

Being Filled With The Spirit Is The Answer

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not wasting the talents and time given by God due to a wrong perception of Him being a demanding taskmaster. It highlights the need to understand God's love and compassion, to surrender self-will, and to discipline the body to run the race of faith effectively. The speaker encourages forgiveness, reconciliation, and living in obedience to God's commands as a way to experience true freedom and spiritual growth.

Scripture: Luke 19:12, Matthew 11:28, Psalm 66:18, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Hebrews 4:15, Matthew 5:23, Matthew 6:14, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Understanding God's Love", "Spiritual Growth through Obedience"

Description

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Transcript

Luke 19, verse 12 to 27. Why did this one man bury his Mina in a handkerchief? There was a reason why he did that. And he gives us the reason.

He gives the reason himself to the Lord in verse 22. It's very interesting for us to see why did he waste his talent? Why do you waste that one Mina? Why is it we have wasted time and our one life so far? He says in verse 21, Luke 19, 21, I was afraid of you, master, because you're a very demanding man. You take up what you did not lay down, you reap what you did not sow.

In other words, you're a very hard taskmaster. Some of you may have had bosses in your place of work are very hard and make you work much beyond your time. And you don't get any bonus.

You don't get any extra salary. They demand. And if one thing goes wrong, immediately they pull you up and say, why did you do that? And humiliate you and hard taskmaster.

There are some bosses like that. If you have never experienced a boss like that, you're a lucky man. There are many bosses like that.

And this man had the idea in his mind that God was like that. Demanding man. God is a demanding God.

He must never get angry even once at other people. He must never lust after a woman even once. He must never watch pornography even once.

He must never tell a lie even once. He must love your enemies, every one of them. Not most of them, but all your enemies.

You must forgive everybody who hurt you. You must ask forgiveness from everybody whom you have hurt. You hear all that and say, what a demanding God this is.

I'll tell you why we think like that. It's because we think like that that we never come to genuine holiness. Because this man thought like that, this master of mine is such a demanding man.

That's why he buried his one mina in the handkerchief and wasted it. And one day when Christ comes back and we stand before him, we will discover the reason why some Christians wasted their lives was because they did not know how much God loved them. The devil fooled them that God was a very demanding, hard taskmaster.

And they completely forgot what Jesus taught, that he was the most loving person in the whole universe. I want to ask you, my brothers, if you look into your mind, you may feel at times that God is a hard taskmaster, particularly some of the things we hear in CFC. Don't you? In many charismatic Pentecostal churches is the opposite.

They keep saying God is such a loving father and he cares for you and he loves you. And it's almost like saying it doesn't bother him what you do. So what if you watch pornography once in a while? It's not serious.

God is a very merciful father. What is there if you get angry? I mean, we are human. We will get angry now and then.

But God understands that. God understands we are human and our circumstances are tough. So we get angry, we lose our temper.

And the love of money, of course, if you live in this world, you have to love money. How in the world can you live otherwise? God is very merciful. And like that, little by little, the devil cancels out everything that Jesus said.

Under the pretext of, oh, God is very merciful and he's so loving. And that's why I've seen a lot of these charismatics and Pentecostals. Their life is so shallow.

There's no victory over sin in their life. Their children are wayward. Their relationship as husband and wife is pathetic.

Why? Because they think God is such a merciful, loving father. That's a wrong understanding of God's mercy. At the opposite extreme, there are these Pharisees who think God is such a tyrant.

You cannot come on the Sabbath day to get healing. No. Come on all the other six days.

God is very strict about the Sabbath. And Jesus rebuked them and said, you evil man, if your donkey falls into the ditch on the Sabbath day, do you pull him out or not? Or do you wait till you allow him to die and pull him out the next day? You're a hypocrite. And all these people who make these hard, demanding laws are hypocrites because they have not understood God's heart.

You can read the Bible without understanding God's heart. I'll tell you a good prayer to pray when you read the Bible. Lord, beyond the words on the page, help me to see your heart in this command.

Help me to see your heart in what you have said here. Then you will see he's not a hard taskmaster. When he says, I don't want you to get angry.

It's like saying, I don't want you to have even a small cancer in your life. Not even a small one. When he says, don't murmur.

It's like saying, I don't want you to have even a little bit of leprosy. Just one bit of leprosy in a hand. I don't even want you to have that.

Is that a demanding thing? That God loves you so much that he doesn't even want one speck of leprosy or one bit of cancer? That is how he's given me. That's a loving mother. If a mother looks at a child having some serious sickness, how will that mother look at that child? Oh, my dear child, I don't want you to be sick.

You're having it all with sick and fever and thin and not able to eat. And the mother would say, I wish I could take your sickness and you'd be free. That's how Jesus came to the earth.

He saw us in our sickness, in our sin, not even realizing the seriousness of the sins we commit. How many of you believe that grumbling and complaining is a serious sin? I think many believers don't think so. They grumble and complain regularly and think it's not serious.

They live under the Old Testament. I should not commit adultery. I should not kill anybody.

Those are the only serious things. Brother, then you're an old covenant person. No, a new covenant is much more serious.

But it's serious for our good health. Everything God says is so that he wants to be healthy, just like a mother. Which of you parents, tell me, which of you parents will be happy if your children are 90% healthy, 10% sick? Anybody? Only 10% sick, 90% healthy.

90% of days they can, they are healthy during the day. I know 90% of the time, but 10% of the time they're sick. 10% in a year means what? 36 days they are sick in a year.

You say, I'm happy. If my child is sick only 36 days in a year, I'm very happy. Are you like that? What about one day in a year? 364 days they must be healthy, but one day they are sick, it's okay.

Not me. I want them to be healthy every single day. Am I a demanding father? Are you a demanding mother when you want your child to be healthy every day of the year and not even have one sickness in the body? Are you a demanding mother? No, you're a loving mother.

You're a loving father. And that's how God says, I want you to give up all sin in your life. The problem is little children don't realize the seriousness of sickness.

Why does that two-year-old put mud in his mouth? Do you grownups put mud in your mouth? Why does that child crawling in the ground put mud inside his mouth? Ignorance. It's not evil. It's totally ignorant that this mud will make me sick.

That is exactly how baby believers are. They murmur, they complain. It's like putting mud in their mouth and they don't say it's okay.

This mud tastes nice. They enjoy grumbling and complaining. You don't realize it's making them sick.

And they think God is a demanding God saying, don't put any mud in your mouth. Don't put those stones in your mouth. Don't jump from the roof of the building.

Are these all very serious demands? When a father says to a two-year-old child, don't jump from the roof of that building. We give commands to our children and we know that it's given out of love, even though the child may think it's very strict. A grownup person knows it is out of love.

And let me tell you this simple secret. When you think any command in the Bible is very hard and strict, you are a baby. You're a baby.

That's why you think, what is there if I enjoy a little mud? Only once in a while I put some mud in my mouth. Only once in a while I watch pornography, not regularly, once or twice. Would you put mud once or twice in your mouth now as you're a grownup person? Not every day, once or twice a year? No.

Because you know it makes you sick. Do you realize that lusting after women and getting angry make you sick in the same way? Or do you think God is a very hard man? Remember this man who put his one talent in a handkerchief, one mina, sorry, in a handkerchief and did not use it is because he thought God is a hard man. And I'll tell you this, it's because you don't maybe don't realize this is because you think God is a very hard person that you don't get victory over sin.

That's why you don't make proper use of your one life. Because you think God is a very hard man. I thought like that for 16 years after I was born again.

I was born again 62 years ago when I was 19 and a half. And for the first 16 years after I was born again I was defeated. I did not know victory over sin.

I mean not externally my testimony was good. I didn't kill anybody or commit adultery or any thing. But I thought my words anger and being gloomy and discouragement was one of my number one sins.

Frequently discouraged. You don't think discouragement is a sin right? It is, I'll tell you that. It's like putting mud in your mouth.

Because it is when I'm discouraged I'm saying indirectly the devil is running this world. He's the ruler of this world. That's what you're saying.

If you say my loving father is rules this universe you won't be discouraged. If you believe that everything God makes everything work together for your good you won't be discouraged. These are little little things we take it lightly.

Every command of God is for our good. You know why the apostle John at the age of 95 wrote these wonderful words. He had been a believer, spirit-filled believer for 65 years.

He was around 30 years old the apostle John when on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled him. And just by the way that is the secret of the Christian life to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I told you I got so fed up with my defeated life that by the end of my 16 years I said Lord I'm so defeated that I don't believe I should continue preaching.

I had already left my job and I was preaching but I was defeated. You think every preacher who preaches is victorious? No, most of them I know are defeated. I was defeated and I was preaching.

And people admired my preaching but I was defeated in my private life. But I was so fed up of that. I went before God and said Lord I'm not happy that other people are impressed by my preaching.

I'm defeated in my life. I get angry. I have dirty thoughts.

I want you to clean me up and if I cannot be cleaned I will stop preaching. I'll go and do some other job and I won't give up being Christian but I'll sit at the back of some church and never preach again in my life because I'm a hypocrite. I'm preaching things that are not true in my life and I don't want to continue like that.

And I became desperate as to fast and pray. Nothing happened. Finally like you know the graph, your graph goes down, down, down, down, down and you hit zero.

I think my graph went to minus not to zero. And at that point when I reached the bottom, God met with me one day in January 1975 and filled me with the Holy Spirit just like those apostles in the day of Pentecost and turned my life around like that. I did not become perfect in one day but the graph started going up slowly and it has been going up ever since in the last 46 years.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit and I did not get the fake, the fake experience that Pentecostals get, many Pentecostals. I remember when I first sought for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I was a young 23-year-old man. I was still in the Navy and somebody said, you got to go to the Pentecostals.

They'll tell you how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You're attending the Brethren Assembly. They don't talk about that.

So I went to a Pentecostal pastor along with another man and that pastor said, keep saying hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, keep on saying it and then if you keep on saying it after maybe a hundred times, your tongue will slip and then you'll battle something and you'll be filled with the Spirit. I thought, what nonsense is this? Who went to the apostles on the day of Pentecost and told them, come on, keep saying hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Nobody.

All this coaching proves that it is not from God. This is human manipulation. It is fake gold.

If you're going to buy gold, I've never bought gold in my life, so I don't know, but if I had to buy gold someday, I won't go alone. I'll go with an expert. See, I don't know what gold is like because there are a lot of things that look like gold, which are not gold.

And there are a lot of things that look like the Holy Spirit that are not the Holy Spirit. It's better to be cheated with gold than to be cheated in the matter of the Holy Spirit. And I was very careful.

I said, Lord, I will not receive a fake experience just to testify. I'm not interested in a fake experience because my aim is not to testify that I'm filled with the Spirit, but I really want to be filled with the Spirit. And

even if I never testify about it, I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, do you believe that what changed those apostles was not some new teaching or some powerful preacher or some conference they attended? No, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's what changed them. And one of the first things that happened to me when I got filled with the Holy Spirit was that I began to see God as a very loving Father. That was the most important thing that happened in my life when I got filled with the Holy Spirit.

I began to see like, and that's in Scripture. You see in Romans 8 and Romans chapter 8 and verse 15, you have received, the last part of verse 15, you have received the Holy Spirit, a spirit of adoption, which means a spirit that tells you you're a child of God. That's the meaning of spirit of adoption.

You have received a spirit that tells you you're a child of God, and that makes you cry out, Abba, Father. Abba is a Hebrew word. Unfortunately, they did not translate it.

If it is translated, it should read like this. You cry out, Daddy, Father. That is what the Holy Spirit did to me.

And I was filled with the spirit. I said, Father, Dad. Oh, I began to know that He was not a strict man like that man who buried that one handkerchief, one mina and a handkerchief.

I knew He was a loving Father, and everything that He said was out of His love, just like a father longs that his child will be 100% healthy, not 90%, not 99%, 100% healthy. And I saw that everything in the Bible, every command was to make me 100% healthy. So I was telling you about the Apostle John.

He was filled with the spirit on the day of Pentecost. And I'm sure they all experienced God as a loving Father. Until then, they had this Jewish concept, which the Pharisees had taught them in the synagogue, God is very strict, very strict.

If you disobey, He's going to come so hard on you, you'll never forget it for the rest of your life. And then they got filled with the spirit, and they cried out, God, Father. They were not afraid of the enemies anymore.

Until then, they were locked in a room. Oh, we better not witness. Everything disappeared.

They opened the doors and began to boldly preach. They were not afraid of anyone anymore. And John lived like that for 65 years.

Spirit-filled life. My experience is only 46 years. He lived 65 years.

And at the end of 65 years, listen to his testimony. 1 John. John wrote this when he was 95 years old.

And he says here in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 3, this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. What that means is two things. There's only one way that you can say you believe God loves you.

If I ask you, do you believe God loves you, you'll say yes. I say words are not enough. You prove it by keeping the commandments.

If you don't keep the commandments, you're like that man who buried his mina in a handkerchief and said, oh, my master is very hard, master. That's why you don't keep the commandments. That's why you

preserve your self-will.

Mina is your self-will, no? And you never deny it. Jesus was so convinced that his father loved him that he denied his self-will every day. Any temptation came, he would say no to his own will.

I'll do my father's will. What did he read in the last session? John 6, 38. I came from heaven not to die for the sins of the world.

I came from heaven, John 6, 38, to deny my own will and to do my father's will. And there were a lot of things, a thousand things in that. And one of those things, one of those thousand things was dying for the sins of the world.

That is only one of the thousand. Every day, denying my self-will in this, denying my self-will in this, denying myself. Finally, in Calvary also denying my self-will and dying for the sins of the world.

That is only one item. But his entire life was, I don't want to bury this thing in my head. I know my father loves me.

He's not an austere, strict man. So I can easily deny myself. When you don't deny your will to do the will of God, you are indirectly saying the same thing which that man was saying.

God is a very strict man. Strict person. No.

And then he says commandments are difficult. But see what John says now. 1 John 5, verse 3. I prove that God is a loving father by keeping his commandments and his commandments are not a burden.

Can you say that? Can you say that every commandment of God in the New Testament is not a burden? I can say that to you. It's not a burden. But I couldn't say that before I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

I thought of God as a very strict, hard God. I know it's not true. It is a lie the devil was telling me all the time.

Now I know the truth. He's a loving father. The most loving father.

No earthly father loves like him. No mother on the earth loves like him. God says even a mother may forsake that child who is newly born.

I will not forget you. I will remember you always. Isaiah 49, 15.

So God is a loving father. That's why we are happy to obey everything he says. Nothing is a burden.

Nothing is a burden. If you feel that any commandment of God is a burden, my brother, the underlying reason for that is you've got a wrong understanding of God. So I'll tell you the great revelation that came to my heart when I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

John 17. Well, before that, let me turn to Matthew 1. You know, the day I was filled with the Holy Spirit for the first time in January 1975, the next morning I woke up and I said, Lord, if what I had yesterday was a genuine experience from heaven and it was really the Holy Spirit, then the Bible should become a new book for me because the Holy Spirit brought this. And if the Holy Spirit has filled me, then when I read the Bible now, I should be seeing things in that which I've not seen for the last 16 years of studying.

And I've studied the Bible for 16 years and I've seen many wonderful things in it. So I said, imagine if the author comes to fill you, if the author of a book comes to live in your house, well, then you will learn a lot of things about that book, which you did not know when you were just reading it. If the author himself is sitting there.

And that's been so blessed for me the last 46 years to have the author of the book sitting beside me when I read the Bible. Do you have the author sitting with you when you read the Bible? Or do you say, oh, I have to read the Bible today. Otherwise I'm going to have an accident on my way to work.

Is that why you read the Bible? Or do you read it as a loving letter from your father? Let me tell you, even if you don't read the Bible, you won't have an accident. Don't read the Bible just to avoid an accident. No, God loves you.

Read the Bible if you love Jesus and you want to hear. Imagine if a wife gets a letter from a husband who's living in some far country. Will she open it and read it immediately? Or will she say, well, I'll keep that.

Maybe next week I'll read it. No. If they are a divorced couple, then it'll be like that.

But if he's a loving wife, he'll say, boy, it's a letter has come. I don't even want to wait for breakfast. I want to read it.

I believe that's how we want to hear what God has to say to us. Not just read the Bible, but to hear God speaking to us every day. Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And that has been the worst. It's always in front of me. I cannot live only by eating food.

I live only if I receive God's word every day. Why every day? Because that's how the Bible begins. You turn to the first page of your Bible.

What do you read? The first day God said something and there was light. Next day God said something and what waters were separated from the heavens. Next day God said something and then something else happened.

Next day God said something and something happened. Next day God said something. That's how it was for five, six days.

God said something. Something happened, God said something, something happens. Always something happens when God says something.

There's no day where it says, God said this and nothing happened. No, that doesn't happen like that. If it was not God, then of course nothing will happen.

The devil said something, or a man read the Bible and nothing happened. That's possible. But if God spoke to you from the Bible, something will definitely happen.

That's what you read in the first page of the Bible. God said, and it happened. God said, and it happened every day.

So I said, Lord, I want it to be like that in my life. So I remember the day after I was filled with the Holy Spirit I said, Lord, when I read the Bible, I want to know what the experience I had yesterday, is it real or is it some just emotional experience like those fake experiences that Pentecostal pastor wanted me to have 12 years ago? Or is it real? So I decided, I'm going to start with the Gospel of Matthew and see if it was the Holy Spirit who filled me yesterday. And I said, Lord, speak to me.

Give me an assurance that what I had yesterday was genuine. And as I read Matthew chapter one, I didn't seem to get any assurance. Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac was the father of Jacob and Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

And I said, Lord, I'm not getting anything out of this. Judah was the father of Pyrrhus and then someone else was the father of somebody else and somebody else was the father of, they went on and on and on and on and on and on. But I persisted, don't give up.

When you read the Bible, don't give up. Sometimes it's just a test. I think Matthew is written like this to see whether you'll give up or you'll continue reading and say, God will definitely speak to me.

So I continued reading. And I finally came to a word which said, this is of the Holy Spirit. I said, wow, this is exactly what I was looking for.

What happened yesterday wasn't the Holy Spirit. And that is in verse 20. Because Joseph had a doubt, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know.

And the angel came and said, don't be afraid. This is the Holy Spirit. The last part of verse 20.

I said, Lord, what a fantastic assurance I was looking for. I thought I wouldn't get it when I read all those verses of who begat who, but finally you had it for me hidden there in the middle. And I got it.

And then from there, God expanded that message and began to tell me, you know why I have freedom with the Holy Spirit? Tell me, Lord. Next verse. Mary would give birth to Jesus.

Aha. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary to produce the body of Jesus in her womb. And the Holy Spirit spoke to me saying, the Holy Spirit has come upon you to produce Jesus in you.

Wow. Not to make me a great preacher, no. Not to make Mary a great preacher, no.

But to produce the body of Jesus in her. And the Holy Spirit had come upon me to produce the life of Jesus in me. I've never forgotten that.

It was like a revelation. And then from there, the Lord gave me a whole message. Do you know that Mary was misunderstood after that? Everybody thought she was an unfaithful woman who got pregnant through some man before getting married.

She had a child and the Lord said to me, you will also be misunderstood. People will tell all types of false stories about you once you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Others who don't understand the operation of the Holy Spirit will misunderstand you just like they misunderstood Mary.

But Mary knew that she was not an unfaithful woman. And the Lord said to me, you know, you did not manufacture this. It was God who gave it to me.

And I say, yes, Lord, I know. But you will be misunderstood. But Christ will be formed in you little by little.

That baby did not grow in Mary's womb in one day. No, it took months and months and months. And so the Lord said to me, it was a whole message.

Christ will be formed in you little by little by little by little. That's why the Holy Spirit has come. That was a message I haven't forgotten until today.

And the Holy Spirit speaks to you. And I realized that day that Christ was formed, was to be formed in me in the days to come. And that Christ was to be glorified through my body.

That was what I realized the Holy Spirit has come for. Not to make me a great preacher, but that I will be more Christ-like. Christ will be seen more and more in me.

And people will misunderstand me, but I know the truth. And he went on to say there that it didn't, as I said, it didn't happen in one day. By little, by little, by little, it'll happen.

And God's purpose for Mary was fulfilled like that. And God's purpose for me will be fulfilled. And one more thing.

See, when God filled me with the Holy Spirit, I also unexpectedly began to speak in tongues. I did not want that. I did not expect it.

And I did not produce it. God gave me the gift suddenly, and I began to speak in tongues while I was praying the previous day. And the Lord said to me this day, the gift of tongues is much abused.

This is what the Lord told me 46 years ago. The gift of tongues has been much abused by so many Christians. 95% of it is fake.

I saw that. But there is some which is genuine. And the Lord said to me, I want you to exercise this gift in a godly way, mostly in private prayer to God, not in public, in private prayer to God, so that as you exercise this gift with a Christ-like life, some people will again have faith in this gift which is misused, abused, and rejected.

It's one of the least of the gifts, but it is one of the gifts. I don't despise any gift. If God gives me one rupee as a gift, I value it.

He doesn't have to give me one million rupees. If it comes from the hand of God, even if it is one paisa, I value it. So there's no such thing as least gift or big gift.

Whatever gift God gives, I value it. And the Lord said, I want you to exercise the gift backed up by a Christ-like life. And from that day onwards, one by one, God began to reveal amazing things.

That's when I discovered the new covenant after that. I never knew anything about the new covenant before that. I never knew the terms of the new covenant or the experience of the new covenant.

I was just like every regular Christian. Forgiving sins. I never even saw this verse clearly in Matthew 1. It's the other thing I saw that day.

The name Jesus means what? Matthew 1, 21. Not he will forgive people's sins. For all those years I was saying, he will forgive our sins, he'll forgive our sins.

But no, he will save us from our sins. Not save us from hell. My message was, he'll forgive your sins and save you from hell.

The name of Jesus means he'll forgive your sin. The name of Jesus means he'll save you from hell. Wrong.

Both are wrong. The name of Jesus is not he'll forgive your sins, not he'll save you from hell, which is the gospel most people are preaching. He will save you from your sins.

So I realized that that was the message I had to preach. Not that he'll save you from hell. Not that he'll forgive your sins, but he'll save you from your sins.

You know the difference between being forgiven and being saved? I remember talking to one believer. I said, brother, why do you call Jesus savior? Has he saved you from your anger? In your conversations with your wife or husband? He said, no. Has he saved you from lust in your mind, lusting in your mind? No.

Has he saved you from murmuring and complaining? No. Has he saved you from being unthankful at different times? No. Then what do you do? He says, I do these things, but I ask him to forgive me.

I get angry and I say, Lord, forgive me. I lust and I say, Lord, forgive me. I murmur and then I say, Lord, forgive me.

I commit some other sin, I say, Lord, forgive me. Ah, I said, then Jesus is your forgiver, not savior. Because he has not saved you from anger, he's not saved you from murmuring, he's not saved you from lusting, he's not saved you from bitterness.

He's forgiven you. Don't call him savior. Call him forgiver.

That's the truth. You're telling a lie when you say savior. He's not your savior.

He saved you from nothing. He said, nobody saved me from hell. That is at the end of your life.

I'm talking about now. I'm not talking what is going to save you at the end of your life. What's he saving you from now? Nothing, zero.

But he's forgiving everything. So be honest and say, Jesus is the forgiver. You see how wrong it is to call him savior? But he is the savior.

Because the first promise in the New Testament is he will save his people from their sins. Not you must struggle and save yourself. That is another mistake.

Ah, we hear in CFC, we must overcome these sins. So from now on, I'm going to fight the battle and I'm going to overcome and I'm going to be saved from my sin. You will not be able to save yourself from your sin.

You can try for all your life. I'll tell you right now, I'll prophesy. You will not be able to save yourself from any sin.

Determine, I got the message now I'm going to start. You can try. Next year's conference will still be defeated.

He will save his people from their sins. That is why his name is Jesus. The fundamental problem with most Christians is they don't know the meaning of the name Jesus.

They use it so glibly, in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus. Lord, we pray in the name of Jesus. I said, brother, what does that name mean? Here it is.

Jesus, he will save Matthew 12:1. He will save his people from their sins. Now I'll tell you something.

I read that verse for 16 years and I never saw it. That's amazing. I read about the new covenant for 16 years in the New Testament.

I never saw it. It's there. And it's like, there's a veil on top of your eyes.

See 2 Corinthians 3. Turn with me please to 2 Corinthians in chapter three. You know, you can read the Bible in the way people read the old covenant. The Israelites led the Old Testament.

Thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt. Thou shalt keep the Sabbath. Thou shalt not worship idols.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not kill. It's all, come on, come on.

Thou shalt not get angry. Thou shalt not murmur. You know, you read that same spirit into the New Testament commandments.

Thou shalt not divorce thy wife. Thou shalt not, so many things. Thou shalt not murmur.

Thou shalt not complain. And that is called reading it like Moses. 2 Corinthians 3:15. Whenever Moses is read, that means whenever you read the Bible in that old covenant Moses spirit, there's a veil over it.

It's like, you know, I take a handkerchief and I put it on top of the Bible and I try to read. Well, I can't see that letter clearly. There's a veil.

I can't read it. I can't understand it. Because you're reading it in the spirit of the old covenant.

Thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt. You should have, say, Lord, I can't understand it. But when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, when you turn to the Lord, which Lord is that? Verse 16 and 17.

The Lord is the Holy Spirit. When you turn to the Holy Spirit, that veil is taken away. You say, wow.

Now I can see something there. It's not written that he will forgive my sin. He saved me from my sin.

But why is it I never saw that for 16 years of reading it? There was a veil. There was a veil over that verse. I couldn't read it.

Couldn't read it. And I want to say to you, there's a tremendous difference when you read the Bible after being filled with the Holy Spirit. And if you remain filled with the Holy Spirit.

They're not clever ideas. What's the difference between Bible knowledge and revelation? The Bible speaks about revelation, the revelation of God. Revelation changes your life.

Knowledge will only increase your understanding. Won't change your life. You may be able to preach also, but it won't change your life.

You'll be just the same hard hearted husband or wife at home. But you'll be preaching wonderful things. You'll be a first class hypocrite.

That's what happens to people who are not genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit. And who don't walk in the Holy Spirit every day. Dear brothers and sisters, when you turn to the Lord, the Spirit, the veil is taken away.

And not only the veil is taken away, verse 17, where the Spirit of the Lord is taken over, there's freedom. Freedom from sin, liberty from sin. First of all, understanding of the word and freedom from sin.

And not only that, little by little, verse 16, you begin to see more and more of the glory of Jesus in the Bible. The mirror is the Bible there. James chapter one says the mirror is God's word.

Beholding as in the God's word, the glory of Jesus. So after you're filled with the Spirit, when you read the Bible, you don't see commandments, you see the glory of Jesus. And the Holy Spirit shows you the glory of Jesus and changes you into that same likeness, not in a moment, but from one degree of glory to another, to another.

From kindergarten to first standard, second standard, first standard, fourth standard, graduate, postgraduate, all the way up to becoming like Christ. That is God's goal for you. The difference between old covenant and new covenant is in the old covenant, they had to struggle and struggle and struggle to try and keep the commandments and they could not keep it.

They could not, they tried 1,500 years. Israel tried, they failed. You read the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi.

You see how God is so disappointed that Israel has failed. But then in Malachi chapter one, he says, but something new is gonna happen now, in a few years, from the East to the West, I will, my name will be great among all the nations. You read Malachi 1.11. All over the world, a new covenant is coming.

That is through the coming of the Holy Spirit. And then we read the same Bible, it's so different. It became different for me.

And so the Holy Spirit opens the Bible and explains to us and shows us the glory of Jesus in the Bible and makes us like that. That's how we must read the Bible. It's not just, oh, I have to read the Bible today.

I have to do that, otherwise something will go wrong during the day. A lot of people are superstitious. Oh, okay, okay, I read the Bible, I'm okay now.

No. I have to live and breathe the Bible the whole day, even if I don't have it in front of me. Do you know that for 1,400 years after Christ, 1,400 years of Christianity, they never had a printed Bible like this.

Do you know printing was discovered only around 1,460, 1460 AD or something? Just about 540 or 520 years ago, 560 years ago, the printing was discovered, 1460 or sometime after that. Then the first book they printed in Germany was the Bible. After that, only people had printed books like this.

Otherwise they used to write on parchments and it was so expensive to get a copy of the Bible that 99% of Christians couldn't afford to have one. You had to go to the synagogue or one person had a copy, go and read it from him. How many of you would read the Bible if the Bible was kept in some building, only one copy available in the town? But there, I believe that God tested the eagerness.

Think of a person like when Jesus was a little boy, how did he know the Bible at the age of 12 when he did not have a Bible at home? Can you imagine one of your children knowing the Bible by the age of 12 and you don't have a Bible at home? How would he know it? How would he know it so well that he could question the priests in the temple? I'll tell you, I've thought about it. I meditate. I don't just read the Bible, I meditate on it.

I say, how did Jesus know it? And I meditated and then I came to this conclusion. There was only one Bible in Nazareth and that is in the Old Testament in the synagogue. Well, so I can imagine that at the age of five, Jesus would go to the synagogue and tell the rabbi, can you please turn to the Old Testament, some book and read it for me? The rabbi was excited.

This five-year-old boy wants to read the Bible. Come, sure, I'll read it to you. And he would read, say, maybe one chapter and Jesus would be listening.

Five-year-old boy, listening, listening, listening, listening. And he says, okay, rabbi, that's enough. Let me go home and think about that.

I'll come back tomorrow. He's remembered all that. He goes home and thinks about what he heard.

Next day he comes, rabbi, can we go to the next chapter? Sure. And like that would appear every day for seven years. By the time he was 12, he knew the whole Bible, Old Testament.

He was wholehearted. You think he didn't want to do so many things the other five-year-old and six-year-old wanted to do? I'm not saying he was doing that the whole day, but he gave up something, even at the age of five, in order to know the Bible. And if you want to know God's word, you have to give up something.

Some sacrifice of time, you'll have to sacrifice something in order to, that's the only way Jesus knew it. He did not come to earth with the Bible in his mind. No, he was born just like you and me, with a blank mind as far as the Bible is concerned.

He had to learn it. Now, these are little things I want to point out to you, brothers, and it's because many don't think that God has gifted that person. That's why he knows the scriptures, or that's why he is following the Lord more.

It's got nothing to do with gift. He has taken that one mina and invested it in a wise way, not wasted it. He's taken the 24 hours, which is the one mina he has every day, and he didn't waste it.

He used it profitably. Don't, I mean, don't you use your, or your children waste money, but you or grown up people, you don't waste your money. Even if you have a lot of money, you invest it wisely.

I feel that many Christians are more careful in investing their money than investing their time. If you earn a hundred thousand rupees a month, how do you invest it? Some people will waste it. There's nothing left at the end of their 30 years of service.

Others have invested it so wisely. They've built a house. They've got so many things.

Maybe they got a car, and when they retire, they have enough to go on. That's wise investment. In the same way, there are people who are born again, and from the day they are born again, just like from the day you guys went to the Gulf countries, you started earning money, and you saved it and saved it, and that's why you're a little bit of comfort in your life today.

So there are other Christians also like that. From the time they were converted, they started reading the Bible and investing their life every day in the way scripture says, and the result is spiritually, they're very rich. And others have been Christians for the same length of time are spiritually poor.

Why is that? They just wasted their time. Like other people waste their money. But these people felt time is money, more important than money.

It's the one meaner God has given me, 24 hours a day. Please remember, nobody has more than 24 hours. If somebody got more out of the 24 hours, it's because he was more disciplined.

I want to encourage you, dear brothers. Take this seriously. It's not enough to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You must be filled with the Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to discipline our lives. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter nine. 1 Corinthians in chapter nine.

Paul was a man who was filled with the Spirit very many times. Forget his gifts. We're not all called to be apostles or prophets.

No, forget the gifts. He lived a godly life. He never told people to have his gifts.

He said, follow my life. Imitate me as I imitate Christ. How did Paul follow Jesus? Not by dying for the sins of the world or raising the dead.

No, no, no, no. He was speaking about imitating Christ in his life, not in his ministry. Nobody can imitate Christ in his ministry and nobody can imitate Paul in his ministry.

I used to tell people in CFC from the beginning, I said, don't try to imitate me. No, God needs only one Zach Poonen in the church. He doesn't need two.

I even told my children that. Don't try to imitate me in my ministry. Imitate me in my life if you see something Christ-like there, but not ministry.

Ministry is unique for each person. Nobody can have my ministry. It's only me and I can't have somebody else's ministry.

In my younger days, when I was foolish, if I admired some great preacher and said, oh, I wish I could have a ministry like that, that's because I was young and foolish and stupid. But as I grew up, I realized that I'm not supposed to be like that. The hand is not supposed to be like the ear.

We're all different in the body of Christ. So don't imitate a person's ministry, but say, Lord, can I learn something from his life? So learn something from Paul's life. 1 Corinthians 9. Here's a spirit-filled man speaking about another aspect of his life.

Verse 24, don't you know that everybody runs in a race but only one person gets the prize, first prize? I think in those early days in the Greek races, in the first century, Paul has seen it. There was no second, third prize. Nowadays they have gold medal, silver medal, bronze medal.

Those days there was only one olive wreath that they would put on the head of the winner. Only one winner, no second prize. One person receives a prize.

He came first. Everybody can run. And he does these Corinthians.

Now remember, these Corinthians were the most carnal of all the Christians that Paul dealt with. Not only carnal, fleshly, worldly, they were born again, but they were really worldly. And Paul tells them, you can run and get this first prize.

So even if one of you listening to me today, you feel you've been very worldly, a worldly Christian till today, probably like the Corinthians, careless, fleshly, defeated. You know what the Lord is saying to you, a defeated, careless Christian? Run, verse 24, in such a way that you can win the first prize. The difference in the Christian race is everybody can come first.

That's the meaning of that verse. That verse is not written in one man's Bible alone. It's written in everybody's Bible.

You can win the first prize. It's very clear. One person only wins a prize, verse 24.

You can run in such a way that you win that first prize. And you say, Paul, you mean every Christian in Corinth, that worldly church in Corinth, everybody can get first prize? Paul says, yes, that's what the Holy Spirit's asked me to write, that every single one of you worldly, carnal Christians can get the first prize if you do what I tell you. And I'll tell you what you should do.

In the next verse, if you want to win the first prize, remember these people who win prizes, they exercise self-control. They deny their own will. That self-will is denied.

And then they get this, what they call a wreath. That was the first prize there is, an olive wreath they put on their head. They got that, which just perishes after some time, but we are getting an imperishable prize.

And so he says, in my own life, that's what I do. I don't run without an aim. I'm running this marathon race, but I know where to go.

I know where to turn. You know, the marathon race is usually through the roads in a city. That's how they run the 40 kilometers.

But you can't see where the end is. No, in a hundred meters, you can see where the finishing line is. But in the marathon race, you don't even know the track, but there are markers along the way.

And there are people there to show you turn here, turn right, turn left here, like that. And finally, 40 kilometers later, they come to the end. And he says, so I don't run without an aim.

I've got an aim. I'm going to reach the finishing line and I must make progress. I must not be in the same place I was in last year.

I must not even be in the same place I was in last month. I've got to make progress, progress, progress. I'm going to discipline myself to run in such a way and in order to do that, verse 27, I have to discipline my body and make it my slave.

You see, Paul is applying this illustration of running the race. Hebrews 12 also says, let us run this race, looking unto Jesus, meaning that Jesus is the first person who's run this race in front of us. How did he run the race? Hebrews 4.15, he was tempted in all points as we are and did not sin.

And Paul says, that's how I'm disciplining my body. Like Jesus who's gone ahead of me, I run this race, resisting temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit. I discipline my body, he says in verse 27, and I make it my slave.

The living Bible has got a very beautiful paraphrase of that verse. I, listen to this, it reads like this. I make my body do what it should do, not what it wants to do.

Paul was tempted like us. He says, in my body, my eye wants to look in some direction which is sinful and I tell my body, no, you're not going to look at that person. You're not going to look, that is sinful.

I'm going to turn my eyes away. Or my body wants to read some magazine which is dirty and I say, no, you eyes, you're not going to do what you want to do. I make my body do what it should do, not what it wants to do.

Or the tongue, Paul's tongue wanted to say something to somebody, but he tells the tongue, no, no, no, you're not going to say that. I will tell you what to do. I will speak lovingly, graciously.

But you know, he slipped up sometimes. Once when Paul was taken to a court, you read in Acts 23, the judge told somebody to slap him on the face. It's wrong for a judge to give such a command.

And so somebody slapped Paul on the face and Paul got very angry. And he told the judge, you whitewashed wall, God will smite you. Somebody told him, hey, is that the way you speak to a judge? And he immediately apologized.

I'm sorry. And I'm sure he asked the Lord to forgive him. See that passage in Acts 23, read it sometimes.

Paul was about 60 years old then. I say, this man had been a spiritual believer for about 30 years and he slipped up. So if you slip up once, don't get discouraged.

Set it right immediately. That's the lesson. Discipline your body, make it your slave.

And if you don't do that, 1 Corinthians 9, 27, after preaching to other people, you'll be disqualified. I've read of a number of races in the Olympics and other games where a person comes running and comes first and all the people are clapping and he runs around the track saying, I come first. And afterwards the judges say, no, you're disqualified.

Because somewhere in your race, you went out of your track or you did went out of the track into somebody else's track, you're disqualified. But you thought you had come first. So it's possible to think I'm doing okay.

And somewhere along the line, you broke the law and you didn't set it right. So even Paul says that such a great preacher as he is can be disqualified. When you read that, my brother, sister, do you get a little fear

in your heart? A healthy fear? If Paul could be disqualified, what about me? And how to avoid being disqualified? He says, I have to discipline my body, verse 27.

And discipline my body means making my body do what it should do. I'll give you one example, which I don't know whether you all do. Please examine yourself.

Turn to Matthew chapter five, how to discipline your body. One example, Matthew five, he's talking about you should not be angry with your brother, verse 22. You're angry with your brother, you're guilty already.

But, and so one day you were angry with your brother. And without settling that matter, you come before God, verse 23, to present your offering. Present your offering means you're praying.

Oh, Father, I want to pray something to you. That is your offering of prayer. And suddenly you remember in your conscience, hey, you remember yesterday you got angry with your brother or your wife? Or this morning you got upset with her or him, your husband? And you never apologized? You never asked forgiveness? Stop praying.

You know there's a command in the Bible to stop praying? Stop giving that offering to God. Leave your offering there, verse 24. If your offering is a prayer, stop praying.

Don't pray. The command in the Bible, don't give that offering to God, don't pray. Go first, be reconciled to your brother or your wife or your husband or your neighbor or your enemy whom you hurt with angry words.

Settle it with him, ask his forgiveness, ask her forgiveness, and then come and say, Lord, please hear my prayer. Many prayers God does not even hear because it says in Psalm 66, 18, there's sin in your heart, God will not even hear you. You dial the number, God doesn't even pick up the phone.

He doesn't pick it up because he says, this man has not settled matters. He hurt his wife and he's not apologized. She hurt her husband and she has not apologized.

I hear the telephone ringing, but I won't pick it up. She can keep on praying, he can keep on praying, God says, I won't listen. Because if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, he will not pick up the phone.

Many prayers are not heard by God. I believe that more than 90% of prayers that believers pray are not heard by God at all, even all night prayers, because there's something they have not settled with somebody whom they've hurt. Some matter in their life, which is not set right.

Some financial matter not set right. Somebody they got angry against, they never asked their forgiveness. And when should we ask forgiveness? Immediately, not the next day.

Paul got angry at the age of 60. He's a man who preached victory over sin, but he slipped up and he got angry with the priest. When did he apologize? Immediately.

If you hurt your wife or your husband, when should you apologize? Next day or later in the evening? Your pride says, no, don't go and apologize now. What she did was wrong, what he did was wrong. It's okay, but you're getting angry was also wrong.

Well, let her apologize first or let him apologize first. This is a big question that comes up. Who should apologize first? There's a conflict between a husband and wife.

I've said this so many times, but I will repeat it again for the benefit of those who don't know. Follow God's example. When God and man had a conflict, who took the first step to restore that relationship? Who took the first step? God or man? You know the answer.

God took the first step. God took the first step, he sent his son. Why? Because he was more spiritual.

So if you have a conflict with your marriage partner, who should take the first step? I'll tell you, whoever is more spiritual. And since both of you think you are more spiritual, then you should be just running into each other's arms if you're a true Christian. But we think, oh, I'm more spiritual, that person did wrong, so he or she must come and apologize.

Imagine if God had sat in heaven and said, man has done wrong, let him come and settle matters with me, then I will help him. We would all be lost in hell today. He took the first step to restore that relationship.

And the Lord says, you do that too. That's the true Christianity. I mean, these things are not preached in other churches.

That's why we say CFC is a new covenant church. We preach things that are not, others are following Moses, not Jesus. They're following Moses.

Moses said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If he takes out your eye, what he meant was don't take out both eyes, take out one eye only from him. If he breaks one tooth of yours, don't break two teeth of his, break one tooth.

That's Moses, not Jesus. The other thing we need to do, one is ask forgiveness. The other thing, Matthew 6, if you forgive others, your heavenly father will forgive your sins, Matthew 6, 14.

If you ask many Christians today, how does God forgive your sin? They'll quote 1 John 1, 9. I agree. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin. I say, don't stop there.

One more thing, number two, Matthew 6, 14. You must also forgive others. Not only your heavenly father forgive you, supposing you confess your sin to the Lord, but you don't forgive somebody.

Your heavenly father will not forgive you, Matthew 6, 15. You don't forgive others, your father will not forgive you, even though you confess your sin to him. You know, there are so many believers who according to 1 John 1, 9, are confessing their sin to the Lord.

And they're imagining I'm forgiven. They are not forgiven. Let me tell you, because there's someone they have not forgiven themselves.

And according to Matthew 6, 15, they're not forgiven. Is this a hard commandment? Do you feel God is a very austere man demanding? No, he doesn't even want a small speck of cancer in your life. Not even a small speck of leprosy.

He doesn't want even a smallest little sickness in your life. And sin is sickness. An unforgiving spirit is leprosy.

An unforgiving attitude, pride, unwilling to humble yourself and ask forgiveness from somebody you hurt is cancer. You see it like that? You know, if you tell an uneducated person in some village who doesn't know the meaning of cancer, doctor says, you've got cancer. He'll sleep peacefully at night.

He's not disturbed by that because he thinks cancer is like a little cough it'll go away in a few days. But you go and tell an educated man he's got cancer, he will not be able to sleep. Particularly if you tell him it is fourth stage.

But you tell an uneducated man he's got fourth stage cancer, he sleeps peacefully. He's ignorant. Now I wanna apply that to you, my brother, sister.

If you can do something wrong in your life, hurt somebody and not ask forgiveness or not forgive somebody who's hurt you and you can sleep peacefully, you're like that uneducated person. Spiritually uneducated, that's how you sleep peacefully. You should not be able to sleep peacefully because you've got cancer fourth stage.

But it can be cured if you go and ask forgiveness and if you forgive that person. This is the gospel of the new covenant. You feel it's a burden? John says after 65 years, God's guns are not a burden.

It's like the wings of a bird. You ask a bird, hey, these wings that you have, aren't they a burden? Isn't it a burden to have wings all the time? See, we men, we don't have wings. And the bird will say, that's why you can't fly.

This is not a burden, this is what makes me fly. The commands of God are like the wings of a bird. They're not a burden.

The people who use it, fly. God bless you and may He fulfill all His purposes in your life, let's pray. Heavenly Father, please help us to live according to the light of your word.

We publicly say your commands are not a burden. They're like the wings of a bird that make us fly. We wanna fly higher from now on than we have ever flown in our whole life.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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