

# Escaping Deception In the Last Days

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the coming of the Lord, focusing on the prevalent issue of deception in the last days. It highlights the need to love the truth about ourselves, seek salvation from sin, and follow the example of Christ in purity and godliness to avoid falling into deception. The speaker urges listeners to purify themselves daily, aligning their lives with Christ's standard of purity to be ready for His return.*

**Duration:** 46:54

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:3, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Luke 19:8, Matthew 7:22, 1 Timothy 3:16, Luke 16:13, 1 John 3:2

**Topics:** "Preparation for Christ's Return", "Avoiding Deception"

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## Description

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## Transcript

We, there's one thing we want to look at in Matthew 24. We're thinking of the coming of the Lord and our being ready for him and Jesus said, you know, the disciples in Matthew 24 asked him, what is the sign of your coming? Matthew 24 verse 3. And the end of the age. Now there are so many people, Christian preachers, who talk about so many signs like, there are many, many things Jesus spoke about but the Jewish people coming back to Israel and wars, famines, earthquakes, and even tribulation of Christians, persecution of Christians, which has been going on all through these centuries.

But when they asked him, what is the sign? That's the question in Matthew 24 3. When will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? He didn't mention any of those other things. He said, deception. What is the sign of Christ coming? Increasing deception.

Now there are many other things he mentioned there about, for example, wars but there have always been wars in these 20 centuries. Verse 6, famines and earthquakes. There have always been famines and earthquakes in all these 20 centuries.

And persecution, verse 9, they will kill you. That's also happened in all these 20 centuries. So the sense in which all these things took place has also been deception in the 20th centuries but particularly in the last days, deception is going to be one of the primary characteristics of the last days.

And Paul also, when he writes, inspired by the Holy Spirit to Timothy, he says in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 1, the spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits. Yep, and that's one of the things which Jesus emphasized, Paul emphasized. There'll be a great deal of deception in the last days.

And where is this deception going to be manifest? In what area? I don't, you know, Jesus said people will say, yes, he's the Christ, but they will still deceive people. So it's not going to be teaching about some other God. But even when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, listen to this, he warns the Corinthians about deception.

In fact, he warned almost all the churches about deception, but he wrote to the Corinthians that deception is something that can come, it can come to any church. He saw that in 1 Timothy 4. But how can we guard ourselves? Well, first of all, before going there, let me look at 2 Thessalonians and chapter 2. We'll begin there and then go to the other verses. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 is a very important verse when it concerns deception, because here it says that God himself will allow you to be deceived.

See this, in 2 Thessalonians and chapter 2, it speaks in verse 10 about Satan, verse 9, coming with false wonders, power, and signs. That means there's going to be deception with a lot of supernatural signs and miracles which are false. And this is with the deception of wickedness for those who perish.

And the reason they are deceived, it says here in verse 10, is because they did not receive the love of the truth, number one, and because they didn't want to be saved from sin, number two. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 10. They did not receive the love of the truth.

They did not want to be saved. And for this reason, what reason? They did not love the truth. They did not want to be saved from sin.

God will send on them a deluding or deceiving influence so that they believe what is false. Now can you imagine, I mean, the devil trying to make us believe what is false we can understand, and the world trying to make us believe what is false we can understand. The Bible says our flesh has got deceitful lusts, and that can deceive us.

But here is the verse, it says God, you've got to read it exactly like that. Don't change the words. Some people like to change the words and say, no, no, it can't be God.

Holy Spirit says God will send on them a deceiving influence so that they believe what is false. Do you mean God wants some people to believe what is false? Not at all. God is truth.

He wants all men to be saved. He wants all men to repent. The Bible says that.

2 Peter 3, 1 Timothy 2, God wants all men to be saved. He wants all men to repent and come to Christ. He does not want anybody to perish.

2 Peter chapter 3, then why does it say he will still allow some people to believe what is false? You think God allows some people to believe what is false? Does God send an influence that deludes people? Sure.

Why do I say that? Because the Bible says that. I don't like to change scripture to suit my own understanding.

I say it exactly like it said, and whom does God delude in this way? Whom does God allow to be deceived in this way? Not everybody. Verse 10, those who don't love the truth and those who don't want to be saved from sin. So the only thing I've got to steer clear of in the last days, if I want to avoid deception.

Remember, Jesus said that is the sign of his coming. Men, they will deceive you, mislead you. Okay, how can I avoid that in the last days? How can I be ready for Christ's coming without being deceived? Well, I must love the truth, number one.

That means two things. When I hear the word of God, either reading the Bible or I hear an anointed message online or in a church, and it shows me something in myself which I have tried to cover up or which I did not know about and God shows me some sin or some wrong attitude or some unforgiving attitude towards someone or anything that God shows me. If I love the truth about myself, I'll say, Lord, that's true.

I love the truth, but I hate my flesh, which has made me act like that. And Lord, I confess it. Please forgive me.

It's true what you said. I've got this habit. I want to get rid of it.

Help me. See, there I'm loving the truth. I'm not trying to cover it up and say some other reason.

For example, if God shows you that you were wrong in some situation and you immediately try to defend yourself, yeah, but Lord, it was because of this and because of that, because that person said like this back, said like that, God sees you don't love the truth. Then I tell you, you'll be deceived. For example, when God asked Adam, very simple question, did you eat from the tree? If he loved the truth, he just said, yes, God, I'm sorry, I ate.

But he went around it, trying to put the blame on somebody else, but it was because my wife gave it to me. And then God asked the wife, did you eat? Take this because the serpent gave it to me. There's where putting the blame on others started, pointing at something else, pointing at the devil, pointing at the wife.

And then I don't love the truth about myself. Then I'm a prime candidate for being deceived. And so whenever God speaks to you in your conscience in a particular situation and says you were wrong there, what should you do? First of all, acknowledge it.

Love the truth. Lord, it's true what you say. And go and set it right with that person whom you hurt or whatever God shows you, you did wrong.

You know, when Zacchaeus was convicted in his conscience, he immediately said, Lord, I'm going to repay everything four times what I took. And those people whose address I don't know, I don't know where they are. So I'll give all that money, half my goods to the poor so that my conscience is clear that I don't have any money with me, which is not righteously earned.

And, you know, that's the only time in the New Testament where we read Jesus saying, salvation has come to this house, I say. And I read that. I said, Lord, I want you to say that about me, that salvation has come to me, salvation from sin, not from hell.

I say from hell years ago, but I want to be saved from sin every day. For Jesus to say salvation has come to this man because he acknowledges the truth and he's willing to set right with others, whatever he did wrong. And Jesus says, truly, I say, read that.

The Gospel of Luke and chapter 19. Truly, salvation has come to this house. A wonderful thing.

And it went on to say that maybe I should show you that passage. Because I remember years ago, God speaking to me through it. Luke 19, when Zacchaeus said, I'm going to return all that I took wrongfully.

Jesus said to him, this is Luke 19. And Zacchaeus said, verse eight, Lord, I have anybody I've cheated, I'm going to give back four times and expand his rest of his statement. A lot of people who I don't even know their address, where can I get that money? I can't keep it in my bank account because it's unrighteous.

I'll give it to the poor. So that in my bank account, every cent is righteously earned. I'm not going to escape by saying, I don't know the address of these people, so I can't give it.

Well, give it in the offering box. That's what I tell people. Don't keep it in your bank account.

Because all money ultimately belongs to God. If you don't know the owner, give it back to God. And Jesus said, today, salvation has come to this house.

And then he said, verse 10, the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, most people, when they read that, they think I was lost and going to hell. And the son of man has come to seek and to save me who was lost.

Hang on. Always read a verse in its context. What was Zacchaeus lost in? He was a crooked tax collector.

He was lost in the love of money. And Jesus came to seek and to save not somebody who was going to hell primarily, though he was going to hell, but he was lost in the love of money. Once he was being saved from hell, if you're not saved from the love of money, you won't be saved from hell.

The son of man, let me expand it. The son of man has come in the context of the whole 10 verses. The son of man, let me read the whole thing.

Salvation has come to this house, to Zacchaeus' house, because the son of man has come to seek and to save all those like Zacchaeus who are lost in the love of money. I read that years ago. I said, Lord, I'm lost in the love of money.

Many years ago. I said, Lord, honestly, I can't say I'm 100 percent free from the love of money, Lord Jesus, like you were. My standard is Jesus Christ, not some zealous Christian on earth.

I'm not free from it like you were, Lord, and you want to make me like you. And I want to be saved from it. I'm lost.

And it says you came to seek and to save those who are lost in the love of money. And I raised my hand and I said, Lord, I'm lost in the love of money. Save me.

And God began to save me little by little by little by little in numerous ways. I remember once he allowed me to lose a lot of money. And I said, Lord, why did you allow that? You could have saved me from losing

that.

And the Lord said, well, you were praying that you should be saved from the love of money. It's just part of the process. I said, praise the Lord.

Do it completely, Lord. Do it thoroughly so that my goal is to be as free from the love of money as Jesus was. I want to ask all of you sitting and listening to me.

Can you honestly say that's your goal? What do you want to be like Jesus in? Being kind and loving others and preaching? What about this primary area? Jesus said you cannot love God and love mine. Pray this prayer. Lord, I want to be as free from the love of money as you are, Lord Jesus.

I prayed it and I keep praying it. I'll never be satisfied until I'm completely free. I love the truth about myself.

That's why I said that. I didn't want to pretend, oh, I don't receive any money for my preaching. I've never received any salary from any church.

I'm free from all that. We are better than other churches. Therefore, I'm free from the love of money.

I don't deceive myself. I said, I know that the love of money is so deeply rooted in every human being, and I've not yet become like Jesus in that area. I want to be like him.

I don't want to glory in the fact that I support myself like the Apostle Paul, and I don't take any money from anybody for my preaching. That's a very small thing. It doesn't mean you're free from the love of money.

You may be better than X, Y, or Z, but that doesn't mean you're free from the love of money. Take Jesus as your standard. Very often we compare ourselves with people in other churches, and people hear other pastors and other preachers and say, I'm free from the love of money.

Deception. Compare yourself with Jesus. Don't ever compare yourself with anybody else.

That's what I mean by loving the truth about yourself, and I've seen that when I don't love the truth about, when I love the truth about myself, God protects me from deception. Deception, the primary mark of the last days. God will not allow me to be deceived.

Another, we're talking about the love of the truth and wanting to be saved from sin, God shows me. The other area where we need to love the truth is when I read something in scripture, which is totally different or slightly different from the way I have believed something. If I don't love the truth, that is God's word, and that's not what I believe, but that's what I believed in my church for so many years.

You say, so what? Your church was wrong. I see this in God's word. If I don't love the truth there, God will allow me to be deceived.

I know numerous people who are deceived like this. I'll tell you in my own case, I told you I came out from the Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox Church, they sprinkled me when I was a little baby and called it baptism. When I was born again in July 1951, in July 1959, 61 years ago, I knew around me, I was going to an assembly where they were all baptized after conversion and I was not baptized.

And some people in the Orthodox Church told me, you know, if you get baptized, they'll throw you out in the Orthodox Church and then you won't be able to witness to the people there. The other people who

need salvation, you're going to an assembly where everybody's saved. Then they don't need to listen to the message of salvation.

They've already saved. How can you save these people in the Orthodox Church if you get thrown out of there? So don't get baptized. I said, oh yeah, that's a good argument.

I don't want to be thrown out of the Orthodox Church. I want to be there so that I can witness to them. But every time I knelt down, but I studied the Bible and I found the Bible clearly taught there's no such thing as child baptism.

It's only believers baptism. So every time I knelt down to pray, I felt the Lord saying to me, you're not listening to me. Why should I listen to you? And I got really bothered by that.

After one and a half years of struggling, one and a half years after being born again, I began to love the truth. What the word of God had shown me, I began to accept it. And I did not accept the argument that if I stay in that church, I'll be able to save them.

The Lord showed me you're not going to save anybody. I'm the one who saves people, the Lord said. So I decided I don't care which church throws me out.

I'm going to obey God in his word. And that was the first step I took. Obey God's word and reject what I had learned all my life in Christianity.

And I was delivered from deception because from that moment, you know what happened? God saw that I obeyed him in that area. And little by little, God began to show me many other things that many other Christians were believing and many other churches were teaching, which are not found in the word of God. I went to an assembly where they did not believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, or the gifts of the spirit of healing or speaking in tongues, or they didn't believe in all that.

It's all finished. I also believed that for some time, but I was so desperate in my life, I didn't have power in my life. And I began to seek God.

And I say, I don't care what this church I go to believe. They believe in water baptism, but they don't believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. So I began to seek God.

And I went to a Pentecostal church. And there they said, you have to speak in tongues. And I saw them babbling something that didn't sound like a language to me at all.

And they were shouting and yelling, and I didn't see godliness in their lives. Their pastors love money. And I said, Lord, I don't want that.

Please give me the genuine baptism of the Holy Spirit, even if it takes 10 years. I want, I love the truth. I don't want anything which is not absolutely true.

I don't want to get some cheap experience and say, yeah, I also baptized in the Holy Spirit. What's the use of that if I don't have power to overcome sin, power to be a bold witness for Christ? So I said, I will not be satisfied, Lord, until you assure me and you give me power. I don't want to deceive myself.

I read in the Word. It is there. And I waited, and I prayed, and I went through a lot of times of discouragement.

But God met with me, and that changed my life completely when God genuinely baptized me in the Holy Spirit. And I discovered that speaking in tongues was not the evidence of it. Though I did speak in tongues, that is not the evidence.

That's one of the gifts when I read the Bible. The answer is no. But there are churches that preach that everybody must speak in tongues.

Now it's a choice. What are you going to believe? You're going to believe God's Word in 1 Corinthians chapter 12? Or am I going to believe what some churches preach? Again, I said, I'm going to believe God's Word. That is what has protected me from being deceived by the thing Jesus said.

Let me turn back to Matthew 24. Let me read this. Matthew 24.

The disciples ask him, Lord, what is the, the one sign of your coming? Matthew 24 verse 3. And Jesus said, see to it that nobody deceives you. Then he spoke about other things, wars, famines, and all that. But again, he comes back to deception.

Verse 10. Many will fall away. And verse 11, many false prophets will arise and deceive people.

Again, deception. Yeah. And then further down, verse 24.

Again, false signs and false prophets will arise and will again deceive people with signs and wonders. I've told you in advance, verse 25. See how many times he repeats about deception in that? He talks about the last days.

He doesn't repeat about famines and wars and all the other things so often, but he repeats again and again in deception. And he says, verse 25, behold, I have told you in advance. And yet people think, don't take it seriously.

That's what made me desperate to find out how can I make sure that I'm not deceived at all? That's what led me to 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 10 and 11, where the Lord said, if you love the truth about yourself, number one, whenever you hear something that convicts you, you say, yes, acknowledge it. And secondly, you read the word of God and find it's completely different from what you believed all your life. Forget what you believed all your life and accept the word of God.

That's loving the truth. And the whole purpose is to be saved. Your primary desire in life must be saved from everything that is sinful.

So you love the truth about yourself, love the truth that you see in the word of God and want to be saved from all sin. God guarantees you will not be deceived. All the others, God himself will deceive them and they will believe what is false.

Verse 11, but if I follow this, the warnings given in verse 10, I will never believe what is false. Everything I believe will be the truth. That's a wonderful comfort for me because I don't want to spend my life on earth believing something that is false and wake up finally in eternity and discover that I was deceived.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 7, Matthew 7 and verse 22. Speaking about the last day of judgment, Matthew 7 and verse 22. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Prophecy is one of the gifts of the spirit.

This is not in some foreign God's name. In the name of Jesus, they prophesied. Didn't we cast out demons in your name? In the name of Jesus, they cast out demons.

And in the name of Jesus, they did not one miracle, but many miracles, genuine miracles, not these fake ones that a lot of people are claiming to do today. And I will say to them, I never knew you. Go to hell.

Depart from me. Depart from me means go to hell. In the last day, when you stand before the Lord and the Lord says, get away from me, there's only one place to go to.

That's hell. Depart from me, you who practice sin. That's the point.

Sin is lawlessness. Your problem was not that you didn't do miracles or you didn't prophesy. The problem was you lived in sin.

So what is the reason why the Lord sent them away? Because they practiced sin. So there again, I see the same thing. I love the truth.

I can do miracles in Jesus' name, cast out demons in Jesus' name, prophesy in Jesus' name. That means preach powerful messages in Jesus' name. But if I'm not free from sin in my life, one day when I stand before the Lord, the Lord will say, I'm not bothered by you doing all this in my name, casting out demons and healing the sick and preaching.

What was your attitude to sin? I never knew you. If I knew you, you would not sin. I learned something else from that.

What is the mark of knowing the Lord? I will not live in sin. I never knew you, verse Matthew 24, 23, and you practice sin. See the connection? Because I never knew you, you practice sin.

If I knew you, you wouldn't be practicing sin. So I'm sharing with you what the Lord showed me and how important it is to be protected from deception in these days. Very, very important.

And I saw one of the ways in which I can protect myself from deception is, let me turn you back to 1 Timothy. You know, we must read the Bible in its context always. Read the Bible in its context.

In one, you know, for example, let me tell you something that in the original New Testament letters, as they were written, Paul did not put chapter divisions and verses and all that. No, no, no. That was just a few hundred years ago.

People put in these chapters and divisions and verses so that we can refer to something easily. Otherwise, it is a big, long letter. When you write a letter, you don't put chapters and verses.

So when you read the Gospels and the New Testament, don't stop at the end of a chapter. Read on, because the thought may be continued into the next verse. Many, many times I've seen that.

You stop at one point and you miss the connection with the next chapter. So nowadays, when I read the Bible, or not nowadays, for many, many years now, when I read the Bible, I'm reading a chapter, I don't stop at the end of the chapter. I go on the next few verses and see if there's a connection.

And very often there's a connection. And here's one of those examples. Because 1 Timothy 4, we read it earlier, the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times, in the last days, some will fall away from the faith,

paying attention to deceitful spirits.

So what is the connection? It says, but. But means it's connected to the previous verse. Now we understand something.

Now let me connect it to the previous verse. 1 Timothy 3, 16. Great is the mystery of godliness.

Christ was revealed in the flesh and was pure in his Spirit. Now, the Living Bible puts it the best way that I can think of. It says like this.

It is true that the way to live a godly life is not an easy matter. That we all agree. But the answer lies in Christ, who came as a man, and his Spirit was pure.

See, that's the thing that man has never been able to keep. His Spirit pure because of his flesh. So the way to live a godly life is not an easy matter because we have a flesh.

But the answer lies in Christ, who came as a man, and kept his Spirit pure. And even the angels saw it and testified to it. It says in that verse.

That is the way to live a godly life, to see the secret of Jesus came in my flesh. No sin in him, he had a will of his own, which he denied even in Gethsemane. And thus he lived a godly life, filled with the Holy Spirit, denying his will, he lived a holy life.

And he calls me also to be filled with the Holy Spirit, pick up my cross every day, deny my will, and I can follow him. And then it goes on to say, but, see the connection? But in the last days, the Holy Spirit, some will fall away from this faith. And we see that happening around.

How many churches do you feel, or have you come across, that teach that the way to live a godly life is by seeing how Jesus came as a man and overcame? Have you heard that on the internet in any message? Have you heard any church consistently preaching it? We've preached it for 45 years. But the Spirit says in the last days, people will fall away from that faith, fall away from that way of becoming godly. And they will turn aside to deceit, deception.

And that's because their own conscience, verse 2, is not sensitive. Their conscience has died. It's like your skin is branded with iron, that part of the skin dies.

And it says your conscience can be branded like that, it becomes dead. And they began to tease, there are other ways to become godly. For example, verse 3, don't get married.

There are people teaching that, you want to be holy, don't get married. Or you must fast, don't eat certain foods, avoid certain things. And different ways of becoming godly, all are deception.

The real way of becoming godly is 1 Timothy 3.16, to see Christ who came like us and was tempted like us and did not sin. And to ask God to give me revelation on that. You know, in Matthew chapter 16, it says that Jesus once asked his disciples, in Matthew 16, verse 15, who do you say that I am? See, in those days, everybody thought in the world, Israel thought Christ was a man.

He was just a man. He's not God. He's not the Messiah.

He's a man, he's a man, he's a man. Then, you know, some said, oh, he's a good man, maybe a prophet like Elijah, verse 14, Matthew 16, 14. Or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, but still a man.

And Jesus said to his disciples, what about you? Who do you say that I am? Verse 15, Matthew 16, and Peter said, you're not a man. You're the Messiah, the son of the living God, the second person of the Trinity, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. You are God Almighty, the second person of the Trinity.

And Jesus said, blessed are you, Simon. Let me paraphrase it. You didn't discover that with your cleverness or because somebody taught it to you.

My father gave you a revelation. My father gave you a revelation in your spirit about this. When everybody around thought he was a man, Peter saw this is not a man.

This is Almighty God who has come in human form. Those days, the problem was people thought Christ was a man. They didn't realize he was God.

Today with Christians, the problem is they think he's only God. They don't realize he came as a man. What about today in heaven? Let me tell you what the Bible says in 1 Timothy in chapter 2. Read carefully.

1 Timothy 2 and verse 5. There is one God and one mediator between God and man. Who? The man, Christ Jesus. So Jesus, when he came to earth and became man, he's become a man forever.

He doesn't cease to be God. He was God on earth also. And the proof of that is on earth.

You read in the gospel, seven times people worshiped him. No, he didn't lift them up like the angels did when people try to worship the angel saying, no, no, no, don't worship me. He accepted it, which is the clearest proof that when he was on earth, he was God.

He forgave sins, especially the fact that he accepted worship. You read even in Revelation, no angel would accept worship. So when he was on earth, he was God.

He never ceased to be God. When he came to earth as a man, he did not cease to be God. And when he went back to heaven, he did not cease to be a man.

He's called here the man, Christ Jesus. Some people say God-man. That's not an expression found in the Bible.

Never. And I wouldn't use it. I say the man, Christ Jesus.

God Almighty became a man. He is God still, but he's a man. But he's not an example for me as God.

Because I cannot follow him if he came to earth as God. I can follow him because he came to earth as a man. The secret of godliness is not in the God-man, Christ Jesus.

I can never follow a God-man because I'm not a God-man. The secret of godliness is in Christ Jesus who came as a man and who did not use his divine power to overcome sin. I often use this example, and I never get tired of using it.

If an angel wanted to teach me how to swim in a swimming pool and comes with his wings and flies across the pool and says, follow me, I'd say, hey angel, I can't follow you. I can admire you how you fly across. If I had wings, I could follow you.

But if you want to teach me how to swim, get rid of your wings. You're an angel. You're still an angel, but get rid of your wings.

And be subject to the law of gravity like I am, that when you go into that swimming pool, you go down. Then teach me how to swim. Isn't that right? It's true.

A bird, for example, can't teach you how to swim because he can fly across. So if Jesus came to earth and he used all his power as God to overcome sin, I'd say, Lord, I don't follow you. Don't even ask me to do it.

And Jesus would not be foolish to ask us to follow him if he overcame sin as to the power of God and tells me to overcome as a man. The secret of living a godly life. Not an easy thing, 1 Timothy 3, 16.

The answer lies in Christ who came as a man and kept his spirit pure throughout his life. I was defeated by sin for many, many years after I was born again, for more than 16 years. I wasn't going around committing adultery or murder or any such thing.

No, no, no, no. I kept the Ten Commandments. But my thought life, particularly anger, I was defeated.

Well, I would confess and I'd be forgiven. I'd confess and I'd be forgiven. I wanted victory.

I wanted victory. And I'll tell you, after about 16, 17 years, one day God opened my eyes to see Jesus came like you. And in the power of the Holy Spirit, put his own will to death and did the Father's will.

And the Lord said, you can do the same. I said, Lord, really? You mean I can overcome anger and dirty thoughts and wrong attitudes? You mean I'll be able to forgive everybody who harms me? And I will never have an unforgiving spirit towards a single human being? Yes, like Jesus, changed my life more than 40 years ago. It's on the basis of that truth that we built CFC, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, enabling us to follow Jesus in his footsteps.

Looking unto Jesus, we run the race. So this is the truth from which the Spirit says in 1 Timothy 4.1, deception will come in the last days. And I've seen it happen.

I've seen how people fight against it. They fight against it. And I'll tell you why they fight against it, because they want to live in sin.

That's why. So I want to encourage all of you to think about this seriously. Ask yourself, if you're defeated by sin, whether you have seen the secret of godliness.

Remember what Jesus said, the great sign of the last days is deception. Do not be deceived. And if you don't love the truth about yourself and you don't want to be saved from sin, you don't have a passionate desire to be saved from sin, God will allow you to be deceived.

Because God is testing people. I believe even when you read the Bible, God is testing people. For example, I'll give you one verse, Luke chapter 16.

You've got to love the truth now. Love the truth and read this verse. Luke 16 verse 13, no servant can serve two masters.

And the two masters are not God and Satan, that I can easily understand. But the two masters are God and money. And you will be devoted to one and despise the other, you'll hate the one and love the other.

So I said, Lord, what does this mean? I cannot love God and money. If there's a slight bit of love of money in my heart in that area, I don't love God. It's clear, according to this verse.

If I want to love the Lord with all my heart, I have to make sure there's zero love of money in my heart. And I want God to show it to me. And it doesn't come all of a sudden, little by little in different situations, God shows me.

And I say, Lord, I want to be free from that. The love of money is like an onion. You see something, you peel it off.

Ah, I've got rid of it. No, another situation, another layer, another layer. So what I've been doing for the past 40 years is reducing the size of this onion called the love of money.

As God shows me little by little by little by little, I want to go to the center where there's zero. Then I become like Jesus in being completely free from the love of money. That'll happen when he comes.

But until that day, I'm pressing on to perfection. You know what pressing on to perfection means? Reducing these things, reducing the size of this onion of the flesh with all its lusts. As I see it, confess it, forsake it, ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome it.

It's like killing the giants of Canaan. One by one, kill the giants of Canaan, occupy the land. Kill another giant, occupy the land.

But they use that illustration or use the illustration of peeling the onion. The aim is to possess the land, this whole body for Christ completely. Well, you've got to love the truth here.

And I said, Lord, I want to see, I want to say honestly that I will not be able to serve God if I love money. How do I know whether I'm serving God or money? This is the test. It's a very simple test.

Supposing there's a person called A sitting in front of me here and a person called B sitting in front of me here. And both of them say, Zach is my servant. Very easy to find out.

You tell them, A and B, call Zach. Tell Zach to come to you. And they say, Zach, come here.

Whoever I go to, I'm his servant. If I go to A, I'm his servant. If I go to B, I'm his servant.

Okay, now apply that to God and money. Here's God and here's money. And God's calling you in one direction and money is pulling you in another direction.

Which call do you respond to? Whether you like it or not, whether you call yourself a spiritual believer or not, you are a servant of money. If you love the truth, you'll be free from it. But if you don't face up to it and say, no, no, no, no, I'm quite spiritual, all your life, you'll be deceived.

Dear brother, sister, I'm serious. We are approaching the end of time. We want to meet the Lord with as much of this wretched onion eliminated from our life.

We want to live a life rejoicing in the Lord, overcoming and useful to God. I really believe that many, many believers, even in CFC churches, are not useful to God because there's a love of something else in their heart they have not cleansed themselves from. I long to see so many brothers and sisters mightily used by God in CFC churches.

They're not being used. They're just sitting there as passive members. It means there's something they love more than God.

And why doesn't God free them from it? He allows them to be deceived because they don't love the truth about themselves. They think they're very spiritual. They think, oh, we are better than those other churches.

Well, you keep saying that you're better than other churches. You'll never get light on yourself. Forget about the other churches.

Forget about the other believers. Say, Lord, show me where I'm short of becoming like Christ. Never compare yourself with other believers.

Compare yourself only with Jesus Christ. That's all. Make that decision in your life.

I will only compare myself with Christ. Looking unto Jesus, we run the race and we press on to perfection. Then we are ready for his coming.

And little by little, we find we're becoming like him. One last verse. 1 John chapter 3. 1 John chapter 3. Speaking about the Lord's coming and how we have to be ready for it.

It's along the line I was just speaking. 1 John chapter 3, verse 2. Beloved, we are already children of God. Verse 2. 1 John 3, 2. We are born again.

But it has not yet become appeared what we will be. When we see him, when he appears, then we will be like him. Till now we are not like him.

It has not yet appeared that we'll be like him. But when he appears, 1 John 3, 2, we will be like him. That is our goal.

Our goal is to be like him. And how do you know whether you have this hope in you or not? Every one of you would say, yeah, my hope is to be like Jesus when he comes. Hang on.

Verse 3. If you really have this hope, you will be purifying yourself every single day until you reach his standard of purity in every area. Lord, I want to forgive people like you forgive. I want to be free from the love of money like you are free.

I want to be free from dirty thoughts like you were free. I want to be free from murmuring and grumbling like you were free. I want to be free from anger like you were free.

I want to purify myself, peeling off the layers of the onion until I reach your standard of purity. That's how we are ready for his coming. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, please help us to take your word seriously and be ready for your return. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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