

Exhortation and Encouragement

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of quoting the whole scripture, understanding the condition for the promise, and obeying scripture to build an unshakable life and avoid the danger of anger and lust.

Duration: 1:16:29

Scripture: Acts 23:1

Topics: "Repentance And Forgiveness", "Restoration Ministry"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not living in condemnation for past failures, using examples of Peter and Paul to show that even great leaders in the Bible made mistakes but found forgiveness and restoration. It encourages listeners to repent, seek God's forgiveness, and move forward in ministry despite past failures.

Transcript

We saw the other day that there is a balance in scripture, and sometimes balance is in the immediate verse following or immediate verse before that. So those of us who only remember individual verses and memorize them, it's good. But be careful that you don't take a verse out of its context.

For example, I'll give you one or two examples. It's very popular for people to quote, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. But do you know that's only half a verse? The full verse is 1 John 1 7. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, then and then only the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

What about someone who does not want to walk in the light of God? That means he's not willing to allow God's light to shine into every area of his conscience. He doesn't want that. I want to say the blood of Jesus does not cleanse him from all sin.

And this is probably the only church where you'll hear that said. Quote God's word exactly. Because in this word, we have the word of life that shows us the pathway to glory.

And the devil is a master at dividing God's word into two and taking out the condition and giving you the promise. The promise is the blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all sin. The condition is if we walk in the light.

And the devil is a master at cutting out the condition, making you memorize the promise. Many of you know this promise. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.

No one will pluck them from my hand. My father is greater than I and no one can pluck them from my father's hand. You know, that's also only half a verse.

It's in John chapter 10, the verse begins at 27, but people quote it from verse 28. It's very common for people to quote the latter half. The verse begins with my sheep hear my voice.

Are you one of his sheep? Secondly, do you hear his voice? Third, does he know you? Fourth, do you follow him? Then, I give them eternal life. They'll never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

My father has given them to me. He's greater than I. No one was able to snatch them out of the father's hand. You know, a lot of people think CFC is preaching new truths.

We're not preaching new truths. We're just quoting the whole scripture. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is inspired by God and is profitable to train us in righteousness, to make us perfect.

So what I mean is it's the whole scripture is like a circle. You take half that circle and say that's inspired by God, but you leave out the other half. You're going to deceive yourself.

Do you know that the devil quoted half a scripture to Jesus? If he can quote it to Jesus, why won't he quote it for you? You read in Matthew chapter 4, it's very, very important. I'm just trying to teach you how to study scripture so that you're not deceived. Matthew chapter 4, the only difference, I'll tell you this, please listen to this, the only difference between us and other churches is we quote the whole verse and the whole scripture.

We quote the condition, but most other churches only quote the promise. If you want to classify it generally, that's about it. We quote the whole scripture, others quote just the promise.

Matthew chapter 4, we read that when the devil came to Jesus and told him, if you are the son of God, turn the stones into bread. And Jesus said, it is written. That's why he was different from Eve.

When you know that the devil came to Eve also questioning, has God really said, has God really said, and for 6,000 years he's been telling people, has God really said that? Imagine how far he's gone. Today there are parts of the world where the devil says, has God really said that marriage must only be between a man and a woman? How far he's gone. Because he leads step by step by step by step.

He doesn't suddenly come up with wild things. I heard of an experiment, I don't know whether it's true or not, of how they put a frog in ordinary cold water and he was quite comfortable there. And they raised the temperature little by little over a period of time.

And they didn't make it boiling hot. Suddenly the frog would have jumped out. But they raised it maybe a few degrees, kept it there, and the frog was comfortable in that temperature.

Then raised it a little more, and the frog was comfortable in that temperature. Raised it slowly over a long period of time to the point where it killed the frog. This is a picture, whether the experiment is true or not, I don't know, but it's a perfect picture of how the devil just makes you compromise a little bit.

You just tell a little lie here, or a little compromise here, or you skip something which your conscience tells you, ignore it. And little by little, he's got a foothold in you. Once you've ignored something which your conscience tells you, or once you've ignored some scripture, the devil's got a foothold in you.

And when the devil came to Eve and said, has God really said? And he got Eve into a conversation. And then Eve said, yeah, we may die. And the devil said, you will surely not die.

See, he contradicts God's word. And the devil led her astray. That's how sin came into the world.

Remember that sin came into the world because the devil questioned God's word and made Eve discuss God's word with him, and got into a discussion with God's word, and gradually led her into sin. Whereas when it came to Jesus, Jesus said, there's no question of discussion. It is written.

That's the end of the matter. Then the devil said, oh, I can't tackle him the way I tackled Eve. So he says, it is written.

Okay, then I will also quote, it is written. So the next temptation, the devil comes with, it is written, because this person quotes, it is written. So if he finds that you're one of those who are stickler for God's word, he will bring God's word to you, but quote half of it.

And so he comes to Jesus in the next temptation and says, if you're the son of God, throw yourself down, because it is written. He's quoting Jesus' own words. It is written.

He will give his charge of, angel's charge of you on their hands, they'll bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone. You compare that with the original verse in Psalm 91, and you'll see a slight difference. It says in Psalm 91 and verse 11 and 12, he gives angel's charge of you, to God you in all your ways, and they will bear you up.

And that is a promise to those who dwell in the shadow of the Almighty, verse one. For whom is it? Is it for everybody? That promise in Psalm 91, no. It's for one who dwells in the shadow of the Almighty.

And when I see the word shadow of the Almighty, it means this. Supposing you and somebody are walking towards the sun. The sun is in front of you, and somebody is walking.

How do you walk in the shadow? You walk in the shadow by walking behind him. That's the only way you can walk in the shadow. You're not walking beside him, you're walking in the shadow.

So to walk in the shadow of the Almighty means I'm walking behind him. And if I'm walking in the footsteps of the Lord, then he will give his angels charge over me to keep me in all my ways. But if I go wherever I like and I say, oh, he has said his angels will give charge over me, you'll be as foolish as the way the devil tempts him, had tempted Jesus.

But Jesus said, you quote, it is written. Well, let me tell you, verse seven. On the other hand, it is also written.

So the truth of God is not found just in it is written. That is one wing of the bird. But if it's one wing of the bird, it'll just go in circles.

And a lot of people who quote one scripture go in circles. But all scripture is inspired by God. So it is written, plus it is also written.

Then we don't go astray. I'm just giving you that little warning on Bible study. Because so many people I find, I get letters from people who quote one scripture.

And they're even trying to correct us. And then when we quote another scripture and say, it is also written this, they never reply back. They don't even have the honesty or the humility to say, thank you, brother, for correcting me.

I see the whole truth now. No, they are humiliated by the fact that they were proved that they were wrong by another scripture, not what we thought. We just quoted, it is also written.

That's how we reply to some emails. Some of them are honest and humble enough to say, thank you for showing us that we learned the truth. If you are humble enough and thankful, when somebody shows you something, corrects you in something, if you have the humility to say, thank you, brother, I did not see that before.

You are on the right path. You'll never go astray. But it requires humility to say thank you so much instead of saying, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I see it.

That's an arrogant way. Has somebody shown you the truth a little better than you saw it before? Have you ever gone up to him and say, thank you, brother, for showing me that? I never saw that before, but thank you so much. That's very good.

So I want to show you one of these places in Hebrews chapter three. Sometimes people say, brother, we preach such strong things in the church. We terrify people with the word of God.

But I say, do you know that in the Bible, let me ask you something, who preached about hell more than any other preacher? You know who it was? It was Jesus Christ. You read in all the New Testament, look for the word hell in a concordance. It's a good way to study the Bible.

I bought a concordance. One of the first things I did when I earned some money way back in 1963 was to buy a concordance. And a really good concordance.

And I began to study words in that. Study what all the scripture says about grace and about faith and about hell. It's so easy when you have a concordance.

Take a concordance and look for the word hell and find out, and you can write to me if you like, how many times did Paul preach on hell? How many times did Peter preach on hell? How many times did John preach on hell? And how many times did Jesus speak about hell? You'll really get a surprise. And Jesus spoke about hell in a very scary way before I get here. Maybe I should show you that.

Matthew chapter five. How many of you know this, that in the entire Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Mount is the longest sermon that Jesus preached to the multitudes. I mean, there's a long message in John 14, 15, 16 also.

But the longest sermon that Jesus preached to the disciples in general and to crowds listening was in Matthew five, six, and seven. And it is the end of that sermon that he said, if you hear my words and obey them, your house will be founded on a rock, unshakable. That means my life will be unshakable.

I want an unshakable life. I want a life where the devil can try to shake me, the circumstances shake me, unconverted relatives shake me, Christians call me heretic and shake me, and I will be unshakable like a rock. One way to get there, obey Matthew five, six, and seven.

That's why when we started CFC in 1975, we preached on the Sermon on the Mount verse by verse through many weeks. And you can go to our website and go to the New Testament verse by verse and listen to verse by verse through Matthew five, six, and seven and through the whole New Testament, if you like. Or you can go to another series we have on our website called All That Jesus Taught.

There you'll see the whole Sermon on the Mount again. So we have many series there in our website where you can listen to the Sermon on the Mount. But I want a family life that is unshakable.

There's so many attacks on the family in these days. Some, the devil tries to come between husband and wife, come between parents and children. So much of that in the world today.

How shall you build an unshakable home? I want to tell you, take the Sermon on the Mount seriously because at the end of that he said, if you listen to my words and obey them, it's the unshakable word of God that can never fail. Your life will be founded on a rock. But if you listen to it and you don't bother to obey it, you can think you're very spiritual, you will shake.

The devil's too smart for all of us. He'll be building on sand. So let me show you, do you know that in the Sermon on the Mount only two places, only two places Jesus spoke about hell.

Did you know that hell is mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount? In two contexts. Actually the word comes three times, but in the context of two sins, that's what I mean. Three times the word hell comes in the Sermon on the Mount, but two sins.

There are many, many sins mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. Judging others, being anxious, doing your works to show other people, hating your enemies, that's a sin, you know, to hate your enemies. And not speaking the truth or loving money, that's another sin.

Many sins like that are mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. And of course, many things mentioned in the first part, not being pure in heart, not being poor in spirit, not being peacemakers, et cetera. But among all these sins, Jesus mentioned two, only two out of all these sins, which are in danger of taking you to hell.

And do you know what those two are? Anger and lusting after women with your eyes. Anger applies to all men and women. Lusting after women with your eyes, it doesn't just apply to young people, it can apply to older people.

If you don't conquer it in your younger age, you're gonna be 80 years old and still be defeated by it. You have to fight and battle it in your younger days. Fight and battle anger, fight and battle lust.

Matthew chapter five and verse 22. I say to you that everyone, there's no exception, everyone. Whenever Jesus uses the word everyone, everyone, and you know, I haven't researched it, but I think it's only in relation to these two sins that Jesus said everyone, everyone.

I mean, in relation to a lust of the eyes leads on to adultery also. Everyone, everyone. You try and search out that for yourself.

He uses that word everyone so there's nobody left out. Everyone who is angry, are you included with his brother? Shall be guilty. You get angry, you're guilty.

And I know in some versions, I think in James version, because they thought the standard was too high, the translators added a little phrase called without a reason, angry without a reason. Even Osama bin Laden was not angry without any reason. He had a reason for getting angry.

Once you put without a reason, all anger is justified. That's a very convenient phrase that people put in. And tell me, do you ever get angry without a reason? I mean, you got to be mad to be angry without a reason.

Always there's a reason, but that is not in the original scriptures. And I believe the NASB is very accurate. He was angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court and whoever shall say, and when the anger in the heart boils out to words, he's more guilty.

And when it goes on to say more words, then you are guilty to go to hell. That's the first place. The second is in verse 28.

I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her, that means to lust for her body. I wish I had her body as already committed adultery because in his mind, he wanted her. He couldn't get her for some reason.

And therefore, you know, this last thing comes with the eyes. If your right eye makes you to stumble, tear it out, throw it away from you. That means basically it means just be like a blind man.

Because if you tear out your right eye, is it still possible to lust with your left eye? Do you need two eyes to lust? No, one eye is more than enough to lust. So you need to understand what Jesus was saying. I mean, if you tear out your right eye, you got to cause you to lust, tear it out.

The principle is if after that your left eye caused you to stumble, tear that out as well. Basically what it means is be like a blind person at that moment, which means close your eyes or turn your eyes away or switch off the computer or something and get away from there so that you're not. Because if you don't do that, you may save your body, but your body will go to hell.

It's better that one member of your body perishes than your whole body be thrown into hell. I mean, is it possible for a person's whole body to be thrown into hell? Who is he talking to? Is he talking to the Pharisees? See Matthew five, verse one and two. His disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and taught them.

He's telling his disciples, you're my disciples. I'm telling you, you can go to hell. There are not many preachers who say that a disciple can go to hell.

Jesus did. And he said, you can sin with your right eye sexually. And then he also says, verse 30, you can sin with your right hand sexually.

And you know what that means. Cut it off. Throw it away.

Cut off the left hand. In other words, be like an armless person so that you can't sin with your hands sexually. Otherwise, your whole body will again go to hell.

Everyone, everyone. So these are strong words. Some people say, Brother Zach speaks very strong.

I say, you haven't heard Jesus. That's why he said things like Matthew chapter 12 and verse 36. I say to you, I say to you, every careless word men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment.

I take that word seriously. Because in that day, I'll be justified by my word. I'll believe the words.

We are justified by faith. But faith without works, James says, is dead. And if it's real faith, I'll believe the words of Jesus.

Faith means to believe the words of Jesus. What does it mean to be justified by faith? Faith in what? Not just general faith. You have faith in a vehicle that brought you here from wherever your home was.

You believe that that vehicle will take you. That's why you got onto it and rode it here. This is faith in God, in his word.

And his word says that every careless word you speak, he'll give an account in the day of judgment. Because by your words, you will be justified. I believe that with all my heart.

I didn't believe it for many years after I was born again, but I believe it now, and I'm very careful with my words. So you see, think of things like that, how Jesus called people generation of vipers and all that type of stuff. Now let's turn to Hebrews chapter three.

Again, a warning to believers. Take care, brethren. Hebrews 3.12, lest there should be in any one of you believers an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God.

Verse 14, we become partakers of Christ only if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. I feel there are lots of believers, lots of believers, and possibly some of you say, sitting here, who think, imagine, I'm a special favorite of God. Those verses don't apply to me.

Uh-huh. How the devil has fooled you. You're a special favorite of God? That those verses don't apply to you? Whom does that apply to? I remember quoting these verses to an elder in a brethren assembly once.

And when I quoted this verse, he said, don't quote to me from Hebrews. That was written for the Hebrews. Uh-huh.

Then there are, I have nothing, there's nothing for Zacharon in here. This is for the Thessalonians and the Corinthians, and I'm searching for something for me, and I find nothing. Can you believe that an elder in a brethren assembly said, that's written for the Hebrews and not for us? Which part of the Bible is written for you then? It's amazing what all things people think to get out of obedience to scripture.

But the devil is a very smart guy. He's got clever arguments to prevent you from obedience, to just go and claim the promises without the conditions. Brothers, take care, brethren, believers.

Who are these brethren? Three, one, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, for whom Jesus is the apostle. These are not Hebrews, these are not Jews. These are born-again believers.

To born-again believers, he says, you believers, be careful that you don't have, end up with an evil, unbelieving heart. That means you don't believe all these warnings given in scripture. You don't believe these warnings about anger and sexual lust.

Because people sometimes ask me, Brother Zach, why do you, in so many of your messages, speak against anger and sexual lust? I'll tell you, because those are the only two sins mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount that can lead people to hell immediately. There are other sins. Obviously, they're not so serious.

They are serious because they're sin. You know, there are diseases. Some are more worse than others.

I mean, if you have a cancer, that's worse than having a cold. You know that. Having a cough and a cold is also a sickness.

Cancer is also a sickness, but one is worse than the other. In some way, there are different sins, but some sins are worse than the others. You've got to see that.

Sin is exactly like sickness. Some are worse than the others. So I don't know what is worse than the others.

I may think murder, oh, that's worse, terrible. Adultery, that's terrible, or some things like that. But Jesus says anger and sexual lust are the ones that he relates to, things that'll take you to hell.

So I say, Lord, I'm not the one who knows about hell. I'm not the one who knows what serious sin is. I just take your word.

I mean, you listen to a doctor. Why can't you listen to God's word when Jesus says something? Please take God's word seriously. It'll change your life.

It'll change your whole life. It'll change everything in your life. Even if other people in your church don't come to a glorious life, you will come to a glorious life.

And people will see that and come to you and say, brother, how did you come to this life? And you'll tell them, I took God's word seriously. I believe it's the first step. Take care, brethren, lest there be, should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart.

Can a heart of unbelief be evil? Yes. That means you don't believe what Jesus said. You don't believe it's gonna happen.

Do you know there are so many believers who don't believe these things won't happen to me because I'm sort of a special favorite of God. God has no special favorites. I fear.

I live in the fear of God. And I believe what it says in verse 14. We become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence.

That means we started the race well and if we finish well, then we become partakers of Christ. But I'm a partaker of Christ now, but I've got to finish well as well. That is one side of the truth.

Warning, exaltation. Now I want to tell you the other side of truth. Encouragement.

Verse 13. It's right there. It's the balance of scripture.

But encourage one another daily. Otherwise you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. So you see warning and encouragement.

That's the balance. How to save people from sin? Warning. How to save people from sin? Encouragement.

Now we think that encouragement may not save people from sin. It does. It says if you want to be saved from being hardened, how do you get hardened? You keep on ignoring scripture, ignoring scripture, ignoring scripture, you get hardened.

After some time, you don't even feel. It's a terrible state to come to. That God's word is preached in power and you don't even feel it.

You don't even feel anymore that lusting with your eyes is a serious sin that can take you to hell. You take it lightly. Ah, yeah, yeah, it happens.

We're all men, what to do? Or you don't even feel that careless words can bring judgment to you. That shows your heart is hardened. Brother, be careful.

While it is called today, verse 15, don't harden your heart. Today, if you hear his voice, there's hope for you. Don't harden your heart.

So there's warning, but there's encouragement. Verse 13, encourage one another as long as it is called today because your heart can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. That means sin can deceive you.

Oh, I'm not serious, the sin says. This is not serious, this is not serious, this is not serious. It's amazing how when I think of these small, teeny weeny germs called viruses and bacteria, it's so tiny you're gonna need a microscope to see it, and that small little thing can kill a man.

What a small thing it is that kills somebody. To me, that's a picture of sin. It's not just lions and tigers that can kill human beings.

In this world, lions and tigers can kill human beings, but the smallest little thing, a bacteria or a virus, that can kill you too. And so sin must be taken seriously. But the way to help people not to be hardened is not always by warning.

That's what I wanted to emphasize today. Not always warning, warning, warning, warning. That's necessary.

The Bible is full of warnings. We read some of Jesus' warnings. But there must be encouragement, and I want to share some meaning of that with you.

First of all, I want you to see John chapter three and verse 17. God did not send in, everybody knows John 3, 16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

But John 3, 17 is another great verse. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn or to judge. Judge usually means in the New Testament, condemn.

When it says judge not, it doesn't mean that I should not have any discernment. Sometimes people ask me, what is the difference between judging and discerning? I say, I tell you, judging is always condemning. As a condemning attitude towards somebody, when you judge, in discerning, you don't condemn.

You're discerning so that you don't go astray. Hey, I don't want to be led astray by that guy. I sort of discern that he's not genuine.

I discern that that guy's after money. I discern that that guy's seeking his own. So I don't condemn him, but I discern and I keep myself clear of such people.

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. Please remember this. Condemnation is not what Jesus came for.

If you ever feel condemned by any preacher or by anybody, that's not from the Lord. What does the Holy Spirit do? Convict. You need to distinguish between conviction and condemnation.

Condemnation makes you feel hopeless. Conviction shows you the sin, but gives you hope. Jesus didn't leave it like that saying, oh well, if you can't get victory over anger, you're going to hell.

He didn't leave it there. He sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to show that you can overcome that. You can overcome that anger.

You have commands in the New Testament like Ephesians 4, 31, put away all anger. All anger means all anger. If you take it seriously and you say, Lord, your command says put away all anger, Ephesians 4, 31.

I believe your Holy Spirit can help me in my life. I remember when praying for the Holy Spirit to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I said, Lord, if it takes 10 years, I'm willing to wait 10 years. You pray like that to God.

Lord, I don't care how long it takes. 20 years, 20 years, the earlier the better, but I'm going to get it. I'm going to put away all anger.

Or it says rejoice always. I don't know how long it's going to take, Lord. If it takes 20 years, I am going to come to the place where I rejoice always.

It's like climbing a mountain. The Holy Spirit will lead you to that place where you will rejoice in the Lord 24-7, not rejoice in your circumstances. We cannot rejoice in our circumstances.

Some of them are miserable, but it says rejoice in the Lord always. Isn't that possible? Has he changed? God is still on the throne. He still loves you.

The devil's been defeated. Christ shed his blood for your sins. Those things are never changed.

Rejoice in the Lord always. That means fix your mind on him and don't be anxious for anything because you've got a father in heaven who cares for you. So never allow the devil to condemn you.

Never, never, never. Condemnation is from the devil. Romans chapter eight.

This is a great verse. Romans 8, one. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now, whenever you read a verse like that, like I've often told you, read it in its context. That means read the verse before it, read the verse after it. Okay, let's read the verse before it.

Verse 24. Wretched man that I am. Romans 7, 24.

Who will deliver me from this body of death? He's feeling so miserable because he's so defeated. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But he says, now this is a difficult passage, Romans 7, 14 to 25.

But I believe he's referring to unconscious sin that comes forth from us even when we don't want to, when we slip up. It's not that I choose to do it, but accidentally I slip up. You know, there's a difference between a 10-month-old child who is falling and when you trip somewhere and fall.

You have learned to walk, but once in a while you may trip on a stone or a banana skin and fall. That's not because you haven't learned to walk, because you're a bit careless. But when a 10-month-old child is falling, it's not yet learned to walk.

It's falling and falling and falling and falling. So there's a picture of one who's defeated, that 10-month-old child, and you are a picture of one who's got victory, but you can still fall any day. I mean, you can fall as you go out of this hall today.

So none of us can say, I will never fall again. I can trip on a stone or a banana skin today. So victory over sin doesn't mean I will never fall again.

It just means I've learned to walk, but I may trip up sometimes. So there is no, so it says, Romans 7, 14 to 25 is talking about that unconscious sin. There's so many areas in our life which we don't have light on.

And so he says, so then, this is a very difficult verse to understand if you don't see, understand what I'm saying. With my mind in my conscious area, let me paraphrase this, I'm serving the law of God. My entire conscious area, I'm serving the law of God, but my unconscious area, which is probably 90% of my life, the law of sin is working.

That means there's a lot of unconscious sin in the best of us. Please remember that. It's a liberating truth that there are areas in your life you're not conscious of, but which are sinful.

And someone who's more godly than you can see it. You can't see it. And if a person condemns you for that, it's because he doesn't know God.

Whenever I see someone doing something which I see as wrong, see, that must be an unconscious area in that person. I don't condemn that person. I mean, it's not like adultery or telling lies which even the worldly person knows is wrong, the 10 Commandments.

10 Commandments, everybody knows. I'm talking about other areas of selfishness and pride. Very often, I can see that in some people, a selfishness and a pride.

It's glaringly obvious to me, but I say to myself, for him, it is still an unconscious area, so he is not guilty. God does not hold him guilty, and I will not hold him guilty. Take that attitude, and it'll also help you to recognize, in the same way, there must be unconscious areas in me, because I'm not perfect either.

And so there must be things in my life that other people can see, which I don't see myself yet. And if he condemns me for it, it's because he hasn't yet become godly to understand God's way. I don't condemn, because I've seen there is unconscious and conscious areas.

With my mind, I serve the law of God, but unconsciously, what can I do? My flesh is serving the law of sin. And even though, now understand this verse. Even though my flesh is serving the law of sin unconsciously, yet, verse, chapter eight, verse, and there is no condemnation.

I don't feel condemned. You see, the connection between verse 24 and Romans 8, one. Though my flesh is constantly serving the law of sin, unconsciously, there are so many areas of my life that are sinful, un-Christ-like.

That's the meaning of sinful. I don't feel condemned as I discover something. Say I discover something tomorrow, and say, wow.

You mean I've had this thing in me for 75 years, and other people had to bear it in me for 75 years, and I'm discovering it now. Thank you, Lord, for my dear brothers and sisters who have patiently borne with me for this wretched thing in me which I'm discovering now. Thank God I can cleanse it away now.

But that is not the end of it. There are still other things in me that people have to bear with. Remember this, my dear brothers and sisters.

It'll help you to be very merciful to your fellow believers in the church that everybody's flesh serves the law of sin. And when we preach victory over sin, we are not saying we have become like Christ. There is no condemnation, even though unconsciously, I discover things in my life as time goes on.

You can see that balance also in 1 John, in chapter two. You know, we quote this verse often, 1 John, chapter two, verse six. The one who says he abides in him must walk as he walked.

So I must walk as Jesus walked. There's no doubt about it. There's no exception to that.

All of you say you're in Christ. You must walk as Jesus walked. But John says further on, in chapter three, verse two, we will be like him only when he comes.

So you need to understand, the Bible says in understanding, be men, be mature. Don't be a child in understanding. 1 Corinthians 14, verse 20.

So in understanding, be mature. Understand the difference between walking as Jesus walked, 1 John 2, six, and being like him, 1 John 3, two. We will be like him only when he comes.

You know, when we tell people we're seeking to walk as Jesus walked, you say, you mean you'll become like Jesus? I say, no, I'll become like Jesus only when he comes. I believe we must walk as Jesus walked. What is the difference between walking as Jesus walked and being like him, which is in the future? Walking as Jesus walked.

Walking is a conscious act. We don't walk in our sleep. I mean, I heard of some people who walk in their sleep.

I hope none of you get up and walk in your sleep. I don't remember that I've ever walked in my sleep. Walking is a conscious act.

You put one step forward. You're not sleeping and putting one step forward. It's not unconscious.

Walking is not an unconscious action. That's what I'm trying to stress. You put one step forward, then you put another step and another step.

This is walking. So it's referring to the conscious area of our life, obviously. Being refers to my total personality.

That includes conscious, unconscious, everything. Being, I am not yet like Christ. All of us must have the humility to acknowledge it so that when people question us, what does CFC teach? I say, this is it.

In my unconscious area, which is 90% of our life, we have not become like Christ. But if we pursue in his footsteps, that area will gradually become more like Christ. This is called progressive sanctification, becoming holier day by day.

That's why some are more than others. And it all depends on your faithfulness. For example, if you see an unconscious area of your life tomorrow, say some new area you've never seen.

Thank you, Lord. You've shown me an un-Christ-like area of my life and you ignore it. Oh, well, it's not serious.

You'll never overcome in that area. You'll stagnate. You'll be like in fourth standard forever because you were taught something new in fourth standard, maybe geometry, and you didn't want to study it, so you fail.

And you keep on remaining in fourth standard forever because you didn't take that subject seriously. Another student who sat with you took it seriously and moved on to fifth standard. So whenever the Lord teaches you something new, it's like a teacher teaching you something new in the class.

Take it seriously. The ones who have progressed in academics and in education the way you want your children to progress is those who take something new they are taught seriously. Oh, this is a new subject, I wanna learn it.

They go on, then they learn something further. Isn't education like that? Every year you're telling something new, something new, something. It's a perfect picture of the Christian life.

It says Jesus learned obedience. You know that verse? Learned is an education word. Hebrews 5 and verse 8. As a son, he learned obedience.

And thus, verse 9, became perfect means complete. How do you explain Hebrews 5, 9? Jesus was made perfect. You know, if you don't compare scripture with scripture and you don't study scripture carefully, you'll be confused.

Jesus was made perfect? You mean he was imperfect? And he was made perfect? He was never imperfect. There was no sin in him, unconscious or conscious. He was different from us in one area that he had no unconscious sin because he was not born like us.

He was born without a human father. He was born of the Holy Spirit. So we have to admit, there was one area he was not at all like us.

He did not have unconscious sin. He did not have dirty dreams like you may have, never in his life, because he had to be a perfect offering when he died on the cross. And that's why he never asks us to be like him in the unconscious area because he was born of the Holy Spirit.

We are born of the Holy Spirit when we are born again. But by the time we are born again, we have probably got 20 years of living in sin behind us. Some people, 30 years of living in sin behind us.

And those years of sin have built in so much sin in our unconscious way of thinking. See, a lot of things you dream about are the things that you have filled your mind with, the trash you filled your mind with in your past days. For example, somebody who for 25 years has watched pornography, read filthy books and seen filthy pictures and all that, he's gonna be plagued with filthy dreams for many years.

And think of somebody who kept himself pure because he was brought up in a godly home for 20 years in purity in his mind, he's not gonna have so many dirty dreams. Otherwise, other people will be struggling with dirty dreams when even they are 50 years old because they are not faithful. You can gradually get rid of it, slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly.

As you fill your mind with God's word, it takes a long time. And that's what should make us hate ever to put any of that dirty stuff into our mind again. Because if you put it, you'll be plagued for another five years with dirty dreams.

Haven't you suffered enough with dirty dreams? Why put one more stuff in your mind that'll plague you for another five years? That'll take you another five years to be completely clean. Be very careful. Once you started walking the way of purity, be very careful what you put into your mind.

Jesus never had unconscious sin because he never in his life put anything dirty into his mind or spoke anything sinful. So there is a difference. But in tempted, he was tempted like us.

But in temptation, each time he overcame some sin, God has never been tempted, the Bible says that. And Jesus came as a man who was tempted. So he overcame that.

It was an education. It's like learning a new subject. Then he was tempted in another area, he overcame that.

Tempted in another area, overcame that. Little by little, he covered the whole range and he became complete. Perfect means he got his degree.

And having got his degree, he has now become a professor, verse nine. This is, I'm paraphrasing it. Jesus completed his education, being tempted in every area and completed it.

That's the meaning of perfect. And now he's become a professor to all those who will obey him to lead them to eternal salvation. That means he's now gonna teach you the same way he went, hey, I'll teach you how to overcome that temptation and that one and that one.

I've gone through the whole range, the Lord says. I hadn't done that when I was in heaven, but I came to earth. I've gone through the whole range of education and I've got my degree and I can lead you.

If you listen to me, I will lead you exactly in my footsteps till you also experience the salvation. It depends on how serious you are to follow him. It's a wonderful message.

There's no condemnation for unconscious sin. So let me turn you again to 2 Corinthians 3. In the old covenant, that is a ministry of condemnation. It says in 2 Corinthians 3, nine, I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians 3. Yeah, the ministry of condemnation, verse nine, is contrasted with the new covenant, which is a ministry of righteousness.

The ministry of condemnation had a certain amount of glory. He's talking about the glory of Moses and his face, verse seven, his face was shining. But do you see in verse seven, the face of Moses, the glory was

gradually fading away.

The Old Testament glory, Moses' face shone when he came down from the mountain. But he put a veil on it, it says. He put a veil over it in verse 13.

Why did he put a veil on it? One reason was people were scared to look at him. But there was another reason. The other reason was, in verse 13, so that people don't see that this glory is gradually getting less and less and less and less and less, and after two or three days, it had gone completely.

And he didn't want people to see that. That's why Christians also put a veil over their life when the glory goes away little by little by little. They don't want people to see that.

Hey, I'm not as spiritual as I was last year, and there's a glory fading away. I better cover it up. These are the hypocrites.

If you live under the law, like in the days of Moses, the glory will fade away gradually. You may come to a wonderful glory because you're revived in a conference and the glory suddenly came, but in six months, it'll all go. But if you live in the Holy Spirit, it's the opposite.

See verse 18. When you come into the new covenant of the Holy Spirit, it increases. The glory, you may not ever reveal it to everybody, but keeps on going from glory to glory to glory.

This is one of the fundamental differences in old covenant and new covenant. In the old covenant, you get all stirred up in a meeting, and then over a period of time, it gradually fades away. Till it comes to the next conference, again, you get all stirred up, and then you put a veil over it.

You don't want people to see that you're backsliding and it's all gone away. That's why some people have to live from conference to conference or from week to week in a meeting. But in the new covenant, it is from glory to glory to glory to glory.

There may be very little increase, but it keeps on going up. The path of the righteous is like the shining light, like the rising sun that shines more and more and more and more. The sun never backslides.

That's the path of the righteous. And that's the same thing here, from glory to glory to glory. So we must make sure that what we have attained, we don't go back on.

You know, in the children of Israel, when they occupied the land of Canaan, they killed one giant and they got his territory. Good. Then they could kill another giant and get his territory.

Every giant you killed, his territory became yours. And every sin you conquer, there's a glory you get there. That's yours.

But you read in the book of Judges, they backslid. And some of those giants grew up, the children grew up to be giants and took over the land again. And Israel was slaves again and again and again and again in the land of Canaan.

The book of Judges is a perfect picture of the lives of many believers. They occupy a land and then they give it back to the devil. They give it back to the flesh.

We must determine, I'm not gonna give anything back. It's with great difficulty that I conquered something. And by the Holy Spirit's power, I'm gonna go from glory to glory to glory to glory.

And I see in the land of Canaan that I'm not condemned because way in the north of Canaan, there's some giants still living. I haven't seen them. How can I kill them? How can I kill a sin which I haven't seen, unconscious sin? In the land of Canaan, you can see conscious sin and unconscious sin.

They saw the city of Jericho, that's all. That's conscious, conquer it. All of Canaan is unconscious sin.

You haven't conquered any of them, nevermind. You conquered what you saw, good. Now you conquer Jericho, go to the next, next, next.

That's how Joshua progressed. But by the time the judges came, they all backslid. They went to, we can say they went to churches that didn't preach strong message of conquering all the giants in Canaan.

The result was the giants conquered the Israelites and they were slaves. The Judges is a pathetic book. One of the most pathetic books in the Old Testament.

Even some of their leaders were leaders like Samson who was constantly defeated in his inner life. So dear brothers, these are all warnings for us. There is no condemnation, but we must make progress.

The old covenant, there was condemnation. In the new covenant, there's a glory. We must believe that God can lead us, the Holy Spirit can, from one degree of glory to another.

I wanna give you some examples, not to encourage you to sin, but to comfort you. Do you know that after the Apostle Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, it says in Acts chapter 10 that the Lord told him to go and preach to the Gentile Cornelius. And he had never in his life preached to a non-Jew till then.

Up to Acts chapter 10, they hadn't preached. Peter had not preached to the Gentile. And when the Lord told him, was preparing him to go to the Cornelius house, he had to give him a vision.

And in that vision, he saw animals that were called unclean in Leviticus 11. The Lord told him to eat. And there were all types of animals in this crawling, Acts 10 verse 12, four-footed animals, crawling creatures.

Some of them which are clearly forbidden by God in the law in Leviticus 11. Some birds that were forbidden. And the voice came from heaven, arise and eat.

And Peter said, no, Lord, I have never in my life eaten anything unclean. Even today, the Jews don't eat certain types of food, pork, certain things they don't touch. No, Lord, I have never eaten that.

And a voice from heaven said a second time, listen to this word, what God has cleansed, don't call unholy. This happened three times, verse 16, to convince Peter that what God has cleansed, don't call unholy. And he was perplexed, what does this mean? And immediately somebody from Cornelius' house came and said, Peter, Cornelius is looking for you.

Cornelius is a Gentile. Then he understood. So I always thought of the Gentiles as unclean pigs.

You know, in India also we have this caste system that we think certain people are lower level. You don't have to belong to the different caste. You can look at somebody as lower than you because he's not so educated or he's not so cultured.

He's crude in the way he does things. He's not civilized. And they do things in a very uncultured way.

And you're a very civilized, cultured person and you get disturbed. I've seen some very civilized, cultured people, Christians. I say, you guys will never be able to work in any villages in India.

You'll get so offended, you'll run away. I remember one missionary told me, a missionary who came with his wife to India to serve the Lord in India. He couldn't last year long because his wife used to see people urinating on the side of the road.

And he said, oh dear, I can't live in this country. And he had to go back to America. I mean, if you can't bear to see the sight of people urinating on the side of the road, brother, you better, if you can't go to America, you got to die.

That's the only way to get out of it. Because all types of crude things people do. It's not a sin.

It's not a sin because even in the Old Testament you read about men pissing on each other. They piss against a wall. Have you read that? Men are described as people who piss against a wall.

If you don't believe it, read that in the King James Version. That is so common, it's mentioned in the Bible. Why do you do that? Did God reject them? So many things which are not sin, which are crude, uncultured.

I remember a Westerner who came to India and said, you guys eat with your hands? You don't use fork and spoon? I said, no. I said, we eat the way Jesus ate. With his hands.

You guys don't use toilet paper, use water? Yes. Jesus never used toilet paper, do you know that? It's amazing what all people think, that people think Jesus used toilet paper and had fork and spoon. Probably he drove in a car as well in that case.

It's crazy the imagination people have just because they've grown up from childhood in a certain way. I say these are the ways we can despise people because of something which has got nothing to do with sin. You don't become holy by using toilet paper.

You don't become holy by using a fork and a knife. And yet these things have been so ingrained in my mind as a reaction, how can they do that? You're not fit to be a missionary. You better live in some high top first world country, live there for the rest of your life.

You'll never serve God. Because even what God has cleansed, you call unclean because they eat with their hands or they don't use toilet paper. What God has cleansed, the man's heart is clean.

I've been tremendously blessed as I've been mixed with crude, uncultured people who love Jesus Christ. And I learn from them. And I've become a very rich man spiritually.

And the people who have made me spiritually rich are not the PhDs and the highly cultured, civilized people. Some very uncivilized, uncultured people who love Jesus with all their heart. Something like Peter, crude fisherman.

If you want to see what the fish of what Peter looked like a fisherman, go to the beaches, go to the coastal areas of southern Tamil Nadu. You see what the fishermen are like. I've seen a number of them.

I've seen some of them in our churches. Crude fishermen. And I think of them and I say that's what Peter looks like.

Yeah, or on the coast of Kerala. So you know what, God has cleansed, don't call unclean. And Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, had a difficulty, so don't get discouraged.

He also had a difficulty going to these crude, uncultured Gentiles, but he overcame it. But years later, you read in Galatians, even though he got that vision, even though he went to Cornelius's house, one day he was sitting in a place along with some other brothers and with some Gentile believers, Galatians chapter two. And he was eating food with them.

And Paul had to correct him. Paul, remember, is 10 years junior to Peter. Spiritually and as an apostle and age.

Can you imagine somebody 10 years younger than you and he was an apostle 10 years before you, and you go up to him and rebuke him. Galatians 2, 11, when Peter, Cephas means Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. Because before some people came from, James was the leader of the Jerusalem church and he was a very strict man.

You can see that from his letter, the letter to James. What a strict man he was. Very, very strict and a bit of a legalist.

I think he got better by the time he wrote James, but that time he was a bit of a legalist. And he was very strict about not eating with the Gentiles. Gentiles can be in the same room, but there must be another table.

We Jews sit at one table. And Peter was sitting, eating with the Jews and Gentiles at the same table. Then he saw some brothers from James' church are coming through the door.

He immediately said, excuse me, brothers. And he went and sat in another table with the Jews. This is Peter, the great mighty apostle.

And Paul saw that. Peter getting up and going to sit with the Jews. And he publicly got up, hey, brother Peter, what are you doing getting up and going there? And Peter, can you imagine how Peter felt? And he says, not only Peter, some of the Jews and Barnabas, who was Paul's friend.

He says, he also started, went away with them. He was led away by their hypocrisy. Verse 13, Barnabas, you also? I praise God for men like Paul.

He preserved the freedom of the gospel, the equality of all believers. We need men like that today, who don't differentiate between Tamilians and Malayalees and Anglo-Indians and Marathis and white men and black men and yellow men and whatever it is, red men or whatever it is. All colors of skin, all levels of education, culture, uncultured, barbarians, Greeks, all together, one body in Christ.

The only thing that unites us is Jesus Christ. What I'm trying to show is, don't get discouraged if you find you also did some unwise things like this, like Peter. That's what I'm trying to show you, to encourage you.

It happened to Peter, a spirit-filled man, mightily used in one sermon of 15 minutes, he brought 3,000 people to Christ, but he slipped out. But he repented and he was forgiven. I'll show you another example in Acts chapter 21.

I'm sure this will encourage you tremendously, Acts chapter 23. This is a great encouragement. Why? Because the other sin of Peter's is not something, is a little easier to conquer, you know, being one with people of different culture.

But this is anger. Anger is a sin which many of us find difficult to conquer. And Paul, who preached victory over sin, who lived in victory for years, and now he's about 55, maybe 20 years, he's been a disciple, apostle, planted churches, all that.

And now one day when he was in front of a judge, Acts 23, Paul looked intently at the council and said, brothers, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. And it was true. And the high priest Ananias sitting there said, slap him on his mouth.

And they slapped him and immediately Paul lost his good conscience. It just took about one second. Paul said, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall.

You think that is a man of the good conscience who speaks like that? He got angry. Let's not call it by any other word. Paul lost his temper.

The man who had preached victory over sin for 20 years, lost his temper. The man who said, I've lived with a good conscience up until this day. God humbled him that very moment.

At that moment, I think a little bit of pride came into Paul. That's the only way he lost grace. Any man who sins, at that moment, he's lost grace.

It's happened to me. And I've said, Lord, I lost grace at this moment. I want to repent immediately.

Come back. I'm not learning to walk. I've learned to walk.

I tripped over a stone because I was a bit careless or a banana skin. It happened to Paul. I want to say that to encourage you.

And he said, you know, was it right to talk to that person saying, you whitewashed wall? You're trying to judge me according to the law and you're not following the law yourself? Well, legally, you can say it's right, but that's not the way a Christian speaks because when they slap Jesus on his cheek, he only said, why do you slap me? If I have spoken, what is the truth? He didn't get angry. He didn't call the judge some names. Anything less than Jesus' standard is sin.

And Paul came to less than Jesus' standard, but he immediately repented. He said, do you revile God's high priest? He says, oh, I'm sorry. I was not aware that he was a high priest because I remember God's word, which says you shall not speak evil to the ruler of your people.

So remember that Paul didn't have the light we have at that time. He was growing and yet he was aware. My point is as soon as you're aware of sin, if you can immediately confess it and apologize.

Back, he came back to what he said in the first verse. I'm living with a good conscience. That's what he did.

So living with a good conscience does not mean that you never slip up. It means that you set things right as soon as you slip up, whether it's Paul or Peter. That's our encouragement.

It may be anger. It may be despising somebody of another culture. It may be lusting with the eyes.

Suddenly you slipped up and you began to admire a beautiful woman. Now there's nothing wrong in admiring beauty, but it's pretty dangerous. I'd say it's like going to the edge of a cliff, trying to see like little children.

How close can I come to the edge of the cliff without falling down? The chances are you'll fall down. Let me read to you in Proverbs chapter six. Jesus spoke about not desiring a woman's body, but here in Proverbs six and verse 25, it says, don't desire her beauty in your heart.

How do you desire a woman's, you don't desire a body. Of course, you wouldn't dream of touching her body. No, no, no, I'm very pure in that area.

I wouldn't touch her body at all. I hate it. You made me see you've got my wife or even if you're not married, I'm single, but I won't touch a woman's body till I get married.

Don't desire her beauty, because if you start admiring a woman's beauty, one day a woman will catch you with her eyes. It's amazing. Eyelids.

You know how some of these flirtatious women flicker their eyelids again and again? Catch you with their eyelids. The Bible is very practical, I tell you. Don't let a woman catch you with her eyes and the way she closes and opens her eyes.

That's you. Don't let her catch you. And it begins with desiring a beauty in your heart.

See, these are warnings given to us because it's like taking, verse 27, it's like taking fire inside your shirt. Put fire inside your shirt. That's what it says in verse 27.

Dangerous. You'll burn up and kill yourself. So what I'm trying to say is that there's hope even if you're fallen.

When Peter fell, he fell into sin. Terrible sin. Denied Jesus.

Do you think denying Jesus is worse than getting angry, worse than lusting in your heart? I believe so. Because Jesus said, if you deny me, I'll deny you before my Father. He never said, if you lust with your eyes, I'll deny you.

He never said, if you get angry, I'll deny you. But if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father. And Peter did that three times.

And that beautiful verse, it says in Luke 22, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. How did he look at him? Do you think he looked at him saying, I told you, you'd do this? No. He looked at him and said with his eyes, it's all right, Peter.

I'm praying for you. God still loves you. Don't give up.

Don't give up. What is the sin, my brother, you have fallen into? You've fallen into some terrible sin. You're ashamed of it.

People don't know about it. Nevermind. Go before God.

You haven't sinned as much as Peter. He did it three times in one night. Worse than what you did.

The worst sin of all, denying Jesus three times in one night. Can you see the Lord looking at you today with compassion and saying, I don't condemn you. I see you have repented.

And Peter went out and wept bitterly, it says. It's a beautiful verse there in Luke chapter 22. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

Verse 61, Luke 22, 61. And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Have you wept bitterly over some sin in your life? I hope you have.

I have many times. It's a mark of true repentance. It's not the only evidence of true repentance.

But if you really feel sorry that you hurt the Lord so much, you weep bitterly because you're so sorry that you let down Jesus by that action. You slipped up. But just because you slipped up is all hope gone for your life? He thought everything was gone.

He thought he could never be an apostle again. That's why you read in John 21, he decided to go back fishing. When he said, I'm going back fishing, he was telling people not just as a, you know, entertainment or relaxation.

He's, I'm going back to my fishing. I tried being an apostle three and a half years. And at the end of three and a half years, even though I said, even though I'll deny you, I will not deny you, I failed miserably.

So apostleship is not for me. And some of you may say, this business of following Jesus and CFC standards are too high for me. Can't be here.

Brother, if you're really sick, you need to be in a good hospital. And CFC is a pretty good hospital. We can treat the worst cases.

A good hospital is one that can treat the worst cases. Have you seen that? Sometimes you take a terribly sick person to a hospital and they say, we can't handle this. Let's take it to that super special hospital.

CFC is a super special hospital for the worst cases. Worst, absolutely worst. Worst prostitutes, worst drug addicts, worst anything.

Sin so terribly. Come to CFC. Jesus has come to me.

He came to call sinners to repentance. You haven't sinned as badly as Peter. The Lord turned and looked at Peter.

And if the look of Jesus has made you weep bitterly, I want to say to you, there's hope for you. Because when the Lord, three days later, Jesus rose from the dead and he sent a message to the disciples. I want you to see this verse.

Mark 16, on the day when Jesus rose from the dead. This is a great verse. All of you must remember it.

Mark 16, the angel, when they came to the tomb, Mark 16, verse five, they entered the tomb. They saw what was a young man. They thought it was a young man.

It was actually an angel. And the angel said, don't be amazed. Mark 16, verse six.

You're looking for Jesus. The Nazarene was crucified. He's risen.

He's not here. Here's the place where they laid him. Now go, this is the verse I want you to see.

Never forget it. Mark 16, verse seven. Go and tell his disciples, and Peter.

Why and Peter? Wasn't he a disciple? Why not and Matthew, and James, and John, and why only and Peter? Never forget those two words. And Peter. They're one of the most encouraging words in the gospels.

That Jesus took special note because if he had just gone and said, ah, Jesus sent a message for the disciples. Peter would have said, that doesn't apply to me. I'm not in that.

I was, not that today. So the Lord included his name specially. Do you feel you're the one who's failed the Lord most in CFC, in your church? The Lord says, go and tell my disciples and put your name there.

I'm going in front of you and you'll see me there. I want to see you. It says that the Lord's saying, I want to see you.

There he said, I'm going to Galilee. I want to see you. I want to be with you.

This is how the Lord encourages. And later on when he met Peter, after they went fishing in John 21, he called Peter especially out of all those disciples. He called everybody in John 21, 12 to come and have breakfast and then he called Peter alone and said, hey Simon, do you love me? Verse John 21, 15, do you love me more than these? See, in the English language, it doesn't come out so clearly but there are two words for Greek, in the Greek for love and Jesus spoke in Aramaic.

I presume there are two different words there which Jesus used. That's why the Holy Spirit has used two different words. What Jesus is asking, Peter, do you love me with that supreme love that a man should have for God where nothing else on the world is more important for him, nobody on earth is important for him and Peter says, I love you Lord but with a friendly type of love.

If he was the old Peter, he said, oh sure, there's anybody on earth who loves you like that, it's me but that's, he's a broken person now. Then the Lord asked him a second time, do you love me with that supreme love that a man should have for God where he loves him more than everything on earth and all other people? Peter's at the lower level. Lord, verse 16, I'm sorry, I'm not at that level.

I only love you at this level and then you see, this is the wonder of it. Peter came, Jesus came down to that level. Okay, Simon, verse 17, do you love me with this, at least with this lower level of love? He's broken.

He said, what can I say, Lord? Verse 17, you know everything. Once upon a time, I thought I knew my heart that I could promise you I won't do this again, I won't do this again, but I'll never say that again. Have you come to the place where you can say, Lord, I can never say to you, I'll never do that again? I've said that so many times and done it again.

I said, I'll never do that again. I'll never speak like that again. I'll never do that again and I did it again.

Lord, I'm not gonna say anything, you know my heart. You know to the best of my ability. It's a lower level, but I love you.

I wanna love you more, but right now this is the level. Please help me. And each time Jesus said, that's okay.

I accept you at that level and I'll give you a ministry. Not just I'll accept you. Think of that.

Think of that some of you failure sitting here. That the Lord comes to you and doesn't just say he'll restore you. He said, I wanna give you a ministry.

I want you to encourage other people because you've gone through failure. The world is full of failures. And you'll be able to encourage them more than these other people who lived a fairly good life all along.

Some of you have messed up in your past life. Don't ever forget that God loves you. He doesn't want to just restore you.

Please believe this. He does not want to just restore you. He wants to give you a ministry.

He says, feed my lambs, feed my sheep, tend my sheep. And you get all discouraged and say, how can I do it, I messed up. No, I'm commanding you.

I've restored you. Don't believe the lie of the devil anymore. When I cleanse a person, I don't remember his past anymore.

I clothe him with my righteousness and I give you a command, tend my sheep. Some of you elders who are discouraged because of your past failures. The Lord is saying to you, come on now, take that responsibly, seriously.

Look after my sheep, look after my lambs. How many of you will say amen to that? Only so many? How many? Will you say amen? Praise the Lord. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you there is exhortation and encouragement in scripture. We would have been discouraged if it was only one. Thank you, you're a God of encouragement.

Help us, we pray, each one. All of us, including me, we have failed so much in the past. We don't come here to make promises saying I will never do that again.

We can't say that. Once upon a time we did when we did not know the corruption of our own flesh. We don't say that anymore.

We say like Peter, Lord, you know everything. And you know we want to love you more than everything else. But Lord, there are things we love on this earth.

We pretend we don't love them. But I want you, Lord, we want you to free us from anything that prevents us from getting closer to you. Thank you.

We will not live in condemnation from this day. We will not live in discouragement. You're a God of encouragement, thank you.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/myHvGa5QxQk.mp4>
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