

Faithfulness With Our Body and Our Money

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living as true disciples of Christ, setting examples for others to follow. It highlights the need to discipline our bodies, make them do what they should do, and not what they want to do. The message urges believers to seek God's kingdom first, exercise self-control, and run the race of faith to win the prize of hearing 'well done' from Jesus. It stresses the significance of being heavenly citizens, living as foreigners on earth, and eagerly awaiting the day when our bodies will be transformed to be like Christ's glorious body.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24, Philippians 3:20, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Acts 17:30, Psalms 139:13, Philippians 3:17, Philippians 3:18

Topics: "Discipleship", "Self-Control"

Description

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Transcript

I want to turn this morning to Philippians and chapter 3. One of the verses that we often quote in our church, which is almost never quoted in other churches, is follow me as I follow Christ. Those are the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1. But it's not only Paul who is an example. Here it says in Philippians 3.17, brothers and sisters join in following my example.

Every true believer, if he's a really wholehearted Christian, should be able to say to people younger than him, follow my example. Paul would not tell Peter, follow my example. Peter was older, more mature than him.

But he was looking at people who were younger than him, younger in the Lord. He said, follow me as I follow Christ. And if you're really a wholehearted Christian, there's always somebody younger than you in this church.

Sure, age-wise and in terms of knowing the Lord younger than you. What is your responsibility towards them? Do you feel you have any responsibility? Do you feel that when you join CFC, you're a member of a family? Not just like many churches, they sit in a movie theater, watching a performance or a drama or listening to a lecture in some auditorium, then go away. That's not the type of church we're building.

That is Old Testament. In the Old Testament, no Israelite had the responsibility to tell others, follow my example. And every Christian who cannot say that is like the Israelites.

He's really under the old covenant. A new covenant Christian not only seeks to overcome sin in his life, but seeks to look at people younger than him in the Lord and to say, follow my example. That's where you have to be careful about your example.

It's not just listen to what I say, but don't do as I do. That's how it is with many people. No, do as I do and listen to what I say.

Follow my example. So he says here, observe those who are walking according to the same pattern that you have seen in us. So it's not just Paul.

There are many others also in his time, probably not many, at least some others. And Paul tells the Philippian Christians, look around. Paul says, I'm not the only one.

Look around and see people who are living according to the same pattern of life that you have seen in me. So there were people whom the Philippians could look around and see, probably very few, but there were a few, who were gripped by what they saw in Paul's life. And they didn't just admire Paul's preaching or his life.

See a lot of people today, they admire a preacher. Oh, that was a great message or that really spoke to my heart. But Paul never wanted anybody to admire his message.

He wanted people to follow his life. So that's what we emphasize. We are not here to get people to admire our preaching, but we want people who will follow the example we set.

Follow me as I follow Christ. And look around you and see other people like that, who may not be as mature as Paul, but who are more mature than you. And not all of them are examples, but some of them are.

Look at those examples. Because even in his day, Paul says, there are many who walk in a different way. And he's not talking about unbelievers.

Unbelievers definitely are walking in a different way. There's no need to even talk about them. But he says there are many who walk about whom I've often told you.

That means Paul warned, even in his day, this is written around 60 AD, about 30 years after Christ, 30 years after the day of Pentecost, Paul is warning people, there are Christians at this time who you should not follow. I warn you, because they are enemies of the cross of Christ. And the amazing compassion that Paul had for them, this is the thing that spoke to my heart.

When he says they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, he doesn't say it with anger or rudeness. It says I'm telling you this, while I'm saying it, I'm weeping. Imagine Paul writing this letter, the tears flowing from his eyes, as he thinks of people who claim to be Christians.

But, you know, those days there was only one church in a city. There were not so many like today. And they all claim to be Christians.

They were the testimony for the Lord in Philippi. And some of them who sat in that church were not a good testimony. And that aggrieved Paul.

He says, what a bad testimony it is before others. I mean, there are some wonderful brothers and sisters here, but there are some, and Paul weeps when he thinks of it. It's like, you know, this is what shows me that Paul was a real father.

You know, you can probably criticize some young man saying he's wayward, but how do you think his father will talk about him? His father will talk about him, yes, he's wayward, but his father will talk about it weeping. You can criticize some young sister here in a rude way, but her father or mother will talk about her weeping. And that's how Paul was.

And that to me is a great verse that teaches me that Paul was a spiritual father to those people who accepted him as an elder. Not to every Tom, Dick and Harry. No.

No servant of God is an elder to everybody. He's an elder to those who accept him as an elder. I've said that for years.

I said, I'm not an elder to everybody who sits in CFC. Far from it. I'm an elder only to those who accept me as an elder.

That's all. And for such people, Paul was a father who took the responsibility of rebuking, correcting, but rebuking and correcting with tears. He was weeping when he said, these are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

And enemies of the cross of Christ, as we understand it today, is not just that they hated Jesus crucified. I don't think people today hate Jesus crucified as if that's a terrible thing. I think it is more unwilling to take the cross in their own life.

They don't want the cross in their own life. They are enemies of the message of the cross. They're enemies of the message that says you must be crucified with Christ.

They're enemies of the message which says you cannot follow Jesus unless you take up the cross every single day and die to yourself. You cannot follow him. They're enemies of that.

And I want to tell you, I don't think I have the tears that Paul has, but I want to tell you it's the truth that there are many, many Christians like that. In fact, the vast majority of Christians, they don't believe that we should die to ourselves every single day and seek to walk in brokenness. I don't know if everybody, if all of you sitting here believe that.

Do you believe my brothers and sisters? Tell me honestly. I mean answer yourself. Do you believe that you should die to yourself in your relationship with your husband every day? And every, in relationship to your wife or to other brothers, die to yourself and say Lord I want to live before your face and everything? I don't think so personally.

I mean if it were like that we'd have a revival here. If every, imagine if everybody sitting here decided from today onwards I'm gonna die to myself. Every single day I'm gonna die.

There will be a revival. That is the, that is the reason why the devil hides that message from so many people. And when you're an enemy of the cross, it says you're their end is destruction.

That's the sad part. Nobody likes to say that the end is destruction for some people, but it is. And it is the Bible that says that.

As I often say, nobody spoke about hell in the Bible as much as the Lord Jesus. Nobody. Nobody in the Old Testament, not Paul, not Peter, not a single person spoke about hell as much as Jesus Christ.

And there's a reason for that, because he was the only one who really knew what hell was like. Coming from heaven, he had seen hell. Paul had never seen hell.

Peter had never seen. You and I have never seen hell, so we don't think of the seriousness of it. But Jesus, who saw hell, realized the seriousness of it.

And he spoke about hell more than anybody else. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, he spoke about hell. And he told the Pharisees, who were very religious people, who paid their tithes, didn't commit adultery, and lived upright according to the law, but who were inwardly hypocrites.

He told them, how will you escape hell? Imagine Jesus saying that to religious people. How will you escape hell? Because you are living a double life. One life in front of people in the synagogue, another life in private.

Those are the people to whom he said, how will you escape hell? He didn't say that to the murderers and adulterers. They were not living a double life. A murderer is living a single life.

He's a murderer everywhere. Everybody knows he's a murderer. A prostitute is living a single life.

They say, yeah, I'm a prostitute. That's my job. But it's among Christians, usually, that you find those who live a double life.

They give one impression of being very holy in the church, and quite another life that they live privately. And those are the Pharisees who lived a double life. And to them he said, how will you escape the sentence of hell? That's a very serious thing.

Do you think that the Lord would have to say that to some folks sitting here? I want to warn you. So he says, the end is destruction. Then he goes on to say certain things which we don't take very seriously.

What are the marks of some people who don't take up the cross in their life, who are enemies of the cross, who don't want the message of the cross? It says here that God is their appetite, or their stomach. Now you'd think that Christianity has got nothing to do with eating and drinking. It doesn't matter how much you eat or drink.

That's not true. It speaks here about some people whose God is their belly. In the margin it says that God is their stomach.

When is a person's God his stomach? Can a person whose God is his stomach, in other words someone for whom food is his God. Is it possible for a Christian to have food as his God, whom he worships? Definitely. And it's one of those things which the Bible speaks about.

The New Testament speaks about it. The Old Testament didn't speak much about this at all. But the New Testament speaks about it, because one part of taking up the cross is keeping this body under the control of the Holy Spirit, and keeping it fit for his use.

And it's a well-known fact, any doctor will tell you, that if you're indisciplined in your eating habits, you will shorten your life. You will not live the length of life God planned for you. God planned when you were born a certain length of life, and you shorten it by making food your God.

Whose God is their stomach. What are some of the evidences that we worship food? Well, if the food is not up to the mark one day in your home, you get all upset about it. Now, there's nothing wrong in telling your wife, there was a bit too much salt there, or you know, I don't like so much chilies in my food.

That's okay. That's just a matter of taste. To have different tastes is okay.

Some people like less chili or more. That's not the point. But who get upset about something? I mean, here your wife has tried her best to cook something, and you get all upset with that.

Brother, I want to tell you honestly, your God is your stomach. You're worshiping your God, and that particular day, the food didn't satisfy you, and you're upset. Because that is your God.

Take that seriously. Enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their stomach, and glory in their shame. How important is this? Let me show you.

You probably never heard me speak about eating. But you know, Jesus began his ministry with 40 days of fasting. Now, I've never recommended people to fast 40 days, because you're not going into a ministry like Jesus Christ.

None of us are, and I have never done that. But I believe a certain amount of fasting, particularly in your younger days, is good for you to overcome this worship of food. All of us are born with certain unique characteristics, like children.

All children fight, and all children love good food. It's all natural. It just comes to us.

And as we grow up, some of these things have to be controlled. And fighting must be controlled, and the love to eat, everything that, as we grow up, we discover certain things are not good for our body. And we just keep on eating it.

I mean, we think about the people who drink too much. Oh, those guys are on drugs. Drugs harm the body.

Or those guys drink alcohol. That harms the body. But you know, there are a lot of other things that harm the body, too.

Not just alcohol and drugs. A lot of sicknesses that we get, like diabetes and blood pressure, and some of these things that can shorten your life, or give you a heart attack, or a stroke, are partly due to hereditary, what we inherit from our parents, but also due to what we eat. So, if I don't control what I eat, I'm going to shorten my life.

And I'm concerned about that. I don't want to live one day less than what God planned for me when I was born. Not one day less.

Not because I love this world. I detest this world. I'd rather be with the Lord.

But I know that God's got a plan for my life. And he's got a plan for your life, too. Whether you're fulfilling it or not, I don't know.

But I have had a tremendous passion from my younger days to fulfill God's plan for my life. Because I know that's the only worthwhile life to live on this earth. And I want to tell you that if you don't know that yet, that's the only worthwhile life living on this earth if you fulfill God's plan for your life.

And for that you have to do a number of things. One of the main things you have to overcome is sin. And this critical attitude of other people is one thing that will help you.

If you give up this critical attitude of other people, God will give you more light on yourself. I've seen that. Let me show you a verse before I move on.

You know, I was reading James chapter 3, verse 1. I'm giving you some really helpful advice if you're serious about it. If you're serious about completing the length of life God planned for you. I'll come to the matter of eating in a moment.

But here's a verse which says, James 3, 1. Let not many of you become teachers. There is a tremendous lust in man, particularly Christians, to be able to give advice to others. Do you find a lust to give advice to others? I can say before God, I have zero lust to give advice to others.

Zero. If people come to me for advice, I give them. But I don't have a great lust to go around telling people, this is what you should do.

We had some older sisters in CFC like that. I think some of them are still here. As soon as they see somebody, they want to give that young sister some advice.

And those young sisters feel like running away from those older sisters. There are people like that. They have a great lust.

They think they are experts and they are very holy and they want to tell these young sisters that and the other. Wait till they come to you, sister. You're not such a holy person.

They detest you when you try to go and give them advice. Wait till they come to you. Humble yourself.

Don't become many teachers. Don't have this lust to go around telling people what they should do, what they shouldn't do. When you have no responsibility for them, you're not an elder.

Maybe you're an elder's wife and you think you're somebody. I feel sorry for that. There have been people like that in some of our CFC churches.

Don't be many teachers. In the Amplified Bible, there's an expansion of that verse which says, self-appointed censors of other people's actions and words. A censor is one C-E-N-S-O-R, one who evaluates something.

Don't be a self-appointed evaluator or examiner. Let's put it like that. There's a more easier word to understand.

A self-appointed examiner of other people's actions and words. Don't be that. Don't become that.

God has appointed some, very few prophets and teachers. Let them do that job. Otherwise, you'll be like these quack doctors who never studied medicine who go around in the villages fooling everybody and telling this is wrong, this is wrong, just to make money.

They do it to get a reputation as doctors. They're quacks. You can be like that also, a spiritual quack who's just trying to go around imagining that you're a spiritual doctor, telling people this and that, this is wrong with you, that's wrong with you, the other thing's wrong with you.

Or even if you don't say it, to have that critical attitude in your mind, you just tell your wife or your husband at home, what do you mean by it? Don't become a self-appointed examiner of others. Self-appointed. God never appointed you.

God has appointed some people to take responsibility of others and he'll do that. That's this critical attitude because I'll tell you the real danger there is that it's very close to the accusing spirit of the devil. The devil is called the accuser of the brothers in Revelation 12.

In other words, when the devil sees something wrong in someone, he's got a great lust to go and accuse him. This is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong in you. It's a little bit of that spirit that comes into a person who wants to go and tell somebody this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong.

Not like a father. A father, like Paul said, does it weeping. But examiners don't do it with weeping.

Examiners do it with a hard attitude. You're like this and you're like this. You see, I'm sorry to say we've had some sad examples in some CFC churches of some elders like that, who preach like that, who hit here there and call people all types of names.

It's very sad, very sad. Whenever I've heard of it, I rebuke them. I say that's not what you're called to be an elder for.

We are to minister the word strongly but with compassion. A doctor doesn't just stab, a surgeon doesn't stab here and there. He's very careful.

Do you know how careful a heart surgeon is when he's doing heart surgery? He wants to make sure that even one small blood vessel doesn't break. The patient can die. But we can be so careless with our words where we just fling it here and there.

The way you speak to your so-called loved ones and father to husband and wife and children and all. Imagine if a heart surgeon did heart surgery like that. All his patients would die.

You've got to be very careful. The subject in James chapter 3 is about the tongue. He says, if you can control your tongue, you're a perfect person.

So this critical attitude and that's part of the body. The stomach, the emphasis on eating and on the tongue. There's no emphasis on the tongue in the Old Testament.

In fact, the body, the importance of the body in holiness was not there in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is just you give some sacrifices and go to the temple three times, Jerusalem three times a year and do certain rituals and that's okay. But in the New Testament, the emphasis is so much on our body.

Who do not control their tongue. Coming back to what I mentioned about food, it says in 1 Corinthians in chapter 6. 1 Corinthians 6, he says, he talks about people with different types of sins. In 1 Corinthians 6, you know, fornicators, adulterers, adulterers, homosexuals and all that.

And then he goes on to say, some of you, verse 11, were like that. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 11. You were like that, some of you, but now you're sanctified, justified in the name of our Lord and in the Holy Spirit.

Now, how shall I live? Look what Paul says. All things are lawful for me. Can't I eat what I like? Okay.

But all things are not profitable. That is the difference between a carnal Christian and a spiritual one. A carnal Christian's question is always, what's wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that.

I can do that. What's wrong with watching that movie? What's wrong with watching the other movie and the other movie? I'll tell you, people who ask like that spend so much time watching movies that they don't have time to read the Bible. I'm talking about CFC people.

This is lawful. It's not pornography. All things are lawful for me.

Good. You'll be a carnal Christian all your life. A spiritual Christian is one who asks another question about that.

Not is it lawful, but is it profitable? You can send your children to the corporation school. They will learn ABC there. They'll learn two plus two is four.

But why don't you send your children to the corporation school? Why is it even some of you who are poor do not send your children to the corporation school? Don't they get an education? Sure. See, we are so careful when it comes to education for our children. You're so careful when you want treatment for somebody in your family, medical treatment.

You don't mind spending money. You don't just pick up any old hospital down the street and say, okay, I'll put my wife or children there for treatment. No.

We want not only what is good, but what is the best. Now, my question is this. Why don't we have that same attitude in spiritual things? It's lawful.

That school is a good school. It's a corporation school. It's maybe not as high standard as that one.

That hospital is a good one, but not as clean and efficient as the other one. See how careful we are in these things. We are very careful when it comes to education for our children and health for our family members.

Why are we not equally zealous in spiritual matters? And I'll tell you why. Because God is not as important for us as health and education. That's the plain simple truth.

Yeah. If you keep on asking yourself, is that lawful? Is that lawful? You'll end up as a carnal Christian and waste your life and probably lose your salvation and go to hell. It's my duty to tell you that.

The serious Christian recognizes that Christ gave everything for me. Christ came in a body and lived 100% for God and for me. So I want to live like that.

And he chooses what is profitable for his body. I told you about how people make their stomach their God. A true Christian, his stomach is not his God.

He eats food in order to live. He doesn't live to eat, but eats to live. So he says another thing here.

Yeah, it's all lawful for me, 1 Corinthians 6.12, but I'm not going to be mastered by something. I want to ask you a question, which you need to ask yourself. Is there anything on this earth that masters you, that you cannot live without? I cannot live without this.

When I eat my food, I must have this. I must have that. You're enslaved.

You don't realize it, but you're enslaved. You're mastered by something, by a particular type of food. Oh, you have to watch that movie or you have to do this thing.

Something earthly, which is... I say, if you keep it in a proper place and use it once in a while or eat it once in a while, that's fine. But when you're mastered by something, I can't live without it. And make life miserable for your wife if she doesn't make it every day.

You know that you're going in the wrong direction. And what is he talking about when he says, I don't want to be mastered by anything? What's he talking about? Next verse, food. That's not my idea, that's his.

It's the Holy Spirit. When he says, I don't want to be mastered by anything, he says, food. That's the subject.

Verse 13. He says, food is for the stomach. And the stomach is for food, but one day God is going to destroy both the stomach and the food.

So he says, be very careful that you don't worship your stomach. Again, the same old thing. You never find verses like this in the old covenant.

So when we talk so much about being New Covenant Christians and we are part of the New Covenant, this is a very important part of the New Covenant. Why is food so important? Because I want to live the entire length of life that God planned for me when I was born. Do you believe that? That when you were born, God planned a certain length of days for you? If you don't know that verse, I've often quoted it.

Turn with me to Psalm 139. Those of you who have never seen it, please see it today. And remember it all your life.

To me, it's a very comforting thought. Psalm 139, it says in verse 13, you wove me in my mother's womb. The second part is verse 13.

Inside my mother's womb, God, you made me. And while you were making me inside my mother's womb, when I was such a teeny weeny little thing, verse 16, your eyes saw my substance. And in your book that is in your mind, all the days ordained for me were written down.

When even the first day had not started. The first day starts after I come out of my mother's womb. But before that, inside the mother's womb, God had planned.

I believe it for myself. David believed it for himself and it's for you. So, this is the number of days this person must live.

And the guy has not even been born. This is the length of days he must live. And I'm absolutely convinced that the vast majority of Christians do not live there.

I mean, if they are martyred for Christ, like Jesus died at 33 and a half, that was exactly the number of days God planned for him. He was born on the exact day he was supposed to be born, died on the exact day he was supposed to die. But if I, I remember years ago reading a challenging article on discipline.

We made copies of that and gave it out to a number of our young people here on how to be a disciplined person. And one of the things I read in that article was, if my life is shortened because I'm martyred for Christ, I proclaimed Christ and because of that somebody hated me and killed me, I can stand before God with great joy that my life was shortened because I proclaimed Christ. But he said in that book, if your life is shortened because you ate too much, or you ate the wrong type of things, because of your lust for food, because food was your God, and your life was shortened and one day you stand before God and you have to answer to God for how you lived, what are you going to say? I thought about that then and I keep thinking about that now and then.

I say, Lord, I don't want to have to, because I won't be able to do anything about it at the judgment seat of Christ. It's over. Life is over.

I can't get another chance to live that life. Now is the time, and some of you are so blessed to be able to hear these truths, which you'll almost not hear in most churches, that we have to give an account of our life every day, every day of our life to Christ. Not only every day, you know, you often heard me quote Matthew 12, 37, that every word we speak we have to give an account, every careless word that we speak.

So, that's the verse which says the days that were ordained for you were written down by God, and right now God knows exactly how long you're supposed to live. And because we live in a sin-cursed earth, there are sicknesses going around and some serious ones nowadays. But even where those serious germs are floating around, can they shorten my life? Is God so helpless that a coronavirus can knock down his child and God can do nothing about it? I don't believe in such a helpless God.

I believe in a God who is Almighty. I'll tell you where He cannot help you. He cannot help you if you go and swallow the coronavirus yourself, or you go and make food your God and eat all types of other bad things which shorten your life.

Nobody would be so foolish to go and swallow a coronavirus germ. But we are foolish when it comes to eating a lot of things that shorten our life in a similar way, because food becomes our God. So, here it says God is one day going to do away with all this.

So, don't become a slave to these things. I will not be a slave of anything except the Lord. I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, can you say Jesus Christ alone is my Lord? I'm not a slave of food and I'm not a slave of money.

These are the two things the New Testament emphasizes a lot. See, when we preserve our body like this and really seek to keep our body for the Lord, here is a promise. There is an amazing promise that I have claimed from the Lord many, many, many times in my life.

I'll tell you, through the years I've claimed this promise. It's right here. We were just reading 1 Corinthians 6.13. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food.

Don't worship food. God is going to destroy them. And the same way, immorality.

That's the other thing that you can do with your body. Two dangers. Overeating and sexual sin.

Imagine that he puts them both together in the same verse. Overeating and sexual sin. Sexual sin, of course, we know it's wrong.

What about overeating? And sexual sin destroys your body. You've got to be careful. Now, here it says, here's the verse that I've claimed.

The last part of verse 13. The body is not for immorality or for food primarily, but for the Lord. So let me paraphrase verse 13.

There are two things he mentions in verse 13 concerning the body. Food and sexual impurity. There are a lot of sexual sins that you can commit without going to a woman on your own.

So, he's talking about food and sexual sin in relation to the body. Be careful and keep your body for the Lord. Two sins you've got to be aware of.

Overeating and sexual carelessness. And if you keep your body from those things and keep it for the Lord, there is a promise. Amazing promise.

The Lord is for your body. That is what I have claimed for years. I say, Lord, I'm not saying that I should never have a fever or never have a cold or a cough.

I'm not saying that. And I have no desire to live one single day longer than what God wants me to live. But at the same time, I don't want to live one day less than what God wants me to live.

If God wants me to have a thorn in the flesh, I will bow my head and say, Lord, thank you. Your grace is sufficient for me. But otherwise, I believe that God wants me to be healthy, to live for Him.

And so, why do I say that? Because my body, when my body is for the Lord, what is the promise? The Lord is for my body. So, where am I finally driving at? Why am I telling you to not make food your God? Why am I telling you to be sexually pure with all the movies you watch and all the other things? Because, ultimately, the Lord will be for your body. Isn't that wonderful? To be able to look up to the Lord and say, Father, my body is only for you.

I will not worship my body. I will not lust with my eyes. I will not be critical with my tongue.

These are part of my body. This is what I mean by body is for the Lord. I'm talking about eyes and tongue with which we commit most of our sins.

Lord, I will not lust with my eyes. I will keep my tongue under control. I may have so many opinions about people, but I don't have to express them.

I don't have to go around telling people what's wrong with them. I'm not a prophet. I'm not a self-appointed examiner of others.

Lord, I want to restrain myself. I don't want to have opinions of all types of people and destroy myself. I'll tell people when you tell me to tell somebody something, but otherwise, I want to mind my own business.

It's a great verse in the Bible. Don't be a busybody in other people's matters. Mind your own business.

Mind your own business. I wish I could write that in front of every believer's face. Mind your own business, brother.

You'll progress a lot more spiritually if you stop worrying about other people's business. Allow your body to be for the Lord, and here is a wonderful promise. The Lord is for your body, and I've claimed that, claimed that, claimed that for years.

The Lord is for my body. Yeah. So that's the first thing, and then I also say, in verse 19, it's all in the same subject.

My body is also a temple of the Holy Spirit, and just like we take care of this building, this is not the house of God. The house of God is the people, but this is a building which is very important for us to keep in good shape so that it doesn't collapse or doesn't decay and all that, because we want it to be a good, clean, tidy place for God's people to meet, and our body is a million times more important than this building. What would you think of the caretakers of this building if the paint was all peeling off and the crack in the roof and cracks in the wall and the rain coming through and rain coming from the roof and all that and everything happening? You'd say, what type of caretaker have you appointed to look after this building? What type of caretaker are you of the temple of the Holy Spirit? Not this building, your body.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and if you'd be upset if some caretaker left this building in a ramshackle, rotten, useless way, what do you think God thinks of you as a caretaker of the temple of the Holy Spirit? Are you taking care of it? Okay, there's a great verse which says, the times of ignorance God overlooks. It's one of my favorite verses, Acts 17 verse 30. The times of ignorance God overlooks.

Okay, let us assume, you don't know that verse? Let's go there. Some of you don't know it. I must show that verse to everyone.

I don't mind repeating the verse 500 times because there may be some people who never knew it till now. So, those of you who already know it, be patient. There are others here who don't know it.

There are some here who are still learning 2 plus 2 is 4. Be patient with them. Acts 17 verse 30. The times of ignorance God overlooks.

But now, he's telling everybody to turn around from that old way of life. Repent means turn around from your old way of life. Okay, let us assume that until today, what's today? The 23rd of February 2020, until today you were completely ignorant that food could become your God.

From today onwards you're not ignorant. Until today you are ignorant of what a critical spirit you have. That when you have a critical spirit, you're almost teaming up with Satan, the accuser of the brothers.

You are ignorant. You say, oh all these years I was ignorant and food was my God and I've done all types of things to shorten my life. Lord, I was ignorant of it.

Till today, what do you do? Okay, God says, up until today, I overlook, cleansed in the blood of Christ, forgiven. But from today, or whenever you're hearing this message, if you're listening to it online, from today, turn around. It's not a suggestion.

God is now declaring, commanding that all people, everyone sitting in this hall, everyone listening to this message at any time, now or in the future, must turn around and say, God, you're going to be the Lord of my body. This is the temple of the Holy Spirit and I want to preserve it for you. I want to keep it pure.

I want to keep my eyes pure. I want to keep my tongue pure. I don't want to worship food anymore, not from today.

I want to be careful and you sisters, there's nothing wrong in wearing good clothes, being decent. I mean, we don't come to church in pyjamas and lungis and all that, what we wear at home. We want to be, you know, we wear clothes because we respect others.

And so we want to be respectable. But be careful that you sisters don't decorate your body so much that your aim is to attract people to yourself. It's a tremendous temptation to, of course, we must look as attractive as God has made us, definitely, and use all the means to make yourself pleasant.

I mean, look pleasant in the way God's made you, but don't get to the point where you want to get people to be drawn to you, sister. It's a very dangerous thing. Very dangerous for you young sisters.

Be modest. Don't try to attract boys through your physical beauty. You'll marry the wrong person.

I'll tell you that. Let people be drawn to you by spiritual qualities. By all means, be well-dressed and comb your hair and do everything properly.

Do your face up nicely. All that is fine, but don't let your motive be, and you alone know that, don't let your motive be, I want people to admire me. I want people to think I'm the most beautiful girl in CFC.

God have mercy on you. You're in danger of going to hell. I'll tell you that straight.

You're coming here to get people to worship you, and people come here to worship Jesus Christ. God have mercy on you. Don't do things to attract people to yourself.

Your body was not given, sister, your body was not given to you by God to attract people to yourself. No. You glorify God.

Out in the world they say, if I don't attract people, how in the world will I get married? I'll tell you, if you're a wholehearted sister, living for God, God will bring to you the best person on earth to be your husband. Yes, he'll do that, if you can trust him. But you don't have to make yourself attractive physically and attract so many boys here and there.

Tempt them with your tight dresses and all. Be very careful. Don't follow the fashions of the world.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Don't dress it in an immodest way. Control your tongue.

So, in Philippians, let me come back to Philippians 3 where it speaks about the stomach being the God of some people who have denied the way of the cross. The enemies of the cross are those whose God is their stomach. Philippians 3. The enemies of the cross mentioned in verse 18, who don't want to follow Paul or is the example of other godly men and whose end is destruction.

God is their stomach and the other thing is their mind is set on earthly things. Primarily money. God has given us money to use and I believe it's a test.

He tested many people through money. Judas Iscariot failed the test through money. He didn't fall into sexual sin.

It was money that made Jesus, the Judas, a betrayer. It's a great warning that the one disciple out of 12 fell away because of money. There was a love for money there.

Imagine, you can sit and listen to the most powerful message that Jesus preached for three and a half years and he still loved money. And you can sit here and listen to powerful messages and in your heart you can set your mind on earthly things. In other words, you don't use money.

Your mind is set on it. There's nothing wrong in using money. There's nothing wrong in having a lot of money.

If God gave it to you and it's all earned righteously. If all the money you have earned is righteously earned, not because you cheated the government or cheated other people or cheated in business or anything. It's all righteously earned and if God decided to make you rich, well, he made Abraham rich who was such a godly man that God called himself the God of Abraham.

Was Abraham a poor beggar? No. Abraham was one of the wealthiest people of his time. God calls himself the God of Abraham.

Imagine if God put your name and said I'm the God of so and so. Boy, what an honor. And in Job's time, he was the richest man in all the earth.

He was a billionaire and he was the most godly man that lived on earth at that time. So the Bible doesn't teach that if you have money you can be ungodly. No.

One of the things Job said in his book was I have not made gold my God. Just like you can make stomach your God, you can make money your God. Where you worship it.

Like people worship food, they can worship money and I want this, I want this and bow down. You know what the idol says, do this, you do it. That's how many people live.

This God says I'll give you money if you do all these wrong things and they do it. They get it. So their mind is set on earthly things.

You heard me use the illustration of a rubber band. To me that's the best illustration I've ever found. If you have a rubber band, a true Christian is one who's got his mind set, his mind is set on things above.

But because he lives on earth and he's got to do hundreds of things on earth for many hours a day, he has to stretch that rubber band to the things of earth for 8 hours in the space of work and maybe another 5-6 hours with a lot of jobs at home. But then when all the work is done, the rubber band is released, goes back up to think about the things of heaven, the things of God, things of God's word, meditate on God's word. That is a true Christian.

But he's spending 14 hours a day thinking about earthly things. Nothing wrong in it. He has to work, he has to earn his living.

A mother has got to take care of the children, has to cook the food. That's this rubber band stretched to earthly things for many hours a day. But when it's released, when it's all over, does the rubber band spring

back to the things of heaven? What do you think about when all your day's work is over? You lie down in bed, what do you think? Or when you're free from other things, you're just sitting and relaxing.

Where is the rubber band? For many people, for the worldly people, it's the other way around. It's never stretched to heavenly things. But for Christians, many Christians, the rubber band is tied to the earthly things.

And on Sunday morning, they'll stretch it for two hours to heavenly things, like go to a church service and think about God. Hopefully nobody's thinking about money even now. Some people even in church, they're thinking about that.

But it's stretched there, and then the two hours service is over, then back to money again, or earthly things. That's not the way God intended a disciple of Christ to live. You say, well how will I survive? I'll tell you.

If you seek God's kingdom first, and his righteousness in everything, all that you need on earth will be added to you. I can tell you that. I can tell you that from my own testimony for 53, 54 years now.

And there are other people better than me who can testify for a longer period of time, who honestly can say, I did not seek money, I did not seek my own. But I sought God's kingdom, even if it meant poverty, even if it meant living simply, I determined to seek God's kingdom first, and God has added everything I need. You must have that testimony at the end of your life, even if you're in a secular job.

Seeking God's kingdom first is not just for preachers and full-time workers, it's for everyone. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And if you're seeking for that, Lord I want to be righteous in my life, I want peace in my heart and joy in the Holy Spirit all the time.

And you put God first in your life in every situation and seek with all your heart, never to cheat anyone, never to take advantage of anyone, never to exploit anyone, and never, never to make money in any unrighteous way. I can guarantee you, I can give you a written guarantee, that the righteous man will never be forsaken by God, and his children will never look for a job, his grandchildren will never look for a job, because the grandfather was righteous. It's an amazing promise.

Don't you want to be like that? So, those who set their mind on earthly things, the rubber band is tied up to the earthly things and occasionally pulled up to religious activities, that's not Christianity. Verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven. We are living on earth, but we are citizens of heaven.

You know there are many foreigners who belong to another country, their passport is another country, different country, but they are living in India now. They are tourists, they are visitors. Even if they are working here, they are not part of this country.

And they are always, they are saving money to go back to the other country, not to be here. So, here it says, we belong to heaven. A day in our life came, when our citizenship was changed.

You know, just like people long to go to another country, better country, we also decided one day to become citizens of heaven. That's the day you were born again, really born again. And it says you got a heavenly passport, you became a citizen of heaven.

And I don't know whether you realize that you are to live here, like the Bible says, like a foreigner on this earth. This is not your home. We look forward to that day when Christ will come again.

It says in verse 20, we eagerly wait for the day when Christ will come back. And this same body, again he talks about this body, of our humble state will one day be changed to be exactly like the body of His glory. We look forward to that day.

Until that day comes, when your body will become like the body of Jesus Christ, free from sickness, free from anxiety, worry, and free from every infirmity. Until that day, my brother, sister, I urge you, use your body to fulfill God's plan for your life. Be careful, discipline yourself.

One last verse, 1 Corinthians chapter 9. You know, when you read Corinthians, remember that it is written to a bunch of worldly, carnal Christians who were defeated in their lives. Do you qualify? 1 Corinthians is for you. Worldly, carnal defeated Christians.

They are the Corinthians. And what does the Holy Spirit tell them? Is there a message for such people? Yes. The message is not get ready to go to hell.

No. The message is get ready to get the first prize in heaven. Can you believe that? This is how the Holy Spirit speaks, 1 Corinthians 9.24. And for every worldly, carnal Christian sitting here, I would say to you, 1 Corinthians 9.24, don't you know that those who run in a race run, but only one gets a prize? You, carnal, defeated, worldly Christians, run from today in such a way that you can win that prize.

Can the Corinthians win that prize? Yes. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit wouldn't even mention that. So, I've said this before that, you know, in a race, only one person wins a prize.

But he's telling all these Corinthians to run to win the prize. In other words, in the Christian race, every one of us can win first prize. I'm not in competition with you to make you second.

No. I'm in a competition to help you to come first as well. I want to help you to come first and I want to come first too.

We're going to be jointly first. All of you Corinthians, you're so worldly now, it doesn't matter. From now onwards, run in such a way that you may win the first prize.

But if you want to win it, take an example from all the athletes who run in the Olympic Games. They exercise self-control. Can you imagine a man who wants to run the 40 km marathon race in the Olympics and he has no control over his eating and his stomach becomes bigger and bigger and bigger and he's indisciplined.

How far will he get from the starting line? They'll laugh at him if he comes to the starting line. First of all, he won't be selected by his country to go and represent them in the Olympic Games. They exercise self-control in all things.

He's taking the example of an earthly runner who's going for an Olympic Games. And they do it to get today a gold medal. But we, we're doing it to get a reward from Jesus who says to us, well done, good and faithful servant, which is worth more than a million gold medals.

So Paul says, as far as I'm concerned, I don't know about you Corinthians, but I'm concerned I am going to run. I'm going to discipline myself. I will not make my stomach my God.

I will not make money my God. I will control myself and control my appetites and my passions, discipline myself and run in such a way with an aim. My aim is, I want to fulfill God's plan for my life.

I want to do all that God wanted me to do on this earth before I leave. I want to be a witness to every person God wanted me to be a witness to on this earth. I don't want somebody whom I lived next to or sat next to for years to years and years and years and years and years telling me at the judgment seat, hey, you knew that Jesus is the only way to heaven and you never told me about it.

And you called me your friend for 20 years. I sat with you every day in the office, lived next door to you and you never told me once how often we talked in those 20 years. And the most important thing which you knew, you never said a word to me.

You talked about all the things in the world, but you never told me about Jesus. Is anybody going to tell you that at the judgment seat of God? I'm not saying we should preach to everybody in the office, but don't you think people around us should know that we are different, we are Christians who seek to follow the Lord. I know when I was in the Navy, for example, you can't go around witnessing to people in the Navy.

But if I had a table, I'd keep a Bible there. Nobody can stop me from keeping a Bible there. And that itself is a witness to people, hey, this guy is some special type of Christian, he's got a Bible on the table.

I'll tell you that Christians are ashamed to put a Bible on the table. They're ashamed the boss will come and see it and think you're a religious nut. Everybody in the Navy thought I was a religious nut, except God.

I've seen non-Christians hang calendars near their table with some idle picture. Why not hang a calendar with a verse of scripture? If that's your table, I mean, not some public office. See, there are many ways without publicly shouting in the gospel at others to let people know, I'm a Christian, but a little different type of Christian from others.

A disciple of Jesus Christ. I want to be a witness. Paul says, I run in such a way.

And what do you do, Paul? Verse 27, I discipline my body and make it my slave. I like the Living Bible paraphrase of that. Beautiful.

Listen to this. Verse 27, I make my body do what it should do and not what it wants to do. Great.

I'd ask you to remember that little phrase. I will make my body do from now on what it should do and not what it wants to do. I'll make my tongue speak what it should speak, not what it wants to speak.

I'll make my eyes look at what they should look at and not what they want to look at. I'll make my hands do what they should be doing, not what they want to do. Great verse.

I make my body do what it should do and not what it wants to do. Otherwise, if I don't live like that, I can be the greatest preacher in the world. Verse 27, I can preach to so many others.

When I come to the end of the race, at the finishing line, the referee will say, disqualified. Not only you don't get a prize, you're disqualified from the race. Your name is not even in the list.

You're not even last. You're disqualified. And you say, Paul, you're telling me you were in danger of being disqualified? Sure, there's no respect of persons with God.

God doesn't say, oh, this is Paul, so we won't disqualify him. There's no favorites. If I don't discipline my body, if I don't make my body do what it should do, I can be disqualified.

I've taken those words very seriously for many years. And I want to say to you, I recommend to you that you take it seriously too. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we know that your word always leads us higher. You never want us to sit in the same class, failing, failing, failing, failing year after year. You always challenge us to get promoted to the next class, to go up higher, to go up higher.

Help us, Lord, we pray, to press on to perfection, not just to sit and look at that verse on the pulpit, but to actually do it in our life, to press on to perfection every single day, so that we can complete our earthly course, which you planned before we were born. Lord Jesus, what an example you set of disciplining yourself, denying yourself. Help us to follow that example.

Thank you for the wonderful examples we have, like the apostles who also lived that way, and who completed their course with great joy. And many other godly men and women through the ages who lived like that. We want to follow their example, Lord, and make our lives worthwhile living on this earth for your glory.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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