

# Coming to God to Be Blessed Eternally

by Zac Poonen

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*To live a life that pleases God, we must learn to recognize the voice of Jesus, avoid stumbling blocks, take a stand for Christ, and confess Him before men.*

**Duration:** 1:01:16

**Scripture:** Luke 15:4

**Topics:** "Following Christ", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of staying close to the shepherd, recognizing the need to learn to hear and recognize the voice of Jesus, and seeking fellowship with godly individuals for protection and guidance. It highlights the necessity of making radical decisions to follow Christ, even if it means cutting off relationships that lead to spiritual stumbling. The speaker urges the audience to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit through humility, prayer, and a commitment to live a life of victory over temptation.

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## Transcript

Let's turn again to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15. We were looking at the sheep coming back, first of all, that we recognize that we are like sheep who can easily go astray if we don't keep close to the shepherd and stay with the flock. And you know, in the early days of our Christian life, when you haven't come to know the shepherd so well, you know, somebody once asked a godly old brother, he said, how is it that Jesus said in John 10, my sheep hear my voice, but I don't hear it.

I can't recognize his voice. And that wise brother said, it's true. The sheep hear his voice, but the lambs have to learn it.

They have learned. The lambs have to learn to recognize the voice of the shepherd. And until you learn to recognize the voice of the shepherd, the safety of the lamb is to stay with the flock.

You stay with the rest of the flock, and with the older godly men and women, and you will be protected. If you follow the advice of godly brothers whom you respect as those who are seeking to follow Christ, just like in an earthly family, little children, they don't have the discernment or ability, when they're small, to live on their own. They can't even cross the road on their own.

So their safety is to be with their older brothers and sisters when they're not with their parents. That's the protection. And so that's very important for you to recognize also as believers, that until you're able to

recognize the voice of the shepherd, the voice of Jesus, and you have a very close connection with him, then you can even live on your own.

But until you come to that place, your safety is in seeking fellowship with other god-fearing people. So if you look around at CFC, there are those who are really serious, god-fearing young people, boys and girls, young men and young women, and there are others who are casual and pretty worldly. I mean, I don't shut my eyes and imagine that everybody, every young person in CFC is wholehearted or spiritual.

It's not true. How can you shut your eyes to that? But when you see that, you have to make a choice who you are going to associate with. The only reason for you to associate with a worldly person in CFC is if you can draw that person to the Lord.

But if you find that he is influencing you, then you should drop that relationship, otherwise you'll be corrupted yourself. That's some practical advice. Don't stay with the sheep who are going astray, unless you want to go astray yourself.

Unless you're strong enough to lead those sheep back to the flock, some will always go astray. Jesus said in Luke 18, that, sorry, I think in Matthew 18, he said, verse 7, he spoke about stumbling blocks. And your young people are going to face a lot of stumbling blocks.

And he said, woe unto the world because of its stumbling blocks. Matthew 18, 7. And listen to this, it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come. But woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes.

He says, you can't avoid it. As long as you're in the world, there will be people who will try to stumble you in your walk with the Lord. You know, we stumble over little things.

You can trip over something, that's called a stumbling block. And there will be people like that in the church, who will seek to stumble you. Because they themselves have no interest in following the Lord.

They're coming to the church because their parents come, or because of some other reason, but they're not really coming to follow the Lord. There will be such people in every church. Even in Jesus' church, there was a Judas Iscariot.

But the wonderful thing about Jesus' church is that Judas Iscariot could not influence any of the other eleven. What a wonderful church that is. That there was one stumbling block.

He may have tried. I'm pretty sure he tried. But he didn't succeed with any of the eleven.

And that's something wonderful. So, there will be stumbling blocks. It is inevitable.

There will be stumbling blocks, and there will be stumbling blocks in CFC. But, woe to the person who causes stumbling, because that person's judgment is going to be so severe in the final day, that I wouldn't like to be anywhere near there. But what should your attitude be towards such a stumbling block? Verse 8, if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off.

The meaning is, cut off that relationship with that person. Any person who is causing you to stumble in following the Lord, don't have a false sense of friendship and love, that you allow your friendship to be more important than your relationship with Jesus. In fact, Jesus said in Luke 14, and verse 26, Luke 14, verse 26, he said, If anyone comes to me, and he doesn't hate his father and mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

In the early days of Christianity, many Christians came from the Jewish faith, came from heathen religions in Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi. There were no Christians those days. There were no Christian families.

Every family was a heathen family, Jewish or other religion. And when a person got converted, they got converted and came out of a heathen family. So if you looked at a church in Ephesus or a church in Philippi or Thessalonica in the early days, you could say every person sitting here has come out of a non-Christian religion.

That's not true today. I mean, when you look at CFC, you can't say everybody sitting here came out of a non-Christian family. But in the early church, every person, 100%, came from a non-Christian family.

So some of you who have come from non-Christian families, you don't have to feel, hey, are we strange? Sometimes they feel they are strange. But I have seen through the years that people who come from a non-Christian family usually have more conviction than those who come from a Christian family because the Christian family, sons and daughters, just oozed into the church. They didn't really come out of choice.

Whereas those who come from a non-Christian family have made a choice. And very often they have had to break with their father and mother. And that's a very difficult thing.

But those early Christians had to make that break. And that was a tremendous price they had to pay. In other words, they had to cut off.

That's a strong statement, to cut off your hand. Would you do that? You know there are diseases which a person can get when they can't be cured. Supposing a man gets, usually in the feet or something, they cut off the foot or cut off some of the toes because gangrene has set in and it will destroy the whole body.

And the only way to protect the body is to cut it off. Otherwise the whole body will be affected. And the Lord said, that must be your attitude towards your father and mother.

And even if you're married to your wife and to your children, if they want to follow some other way, let them go. But you're not going to let them interfere with your following the Lord. It's an amazing statement.

Otherwise He said, you cannot follow Me. And those early Christians, they took that decision. They said, well, if dad and mom go another way, God bless them.

But I'm not going to listen to them. I'm going to listen to the Lord. If my brother and sister want to go that way, even if my wife wants to go another way, I'm going to follow the Lord.

So, unfortunately, today's generation, we have a lot of wishy-washy Christians who don't take that type of a radical stand. They are good people. You look at their life, there are so many good things.

But they have never fulfilled the first condition of discipleship. And that is the first condition, which the early Christians fulfilled. And that's why they became such good Christians.

So, and you can see how the Ephesian church, which Paul started, which is so wonderful, 30-40 years later, in Revelation chapter 2, it's become very worldly. So worldly that the Lord tells the Ephesian church in Revelation 2, you have left your first love. What happened? It was the second generation.

Whereas the early church was the first generation. In Ephesus, they had come straight out of heathenism. But 40 years later, after Paul died, 30 years after Paul died, it was the second generation growing up.

They had sat in the church from babyhood. They didn't have such convictions like their fathers. They sat there and they became backsliders.

So it's very easy. So if you don't fulfill that first condition of discipleship, I want to tell you right now, it's not going to go very well with you in your Christian life. You'll have a lot of regrets later on.

So, there will be stumbling blocks, but we have to... I mean, it's like if the prodigal son in the far country decided one day, I'm going to go back to my father's house. And some of his friends say, Hey, listen, hang on here, man. You're going to lose all our friendship.

He'd say, sorry, I'm going to go back. And it requires that type of decision to really be able to follow the Lord. And you will find yourself in that type of situation.

And I tell you, the Lord will test you. I know in my own life, the Lord tested me in a number of areas. That, am I going to please him? Or please my parents? Or... I remember when I was 14 and a half, my father, I was just finishing school, and my father said, I want you to join the military academy.

And I want you to join the Navy. And I want you to top the class and become an admiral before you leave. That was his ambition for me.

And he made me join the National Defense Academy. And I did well, and then I got converted. And when I was 24 years old, the Lord called me to leave my job.

I didn't consult my father. I didn't have to consult my father. I was independent, and I was 24 years old.

I was earning my own living. I took my decision and put in my resignation and told the Navy I'm leaving. Then I wrote to my father.

I'm quitting. I've already put in my resignation. We need to... If you want to follow the Lord, you have to be willing.

Of course, I consulted with godly older brothers. That I did because I was young. I didn't feel that I was full of wisdom.

I would not have taken that decision all by myself without consulting at least one godly older brother. I did that. But if you consulted godly older brothers who you know are following the Lord and they encourage you, you sometimes need to take a stand against your parents and tell them, after you've taken a decision, will it offend them? Of course, it will offend them.

I remember, well, my father said, if you're serving the Lord, that's fine. But then, another thing happened later on. From about 1971 onwards till about 1974, the Lord opened so many doors for me to travel in many countries, international Christian conferences.

My father was once again happy that though I'd left the Navy, I was having a great ministry around the world. And then one day he saw, I decided, I finished with all that, I'm not going to travel around the world as a big conference speaker. I'm going to sit in my home with three or four families and build a church.

That is the most crazy thing for any international speaker to do. And my dad, again, couldn't understand it. And I didn't ask his permission.

He was a good man, he was a believer. But I don't think he could see what I was seeing. And I don't think many people could see.

A lot of other believers who loved me said, Zach, what are you doing sitting with three or four people in your home? But I knew what I was gripped by. And that's how the church started in 1975. And those of us who were there those days, there are very few left now, it was something that many people couldn't understand.

And on top of that, everybody called us false teaching, etc. But we stood against it. It's that opposition that we faced that we stood against that made us strong.

Today, CFC has become popular, we are in danger. We were safer in those days when we were misunderstood, reproached, falsely accused. And my name was Scum.

So don't think that being popular and accepted means anything. The early Christians were not popular. We must come to Christ out of conviction.

And I remember in those days, the Lord asked me, if everybody turns against you, will you still stand for this truth that I've shown you? I said, yes. I don't care if anybody leaves me, it makes no difference. And most people left.

It's fine. Even the ones who came, people used to come and most of them would leave. And I say, what I'm saying is, our parents won't understand until much later.

Today, my dad is in heaven and I don't know whether he can see us, but if he could, he would say to me, son, you were right, and I was wrong. And Annie's parents couldn't understand why she wanted to marry me when I had no income. But her dad is in heaven also, today.

And if he could see, he would say to her, my daughter, what you did was right. The reason I'm saying that is, it may be only years later that your parents will understand why you took a stand. So don't be discouraged right now.

Make sure you know the Lord. And if you seek the advice of godly older people, you'll be safe. If your parents are more godly than those elders, listen to them, sure.

But if they are not, I would advise you to listen to the advice of godly older brothers. That will be your salvation. Until you're grown up and mature enough to stand on your own feet.

These are simple little things. I know so many people who have made a mistake when it comes to marriage. And if you're unmarried, and you'll find tremendous pressure when it comes to marriage from your parents.

And at that time, you have to decide. Because marriage is one decision you can never change. Once you've taken it, that's it.

You can't go back on it. If you took a wrong job, you can always go back, give it up. If you rented a house which you don't like, you can move.

Even if you built a house which you don't like, you can sell it and go. But you can't do anything once you get married. It's the most important decision after salvation that you're ever going to take.

And it'll be calamity if you make a wrong choice there. And I've known people who've made a wrong choice. They somehow survive.

And at the end of 30-40 years of marriage, they can say, we have survived. Is that the way you want to end your married life after 30-40 years? No, that's not the way. Married life is meant to be like heaven.

I tell you honestly, but it requires that you put the values of Scripture and Jesus Christ first. And one of those things is you'll have to take a stand against your parents, against your friends, and the advice of people who are not godly. When you seek advice, seek it from a godly person.

See this in Matthew chapter 10. How many of you know this verse? Jesus said in verse 32, everyone who confesses me before men, Matthew 10, 32, I will confess him before my Father in heaven. What does it mean to confess Jesus? It doesn't mean just saying I belong to Jesus Christ.

It means I stand for everything that Christ stood for. Uprightness, righteousness, speaking the truth, loving, everything that Christ stood for, that's what I stand for. I remember in the years when I was in the Navy, I was never ashamed to let everybody know that I was a Christian.

I didn't go around with a badge saying I'm a Christian. I wanted them to see by my life and by my words and there were many times I had to say to my senior officers, I'm sorry sir, I can't do that. I'm a Christian.

My conscience does not permit me. And do you think the senior officers are happy with me? No. They were upset.

I remember numerous situations like that from the time I was 21 to 24. Very young age, same age many of you are and younger than most of you. Between those ages I was baptized when I was 21 and I had to take a stand, for example, in the Naval officers room, you know, the dining rooms.

If a person was promoted, he had to serve alcohol to everybody and when I got promoted, I refused to do that. They thought I was stingy. You can say what you like, I serve orange juice and they knew that I was a Christian and things, there were a lot of senior officers who asked me to do wrong things and I would say I'm sorry sir, I'm a Christian, I can't do that.

Not just my conscience does not permit me because then you're hiding the fact that you're a Christian. My conscience does not permit me because I'm a Christian. You know, it's so easy to be ashamed of the name of Jesus Christ in our place of work, where everybody else is a Hindu.

A lot of my senior officers were Hindus. They would write wrong, bad reports about me, fine. I decided when I became a Christian, a wholehearted Christian, that promotion was not my goal in life anymore.

I would do my best, but to get promotion and to make money was not my aim in life anymore. My only aim in life was to please God and the rest God would take care of and He has taken care of it all these 50 years and you must be a testimony when you come to the end of your life that you are not a compromiser. That you are not ashamed of the name of Jesus Christ.

I used to often sing a song called, I'm not ashamed to own my Lord or to defend His cause. Maintain the honor of His word and the glory of His cross. I used to sing some of these hymns which are more meaningful than some of the hymns that songs that are being written nowadays and I find these to encourage me, some of these old time hymns.

I would encourage you to learn them because those hymns encourage me tremendously and I remember situations where I was not only not God promoted, I could almost be sent to jail for disobeying my senior officers. See, in your secular jobs, if you don't obey, you're just sacked from your job. But in the Navy, if you don't obey, you'll be jailed because it's like mutiny and you can be court-martialed.

So, never be afraid of confessing because Jesus said, if you confess me before men, I will confess your name before my father. And that was very important for me. But if you, verse 33, Matthew 10, 33, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father.

That means in some situation in your place of work, you somehow hope they don't discover that you're a wholehearted, radical Christian who will not do what's wrong. Well, the Lord sees that at that moment. You can justify yourself, but the Lord sees, this guy was ashamed of me.

And I said, Lord, you are not ashamed to hang in an underwear on the cross. I'm not going to be ashamed of you. See, that's what used to help me, meditating on the cross, that he was not ashamed of me.

I'm not going to be ashamed of him. And then he said, when you stand like that for me, it could be in your own home where your relatives don't understand the stand you have taken. I think many of you who are sitting here, your parents are not in the church.

Some of you, your parents are not even believers. So, these words are for you, to confess Christ before them. And then he said in verse 34, Matthew 10, 34, don't think I came to bring peace on the earth.

I came to bring a sword. Can you imagine Jesus saying this? I did not come to bring peace. Some people only know that Jesus is the prince of peace.

Where does it say that, that he was a prince of peace? Isaiah chapter 9. Yes. But Jesus himself never used that title. He came to bring us, bring peace between us and God.

But what he said, don't think I have come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword. He told his disciples, in me, you will have peace.

That's for sure. But in the world, you'll have opposition, you'll have tribulation, John 16, 33. In the world, you're not going to have peace.

And the early Christians never had peace. They were martyred and killed and burnt. He said, I came to bring a sword.

It's amazing how so many Christians have all got these wrong ideas about Christ. And then he said in verse 35, I came to set a man against his father. Has that happened to you? A daughter against her mother.

A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a Christian's enemies are going to be in his own family. How many of you have experienced that? Your enemies are in your own family.

And then he says, if you love father or mother more than me, you're not worthy of me. It's a very serious thing to be a Christian. It's not just believing something and I'll go to heaven.

It brings a break like the cutting off of the hand. The hand was part of my body for so many years and one day it's cut off. That's what's happened with many, many people.

They were part of an earthly family for a long time. And then one day it was cut for the sake of Christ. It's happened to numerous people in 2,000 years.

And if you're not willing for that, you'll never be a wholehearted disciple. Even though my parents were believers, I decided that they're not the ones who are going to choose a bride for me. They may not know my values.

I'm going to choose my own bride. Now that's not true of most Malayalees. Most Malayalees will be friendly with everybody till it comes to the time of marriage.

Then they'll listen to their parents. I've seen that again and again and again and again. And I've seen that with a lot of people and I see finally how it goes with such people also.

You know there are important decisions we take in life where you have to decide, I am going to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whatever the price, I'm going to follow him. And I'll tell you something, you won't suffer loss because of that.

Do you think you can suffer by honoring God? That is impossible. How did I suffer by giving up all my ministry and sitting with four families in my house 38 years ago? Did I suffer? I don't think so. Initially it looked the most foolish thing to do.

Like sometimes the decisions we take for the Lord may appear foolish. But if you have taken it for the Lord, you will not suffer because of that. I remember one of the things my father said to me and I mentioned this because a lot of you got to deal with your parents.

Now I'm talking about a father who is a believer and many of you parents are not believers. It will be even more difficult. But my dad said to me, how are you going to educate your children? My father died when my oldest son was just 12 years old.

So this was before that when all my kids were small. The youngest was only 2 or 3. And he said, you don't realize it's so difficult to educate children and nowadays college fees are so high. How are you just sitting here gathering with these 3-4 people and you don't take any money and how are you going to educate your children? I said, dad even this 90 rupees I'm paying in Clarence School, as school fees I won't be able to pay if I don't seek God's kingdom first.

But if I seek God's kingdom first, I believe all that I need will be added to me when the time comes. God will take care of that. And I wanted my life to be a testimony that when I come to the end of my life, my life should be a testimony to the fact that I did not seek my own, I did not go after money, I sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness and God took care of all my needs and my family's needs.

I hope that will be your testimony too. You know, when we started the church Brother Ian was a young man also, 34 years old, not much older than some of you. And he didn't have any profession.

He had worked in the railways when he quit that. And when we started the church, he had to find some means of supporting himself because we both decided we're not going to be dependent on the church. We'll take care of our own needs like the Apostle Paul.

That's when he decided to go into woodwork and furniture and interior decoration. And if you want to know how difficult it is in a city like Bangalore where there are already so many people in that business to start

something completely new and you have a wife and children to take care of and on top of all that, you are doing it honestly and uprightly, unlike all those crooked furniture makers and carpenters. I really believe that it was supernaturally God honored him and blessed his business.

Some of you don't know these things, that's why I have to tell you. They would call us heretics, the other Christians in Bangalore. But when those Christians wanted a furniture or some woodwork to be done, they would come to the heretic carpenter, because they knew he'd be honest.

And that's why over a period of time, we got a reputation that doctrine is wrong, but their life is very good. I said, that's crazy. That's like saying that farmer has got bad seed, but he gets a good harvest.

But we've got very good seed, we've analyzed it under a microscope, but when we sow it, we get a bad harvest. And so Ian's life is an example. You don't know, I know it better than anybody else.

It's a testimony to the fact that those who honor God, God will honor. And I want to say that God gave us the responsibility, both of us, to start the work here. And I'm glad that both of us have this testimony at the end of our lives now, that we have sought to honor God, we have not compromised.

We've suffered financial loss, sure. Go and ask him. We both suffered a lot of financial loss because we want to honor God.

We wanted to be upright. But do we regret it today? No! We would have suffered much more spiritual loss if we had tried to seek for financial gain. So what I want to say is, you have some examples in front of you, young people, who have honored God and God has honored them.

Why are you afraid? God has not only given you his word, he's given you examples of people who have done it before you. Who can say to you, follow me, as I follow Christ. Because, you know, there's a natural you know, desire in us to protect ourselves, secure ourselves, we think of the future and all, it's right.

That's good. But don't do it at the cost of compromise. Don't do it to seek to please your parents.

Don't do it to seek to please your boss. Very, very important. Because to me, that is like the prodigal son coming to the father's house and then going back to the pig's farm.

Do you think he ever wanted to go back? I'll tell you in what situation with the prodigal son, having come back, got the new robe, the ring and dressed up and has got his own room to himself in the house and eating this wonderful food. In what situation do you think he would have been tempted to go back to eat what the pigs were eating? Any situation? Have you ever thought of it? Maybe if one day the father corrected him strongly. Some people don't like correction.

You know, some young people turn around to their dad, well, if it's like that, you can go and hang yourself. I'm going to go take care of my own life. Take care of myself.

It could in such a situation you can get offended. You can get offended with the correction by the elders and you leave. That will be your destruction.

If he had got offended one day when his father corrected him about something, he could have got offended and then be back in the pig's farm again. Or if out of some circumstance he was not eating. Spiritually that is true.

When we come to Christ and we have come, genuinely come, genuinely repented, genuinely come back to the Lord. The Lord has welcomed us and but we don't feast at the Lord's table. I don't mean the breaking of bread.

Feast with the Lord everyday and when we are not being satisfied then we will be tempted to go back to the pig's food because we are not getting good food. If you really get to taste of the heavenly feast God provides us in our walk with the Lord, which is not just the Bible. By heavenly feast I primarily mean fellowship with Jesus Christ personally.

If you don't have fellowship with Jesus Christ personally, the Bible can be a very boring book. I'll tell you that. It can be a very boring book.

A Hollywood movie will be more interesting for three hours than the Bible. If you don't have fellowship with the Lord and a lot of Christians don't live in daily fellowship with the Lord and that is why the many things in the world are attractive. Like I said, you are not feasting at the Father's table and you are hungry.

The feast is there but for some reason you don't go there. Then you are tempted to go back to the pig's food and you don't realize that that pig's food is going to destroy you. Do you think all these young people who go for drugs and alcohol and smoking and things like that, they don't know that these things are harmful? They know it.

But they do it. Don't they know that drugs can ruin your mind permanently for the rest of your life? Don't they know that watching internet pornography can ruin your mind permanently? For 50 years you'll be having bad dreams after that. You'll never get over it.

I'll tell you honestly, you will never get over your bad dreams. Even after you've been married for 20 years, you'll be seeing those filthy pictures that you saw when you were 19 or 20 years old through internet pornography and it'll torture you, it'll torture you, torture you. I might as well warn you right now, it's an addiction.

And you won't be able to get rid of it even after you're married. And it'll destroy your marriage. It'll destroy your sex life after marriage.

You can even lose your salvation. For what? For the sake of 5 minutes of some filthy pleasure. What a fool you are.

Would you give up your job? Supposing you've got a good job, getting 30,000 rupees a month, would you give it up for the sake of 5 minutes of pleasure? No! You'd say, if I have to lose my job for this 5 minutes of pleasure, I'd rather give that up and keep my 30,000 rupee a month job. But don't you realize that walking with the Lord is something that's going to give you far more riches than that. I'm telling you from my own experience, when I was your age, I was tempted in every point, as you are, every point that any young man is tempted with.

Every young man in the world is tempted by the same things, and I know it all because we're all human beings. I don't know the things girls are tempted by, but I certainly know the things every young man in the world is tempted by. I had to battle them.

So what shall we do about the fact that we have failed in the past? You have to take responsibility at some time. You can delay it if you want, mess up your life some more, or you can take that decision today and

be firm in your decision and say, I've had enough of it. I'm going to take care of my own life.

And the only one who can save me from living with the pigs is Jesus Christ. I want to surrender my whole life to Him, and when I'm tempted, if I can't find strength by fellowship with the Lord Himself, I'm going to run away from that place of temptation and seek for fellowship with some believers at that time. That is why I say to you, seek fellowship with the godly in CFC, and not with the half-hearted and worldly, because you'll be like them.

Be willing to break some friendships, cut off the hand. Just like you've got to hate father and mother, you've got to hate your brother as well. If he's going to lead you astray, you're going to honor God, you're going to put God first in your life.

That's very, very, very important. I turn back to Luke chapter 15. We read here something of the wonderful experience that we can have with the Lord if you really live with Him.

You know, these are pictures the Lord used. Luke 15.22, the Lord said, the Father said, Bring the best robe and put it on Him. Now this prodigal son was in ragged, torn clothes, a picture of our filthy, dirty life, and the first thing the Lord does is clothe us with the robe of righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It's important for you to understand that not only does the Lord forgive you, forgiveness itself is a great thing, that all your spoiling my name, all your ruining everything I gave you, you know, this prodigal son, everything he got from his father, he went and wasted it. God gave you a life, health, probably you earned some money, time, and you spent it all on yourself, and you come back, and in a moment the Lord says, it's okay, it's all forgiven. But not only am I going to forgive you, I'm going to now clothe you, and make you look as holy as Christ when you stand before me.

It's actually unbelievable. I mean in a human way, it's very rare to find a father like this. See, the father must have been a very rich man, because there are little indications in here which indicate that the father was a very rich man.

You know, when this younger son says, my father has got so many hired servants. That's what he says in verse 17. My father has got so many hired servants.

That's a little indication that his father was a very wealthy man, to have so many servants working for him. How many servants do you have working in your home? He was a very wealthy man, and for half of his father's wealth, it was not 2,000 or 5,000 rupees. That boy went away with probably a few millions of rupees.

Half the wealth! And how long does it take to spend a few million rupees? Not one or two years. It must have been a number of years that he wasted it. And imagine if you came back to your father after having destroyed half his hard earned wealth.

And your father welcomes you and says, come right home, son. I won't say a word about your past life. I won't ask you where you've gone.

I won't ask you anything about your past life. It's all forgiven. And I'll clothe you with a new robe.

I want to welcome you back as a son. This is the picture Jesus gave. Clothed in righteousness of Christ, one who deserves hell, standing before God as if I've never sinned in my life.

Do you recognize your position before God? And then he says, put a ring on his hand. I think all these things have got meaning. I believe that ring is a picture of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit, which God wants every one of his children to have. It's given. It's not something you earn.

It's not something you deserve. A lot of people think I have to deserve this. I have to earn it.

No. You'll never earn it. God filled me with the Holy Spirit when I was at the bottom most first stage of my life.

Absolute rock bottom. That's when God filled me with the Spirit. In other words, at that moment when he should have sent me to hell, he filled me with the Holy Spirit.

It's like supposing you committed a terrible crime in your office. Very serious thing and you messed up some serious thing in your office that your office, your company lost a lot of millions of rupees because of your mistake. And you're called into the chairman's office expecting to be sacked.

And the chairman says, I'm going to promote you and make you a senior manager. Can you believe it? You'll think he's joking. But that's exactly what God did with me when I was at rock bottom and I should have been sent to hell nearly 40 years ago.

God filled me with the Holy Spirit, teaching me one thing that I'll never forget all my life. That God does not give the Holy Spirit to those who deserve him. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who need him desperately.

I certainly did not deserve to be filled with the Holy Spirit but boy did I need him desperately. So I want to ask you, I'm not asking whether you deserve the Holy Spirit, none of you do. But some of you are thinking maybe one of these days I'll deserve the Holy Spirit and God will give him to me.

You'll be waiting all your life. I remember once speaking to a Christian couple, nominal Christian couple who came to me at the end of a meeting. And I said the trouble with you is you're coming to God as Christians.

God doesn't accept Christians. Christ did not die for Christians and they were surprised. I said Christ died for sinners.

God is inviting sinners to come to him. Jesus said that once. I did not come to call the righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance.

You know that he doesn't call righteous people, he calls sinners. Everybody's a sinner but some people don't realize they're sinners. So the person who thinks I deserve will get nothing.

And so as long as you think Lord I prayed enough, I fasted enough, why haven't you given me the Holy Spirit? You'll never get the Holy Spirit. Because you think you can earn him by a few more prayers and a little more fasting or something like that. You have to come, nothing in my hands I bring, Lord I desperately need this.

And I'm asking you because Jesus died and because Jesus died he not only shed his blood to forgive my sin, he also died and rose again that I can have the Holy Spirit. I want the Holy Spirit to fill my life and give

me an assurance that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit. All of you should pray that prayer.

If you've never prayed that prayer, start praying from today, Lord you give me an assurance that I've been filled with the Holy Spirit. You cannot live the Christian life without that. And don't live in perpetual uncertainty about it.

Don't be confused by the Pentecostal teaching that you have to speak in tongues. That's one of the gifts God gives. But speaking in tongues is a gift just like preaching or prophesying that I have.

Will you wait until you can preach like me before you believe that you have the Holy Spirit? No. God doesn't give that gift to everybody. He gives the gift of preaching to one person, He gives the gift of tongues to another, He gives some other gift to somebody else.

So, we don't look for that. But ask God to give you an assurance, just like He gave you an assurance that your sins are forgiven. How do you know that? If some non-Christian came to you and say, how do you, nominal Christian, how do you say you're different from me? I'm a Christian, you're a Christian.

You say, no. My sins are forgiven. I'm a child of God.

And you say, how do you know? I say, well, two witnesses. One, the Word of God and the other is the Holy Spirit. There are verses that tell me if I receive Christ, I'll be a child of God.

And to confirm that, the Holy Spirit is witness to me as well. It's the same with being filled with the Holy Spirit. The Word of God says, ask and you'll receive.

And if you want a verse, here it is. Luke 11, verse 13. Take that verse and go to God.

Luke chapter 11, verse 13. If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? You can't get the Holy Spirit without asking. And if an earthly Father would give good gifts to those who ask Him, how much more? Not how much less, not even equal, but how much more? Many of you got good fathers and when you have an earthly need, especially for food, did your father or mother ever deny you? If you would say, Mommy, I want a glass of water.

You're a little child. Which mother will deny that? How much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Lord, I want it. Jesus did not invite everybody.

He said, if you're thirsty, come to me and drink. And I will give you the Spirit. If you're thirsty, come to me and drink.

So that's how we're invited to come. If you're thirsty, come and drink. Drinking is the easiest thing to do.

You know it's one of the first things a baby does? There are two things it's very easy for a baby to do. Can't walk, it can't talk, but it can breathe. Take in oxygen.

And that's one picture of receiving the Holy Spirit. Breathe and receive. The other thing a baby can do is drink.

Right from day one. So that's another picture of receiving the Holy Spirit. Drink.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Drinking and breathing are both pictures of receiving the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is pictured like a wind, like air, and like water. It's as easy as breathing and drinking.

You come with an open heart, but God won't force your mouth open and if you hold your breath, He's not going to force your nose open. But otherwise, it's very easy to open your mouth and drink. It's very easy to open your nose and breathe.

And it's very easy to open your heart and receive the Holy Spirit. It is as easy as that. Provided you have confessed your sins, acknowledged you're a sinner, come back to the Lord and say, Lord, forgive me.

And provided to the best of your knowledge, you've given yourself completely to Christ. Exactly like a woman would give herself to her husband on a wedding day. You know, she's not thinking tomorrow, whom shall I be with? That's all settled.

On the wedding day, a woman decides, for the rest of my life, I'm going to be with this man. And it's that type of decision. You say, Lord, to the best of my knowledge, I'm giving every area of my life to you.

And I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit. I want you to pray that prayer when you're by yourself. You don't have to go to any meeting.

Meetings can be very emotional. And some emotional experience you get may be counterfeit. In fact, I usually tell people, don't go to any meeting to get the Holy Spirit.

You may get some counterfeit experience. Get alone in your room. I know so many people, including myself.

Alone in a room, meeting with God. God will fill you with His Holy Spirit. And ask God to give you an assurance.

He'll give you that assurance and you'll never doubt it for the rest of your life. Of course, you can backslide. Anybody can backslide.

That's why we need to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. And to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, all you've got to do is keep a good conscience. That means as soon as you're aware of some break in your connection because of sin, rectify it.

You know, it's like, Holy Spirit's like electricity. There's a break in the wire. Even a small break in the wire, current goes.

What do you do? It's like in your house. Supposing you used a heavy duty equipment and suddenly the fuse blew or at the meter board, the thing tripped. What do you do? You just go back and put it back on and make sure you don't use that faulty gadget again.

It's that easy. To come back to the Lord and say, Lord, the connection's gone. It's all dark.

I'm going to that thing that tripped, I'm going to put the switch back and the current is back on again. It's as easy as that. And make sure you don't make that mistake again.

At least try to. Restore that relationship just as you would do if the lights went off in your house and that switch tripped at the meter board. And the second thing is, one I told you, keep a good conscience, and the other is always choose the path of humility.

One of the greatest dangers I've seen with young people, particularly CFC young people, is the danger of spiritual pride because they think they know so much. I've seen that and some people have gone away from here to other places. There's a pride in them because they know so much.

And they think that knowledge makes them spiritual. It does not. I can see pride written in them from head to foot.

But they don't see it themselves. We can't usually see it in ourselves, but other people can see it clearly. So choose the way of humility.

Don't ever think of yourself as somebody important and big. Go down and you'll always have that ring on your finger, the father's authority, guiding your life. Then you can feast at the father's table all your life.

And you need never, never go back to the pig's farm. I mean, that's been my life for many years now. My life with Jesus is like eating at a feast every day.

Every day. It's wonderful. And when you taste that, there's not even a temptation.

Those other things don't even tempt you. Can you imagine a situation coming where the things of the world that pulled you so much don't even pull you. You don't even feel it.

You can come there if you're faithful, faithful, faithful, faithful, faithful. There's a song which I don't know whether we sing it so much. Unfortunately, we don't, as I said, sing some of these old good hymns.

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you another to win. I want to encourage you to get a good old type of hymn book.

And even if you don't know the hymns, read them. Those hymns helped me tremendously in my early Christian life. Because those are the only hymns we used to sing in those days.

Solid hymns which helped me. And one of those is this. You know, these hymns I used to sing when I was traveling in a bus or having a shower.

It reminded me, yield not to temptation for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you another to win. I would encourage you to get a hymn book.

And learn some of these hymns and sing it to yourself. It will make a tremendous difference in your life. And it's true that if you win a victory, next time it will be easier to win another one.

It becomes easier and easier and easier and easier. Just like anything else, you know, first time you handle a computer, you don't know head or tail of anything there, but some of you have become such experts. It's like first time you ride a bicycle.

You fall so many times, but now you can ride a bicycle with your eyes closed. So, it's like that in the Christian life too. The more you really seek to go that way, it becomes easier.

It's not a strain. As it is in the beginning. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads before God. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, I pray that all these lovely young people who have such tremendous potential in their lives, something that you can do so much with for your kingdom in Bangalore, in India, from this little group of young people you can raise up godly young men and women who will be part of a flaming powerful church in this land. But I know that the devil is also looking at them and sees that he can use them to destroy their lives, to mess up their life, to get them into some wrong marriage, all types of things.

Please save them from such calamity. Help them to be radical disciples, to cut off their right hand or foot or pluck out their eye, to stand against father, mother, brother, sister, everybody in order to follow you and thus to prove that they love you more than anyone else on earth. We commit everyone here to you, Lord.

We want a church full of disciples. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/WuocSG40ifQ.mp4>

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