.

And this woman is disobeying the law. She was a Jew, obviously. Disobeying the law and bringing the hire of a prostitute and pouring it out in the house of God.

And Jesus who knew the law clearly. Accepts it. But the Pharisee.

He says, oh, no, if this. If this man. Knew who this woman was.

He would have. Verse 39. If this man were a real prophet.

He would know what sort of woman this is. And he would not allow. Her to touch him.

He knew the law. That. A prostitute cannot bring her money into the house of God.

And he quotes that verse. Verse 39. And he even doubts whether Jesus is a prophet.

Think back what Jesus said to the Pharisees. I desire compassion. What I learned from that is.

If I really want to understand scripture in the right spirit. Even the New Testament. I need.

Tremendous compassion in my heart. Towards sinful people. Otherwise, I'll be a legalist.

What is the greatest danger we face in RLCF? Legalism. Now. If you don't.

If you take this as a law. Now what I've said. You go by the letter of what I taught today.

You end up as a compromiser. All types of things you'll compromise and say I'm being compassionate. No.

You cannot. It can only be done by a truly spiritual person. You need to ask God to make you spiritually minded.

To know where you have to be firm. And where we need to be compassionate. Where it looks as if.

It looks as if we are violating God's law. But we understand the spirit. We understand God's heart.

So what I'm trying to say finally is. Dear brothers and sisters. Let's not just be taken up with the letter of scripture.

But beyond the letter. Let's try to understand the heart of God. The heart of God for lost sinners.

The heart of God which says in 2 Peter 3. He does not want anybody to perish. But wants everybody to come to repentance. I know many times the Lord sort of.

Brought that word to my heart. God wants every single person. Even those who have committed terrible sins.

In 2 Peter. And chapter 3. It says. In verse 9. He wants every person to come to repentance.

Think of someone who's done some terribly wrong things. And you say well I have no hope for them. I'll tell you.

You may say that but. The Lord says. He wants even that person to come to repentance.

Somebody who's probably created a lot of problems. In RLCF. You feel there's no hope for them.

You believe God wants them to come to repentance also. There's a person back who does not repent. But God wants all to come to repentance.

That we can be strict with someone. And stand up. And confront a person when they're wrong.

But yet. Long in our heart. I hope that person will repent.

I don't want that person to continue in that way. I want him to repent. Do you have that attitude to people who have.

Done a lot of wrong things. In RNCF or people you know. Lord does not want anybody to perish.

But wants everybody to come to repentance. If you have that heart of compassion. And only God can give it to you.

Then we will understand Scripture. All right. Then even sometimes it may look as if you're violating Scripture.

But you're not violating Scripture. You're acting in the spirit of Christ. And.

Otherwise we will become. Pharisees who keep the letter of the law. Get a reputation before other legalists.

But we will not find. Approval from the heart of God. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father. This is not a subject we can understand. With the cleverness of our mind.

You have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent. But we know that if we come with a humble spirit. Acknowledging that we don't understand.

You will teach us. We pray that we'll really have the wisdom. And the power of the Holy Spirit.

To have compassion where we need to show compassion. And yet to reach out to the lost. To be your witnesses.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. There's a whiteness in God's mercy like the whiteness of the sea.

There's a kindness in his justice which is more than liberty. This is written by Weber. And some of his songs are really very meaningful.

Even though he was a Roman Catholic. He had a tremendous fear of God. And.

I see in this song a tremendous balance. Which is very important. In fact this is a good song for all legalists.

To sing. I sing it very often because I see that tendency towards legalism. In me because we're standing up for the truth.

So. That's a good way to express it like the whiteness of the sea. There's a whiteness.

And in his justice also there is a kindness. It's not a harsh. Judgment about this.

Which is even more than liberty. You want to go to the next verse? There is welcome for the sinner. And more graces for the good.

Think of that as. All sinners are welcome. And those who are good there are more graces.

That they can receive which they are. Then. They already have this mercy with the Savior.

And there's healing in his blood. We understand that the same mercy that we have received from the Savior. Is what we need to pass on to others.

We are when we say that we are like a branch in a tree. Whatever comes from the tree to us. Is what we pass on and the mercy we have received mercy from the Savior.

We need to pass that on to others. And the next verse is there's plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed. That's just telling that.

It doesn't matter how great a sinner you are. Redemption means. To be purchased out of the slave market of sin.

And that blood can deliver you and there's joy for all the members. Christ has suffered many sorrows. But for us there is plenty of joy for every single one.

No, all the members means. Every single person in the body of Christ. There's plenty of joy for you.

Because Christ has already taken all the sorrows upon himself. Let's remember that. And the next line is but here is the verse which is very very often comes to my mind.

We make God's love so narrow. By false limits of our own. Just like we heard today.

But the word of God says here. The prostitute must be stoned. So Lord how you are without sin.

Why don't you throw that stone? Why are you disobeying your own word? Or the word of God says you must not receive a single cent. From a prostitute coming in with an offering. How is it you all take such an expensive offering of an.

Alabaster vial full of perfume. We would even criticize Jesus himself. That is what the Simon the Pharisee did.

And today it's not Jesus. You may look at a godly man or a woman. Who does.

Something and you say how can he do that? And. We make God's love so narrow. Like I've said you know.

I've often publicly appreciated Mother Teresa. Great work she does among the poor people in India. I don't do anything for the poor beggars in India.

And she's done it so you and I I don't know how much you and I have done. Homeless people on the street. But here's a woman who's done such a lot.

And I appreciate her. I mean OK. She's got some false doctrines which I don't see a very serious.

Because I see those are the matters of the head. Worshipping Mary and all that. But in her heart she had a compassion.

For the poor which. Far exceeds what I have. So but we can make God's love so narrow and say yeah.

But the doctrine is not right. OK we're not joining her church. Let's stick to our own understanding of doctrine.

On everything. But we can magnify God's strictness. With a zeal that God himself does not magnify.

We need to be very careful. This is one of the most important verses in this song. We make God's love so narrow.

With all types of limits that we make by what we think is holiness. And we magnify its strictness. And before we go to the next verse.

I just want to read one verse from scripture. And that's in 1 Thessalonians. And.

Chapter 3. I don't know whether you know this verse. It relates to this verse in this hymn. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. And.

Verse 12 and 13. Read it together. And see if you've ever seen the connection between this.

What is the prayer? May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love. First of all for one another. And then for all the people in the unconverted people who need salvation.

Just as we do for you. May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for all people. Your relatives.

The people in your place of work. That circle. That world in which he has placed you.

Why? So that you may be without blame in holiness. All of us want to be without blame in holiness. This verse tells us.

You cannot be without blame in holiness. Unless you abound in love for all the people around you. See the connection? Holiness is not just doing certain right things and paying our taxes.

And doing certain things legally right. If you want to be without unblameable in holiness. You have to abound in love for all people.

And you can't do that. May the Lord cause you. That means the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Fills you. And floods your heart. Romans 5.5. With love.

For all people. Then you're unblameable in holiness. Otherwise something lacking in your holiness.

Okay. The next verse. And he says.

Goes on by saying. The love of God is broader than the measure of our narrow minds. We tend.

There's a tremendous tendency. When we stand up for the truth. To lose out on love.

Stand up for truth. And we lose out on grace. For the glory of God was seen in Jesus.

Full of grace and truth. And. Our tendency.

Generally speaking. Is to emphasize truth. And think we are upright.

And despise those who don't agree with us. In some minor point of doubt. But.

The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. And the heart of the eternal. Is most wonderfully kind.

These two verses. You know they're really in this song. Many times.

I sing it to myself. Lord this is what I want to be. I want to have that broadness.

Breadth. That you have in your love. And I want to have that kindness.

That you have in your eternal heart. Okay. Is that the last verse? And then it goes on to say.

If our love were but more simple. Or I would say if our faith. Were but more simple.

And if our love. Were but more simple. We would take him in his word.

And believe. In all that we heard today. And our lives would be all sunshine.

In the sweetness of our Lord. There's something sweet about the holiness of Jesus. And there's something.

Which is full of chilies. In the holiness of many. Christians.

But the holiness of Jesus was something sweet. Yeah. Thank you.

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