

Fearing God and Being Thankful

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of developing a spirit of gratitude in our lives. It highlights how failing to give thanks can lead to murmuring, complaining, and ultimately backsliding. The speaker delves into the significance of being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit and the transformation that comes with a heart of thanksgiving, contrasting it with the downward spiral of ungratefulness and sin. The message encourages a lifestyle of gratitude towards God, others, and in all circumstances.

Scripture: Philippians 2:14, Philippians 2:15, Romans 1:21, Ephesians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20

Topics: "Gratitude", "Transformation through Thanksgiving"

Description

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Transcript

So, I'm very happy to be able to meet with all of you like this. Praise the Lord for technology that does not hinder us from meeting. It must have been so difficult in the early days of Christianity where it was so far away there was not even any means of communication.

One of the things that we need to develop in our life is the spirit of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude is very, very important because it's so easy for some small thing to be missing in our life or some small thing to go wrong and we can have murmur or complain and gradually our children pick it up, that habit, and that begins to ruin their life as well. You know, the Bible speaks about this matter of murmuring and giving thanks.

Let me turn with you, please turn with me to Philippians in chapter 2, Philippians 2. And we read here in verse, beginning at verse 12, the last part of verse 12, Philippians 2 verse 12, it says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Now, the Bible does not add unnecessary words. You could have just said, work out your salvation.

But it says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. And we need to think what that means. That the fear is, you know, the reverence for God.

Like I often say, there are two types of fear of God. One is the fear that God may hurt me. That's what a lot of people have.

And the other is the fear that I may hurt God. How do I hurt God? How do you hurt a father who loves you so much? The fear that God may hurt me is a physical thing. He may harm me in some way that God never do.

He'll never do that. God is a God of love. But do you have a fear, my dear brothers and sisters, that your way of life or the way you speak to each other at home, husband and wife, probably hurting God? That is the reverential fear of God.

If we don't have it, we need to develop it. You know, Proverbs 9, 10 says, the fear of the Lord, this type of fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. In the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord was the fear that God will hurt me.

But in the New Covenant, we are children. We are not, you know, office workers under a master called God. No, we are children under a father.

And our fear is that we may hurt our heavenly father. And that is the ABC of wisdom. I never get tired of saying these things.

There was a great evangelist in America called Charles Finney, mighty preacher, one of the world's greatest revivalists in 1850 or so. After many years of experience, he said that, I've discovered that you have to preach a truth 10 times before the average believer really has got it. Till then, he hasn't got it.

He just hears it, and it slips out of his mind. Think of many truths that you've heard in CFC through the years. It's probably slipped out of their mind because we haven't heard it enough.

That's why I never get tired of repeating what I have said. If you read the Old Testament prophets, they're repeated. People like Jeremiah, he had only one message for 40 years.

He never changed it. These Old Testament prophets were not trying to get a reputation to preach a new message every time. They were preaching what God told them.

And if God told them this is the need among the people and that's still not right, they'd keep preaching it for 40 years. So it's like that. I find that there's such a great need here to learn the ABC of wisdom.

I mean, our children, when they go to school, they can't study geography and physics and history before they learn ABC. And don't attempt to understand the great truths of the Bible before we learn the reverential fear of God, the respect for God that recognizes that I'm always in his presence. You know, newly married couples and even older married couples, I say, speak to each other in such a way that you recognize that Jesus is in you.

Not imagine. Not imagine Jesus is there. Imagine Jesus is there means he's not really there.

Then you're an unconverted person. Okay, if you're an unconverted person, then you've got to imagine that Jesus is listening. But if you're born again, and you and your wife are born again, you don't have to imagine that Jesus is in your home.

He's there. And it's recognizing that he's there. Not imagining.

He is there, but we don't recognize him. And I believe it's a great insult. If you have a very important person living in your house, and you don't even bother about him, he's at the table, you don't talk to him.

He's in the house moving around, and you ignore him. I mean, you can do that for maidservants or people who are, whom you feel are beneath your level. But Jesus Christ in your home, I want to encourage you to recognize his presence.

Then we will be able to have a reverential fear for him, which is the ABC of wisdom. I was born again 61 years ago and 81 years old now. And God's been very good to me that I have to say that in every way, spiritually, physically, and family-wise, everything.

But one of the first things God began to teach me when I was a young Christian, I was converted when I was 19 and a half, was to fear him. To recognize that he is God. I'm a small, teeny-weeny speck of dust on the earth, but he has loved me and desires to have fellowship with me.

That makes me feel so small. It's like if the ruler of your country once comes to you and says, I want to have some fellowship with you. He's so small.

I mean, you would long to have some, even meet him. I wonder if many Christians have that type of reverence for God, Almighty God, the ruler of this universe, comes to me, small as a person, and wants to have fellowship with me. You see, one requirement for that is I must recognize how small I am.

What happens to many believers is after a few years of being born again, they begin to think they are very important people. And then they lose grace. I'll tell you, the one thing I have feared in my life is losing grace.

Grace and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Many times I wept and prayed, Lord, I don't care what you take away from me, my health, my money, my whatever. I don't want to lose your grace.

And I don't want to lose the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And I mean it, Lord. And you can test me on that.

Take away anything, but don't take away grace from my life. And don't take away the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That's been my constant prayer.

And that's why God has given me that grace through the years. I've experienced in different situations. And you experience it mainly when a storm comes.

When there's no storm and everything is calm, you can imagine that you have a lot of grace. I'll tell you when you discover whether you have grace or not. When in the midst of a storm, some type of storm has come in your life and you find you're at peace.

You're not in turmoil. You're not anxious. You're not afraid.

You're not fearful. You've got grace. Or some task that you have to fulfill, which is a difficult task.

And you find grace to do it. Or grace to bring up your children properly. There's no excuse for a born-again couple not to bring up their children properly.

To bring up their children in a God-fearing way. It's the responsibility of every born-again couple. And if you came to Christ later in life and your children are already grown up and you wasted the early years and

they've sort of drifted away, I want to tell you in Jesus' name that you can still draw them to the Lord.

I've sometimes told married couples whose children are grown up and left home and they're wayward. I said, you know, I can tell you that you can bring your children to the Lord if you do one thing. Promise me to do one thing.

Every day, husband and wife, father and mother, kneel down before God and spend five minutes. That's not a long time. Five minutes praying for those wayward children of yours.

Every day. Keep your conscience clear. Make sure you're in a good relationship with each other as husband and wife.

Otherwise, God's not going to listen to your prayer. And pray together that your children will follow Jesus. My wife and I used to pray regularly for our children.

Today, we have 17 grandchildren. Believe me, my wife and I pray for them. Just like my children are serving the Lord, I want my 17 grandchildren and their generation to serve the Lord.

And that will not come by any human cleverness. No. When we pray, we are saying, Lord, I'm helpless.

I can't do this. You have to do it. And I'm dependent on you.

If you think you can do it, then you don't pray. We pray when we feel helpless. And helplessness is one of the important requirements for faith, for prayer.

So the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And here it says, we were at Philippians chapter 2, verse 12, if you remember. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling because, read it together with verse 13, because God is at work inside you to make you desire his will and to enable you to do his will.

See, this is wonderful. This is the difference between Old Covenant and the New Covenant that you can see clearly here in verse 13. Verse 13 could never be found in the Old Testament.

No, Moses could not teach this. That God is at work inside you. God was not at work inside anybody in the Old Testament.

He was at work outside. It was all outside miracles, the manna from heaven, the Red Seas being split, and so many, many external miracles. Even when Jesus was on earth, the only person on earth inside whom God was working was Jesus Christ.

All the others, it was outside, outside, outside. That's why even on the last day, they denied Jesus and left him. Peter denied him because God was not inside him.

But what a change happened 40 days later, on the day of Pentecost, or 50 days later. All of a sudden, they became different because God who was outside came inside. That is the meaning of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

When it says filled with the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, like John the Baptist and Gideon was filled with the Holy Spirit, it was the Holy Spirit upon them. It's like, see, if this glass of water is covered and you pour water, no water goes inside. It falls upon.

But when you remove the lid, the water can go inside. So that's what happened when the veil was rent in the temple and we could go right into God's presence. God could, there was something inside our heart that needs to be torn open spiritually.

And that's what God does when we humble ourselves and repent of our sin and receive Christ into our heart. The Holy Spirit comes in and we need to pray that God will fill us with the Holy Spirit. That is God working inside.

And what does it work inside? See, a lot of people, when they seek for the power of the Holy Spirit, they're seeking to speak in tongues because that's spectacular. Or they want some gift of healing. I never in my life asked God to give me the gift of tongues.

I'll tell you what I did ask for. You know, when God filled me with the Holy Spirit, he did that more than once. But I remember a crisis experience 45 years ago, just a few months before CFC started.

I was seeking God because I was thoroughly defeated in my thought life and with my tongue. My external life was good. Just like all of you, your external life is very good.

But you may be defeated in your tongue and you may defeat it in your thoughts. And I said, Lord, that's what I want victory over. The areas that other people can't see.

My thought life, the way I speak to my wife at home. That's what I want victory over. Not speaking in other tongues, but speaking in my mother tongue in a Christ-like way.

Lord, do that for me. I don't want other tongues. I want my mother tongue to be Christ-like.

And boy, I prayed and fasted because I was so defeated. Like many Christians are. And I tell you, God met with me and it changed my life.

It changed my family life. I thank God my children were small so that it could change the way I brought up my children. Dear brothers and sisters, don't devalue being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Seek with all your heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And if God gives you the gift of tongues, use it. I use it, but I use it entirely in private.

It is a love language between me and my bridegroom. I never use it in public. I don't believe it was meant to be used in public.

But seek for the fullness of the Holy Spirit to control your mother tongue at home. The way you speak to your husband, the way you speak to your wife, because it goes on from there. God is at work inside you.

And if he doesn't work inside you, you will not be able to control your tongue. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The tongue is the overflow valve of the heart.

When the heart is full, it overflows from the mouth. And there was this very saintly person who said that if a glass of water, if a glass is full of sweet water, when it overflows, it cannot pour out bitter water. No matter how heavily you shake that glass, bitter water cannot come out if it is filled with sweet water.

If bitter water comes out, it just proves there was bitter water all along. So in a moment of pressure, what comes out of our tongue again and again and again is a revelation to you of what is in your heart. If you

say, oh, that was just a momentary weakness and you excuse your failure, you will never overcome it in your life.

I stopped making excuses like that. I said, Lord, something is wrong in my heart. I'm not yielded fully.

The Christian life, I'm not taking it seriously enough. Please control my mother tongue through the Holy Spirit. You know, the Bible says in James chapter 3 that nobody could control the tongue.

It says there in James 3, people have been able to tame lions and wild animals, but they're not able to tame the tongue. It's a wild animal inside our mouth. And the fear of God and the fullness of the Holy Spirit will control it 100%.

I tell you, it changed my life. It changed my home life. Imagine living 365 days a year in your home without ever raising your voice.

That was my longing. Lord, to be always at rest, never in a panic, never, not even accidentally yelling out in anger. Only the Holy Spirit can do it.

If you say, no, such a life is impossible. Okay, according to your faith, be it unto you, it'll be impossible for you. Another person says, what is impossible for God? You mean God cannot do that? And the Bible says, God is at work inside you.

Verse 13, to make you desire his will and to do his will. You know, this is the promise in the new covenant that God will work. I don't have to do it.

If I yield myself, God will work inside me. You know, Jeremiah, it speaks about the potter. The Lord says, I'm like the potter.

What does the clay have to do for the potter to make a beautiful vessel? The clay has only got to yield, that's all. The clay doesn't have to manufacture the vessel, no. The clay yields into the potter's hand.

And when the potter takes out a stone stuck in that clay, let the potter take it out. Lord tells you to get rid of something in your life. Maybe some habit, maybe some type of movies that you're watching.

Maybe some places on the internet that you should not be going to. You don't get rid of it. You have those stones in your clay.

You will never be a vessel that is fit for God. You can pray as much as you like, attend as many meetings as you like. You'll never change.

Year after year after year, you'll be the same, my brother, sister. Telling you the truth. But if you yield, your life can be completely transformed in 2021, like it was never in this year.

So, ask God to work inside you. It says here to desire, to will and to work means to desire and to do his good pleasure. Now, if you just, I'll come back to there in a moment.

What did I say? To will and to work his good pleasure means to desire his will and to do his will. Now, if I were to ask you, I think most of you will say, yeah, I have a desire to do God's will. But I feel, I have a feeling that most of you think you've got that desire yourself.

That you're one of those good people who have a desire to do God's will, unlike other people who don't have that desire. That is pride. I'll tell you, if I have a desire to do God's will, it is 100% God who gave me that desire.

Basically, I'm a child of Adam. I often said to myself, I am no better than the worst terrorist in the world. He was born of Adam and I'm born of Adam.

What is the difference? Why did he become a terrorist? And why am I not a terrorist? I'll tell you why. One, because I had a good upbringing with my parents and you had a good upbringing. That's what protected you from being a terrorist.

Otherwise, I'm as bad as the worst adulterer or murderer or thief or terrorist in the world. I don't know whether you recognize that. I don't know whether you recognize that every child of Adam is the same.

I have confessed it to God. Lord, I am no better than anyone in the world. That's why Paul could say I'm the chief of sinners.

Then what is it that made a difference? I humbly say it was God working in me. Through my circumstances, through bringing me in touch with godly people who challenged me to something higher, putting me in touch with godly literature or nowadays listening to tapes that challenge me, I give all the glory to God. It's he who did it.

I don't want to take one atom of credit for myself. God is at work inside me, it says in Philippians 2.13. First of all, to desire his will and then if he did that part, why won't he do the second part? See, God gave us two legs to walk on. You can't walk on one leg.

It's very difficult. What are those two legs? I desire to do his will and I do his will. So it means like the military command of left, right, left, right, left, right.

I desire to do his will and I'll do his will. I desire to do his will and I'll do his will. That's what's written in Philippians 2.13 and that is a new covenant promise.

Now it is explained in another way in Hebrews chapter 8. Turn with me for a moment there. Hebrews chapter 8. This is an amazing statement. If you heard me say the old covenant was faulty, there was a fault in the old covenant.

You would say, brother Zach, are you trying to criticize God who gave the old covenant? But it's not I who am saying it. The Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 8 verse 7, the first covenant was faulty. There was something wrong in it.

Not that the commands were wrong. What was wrong in the old covenant? Why is it said that the first covenant verse 7 was faulty? He says if it was perfect, there was no need for a second covenant. There's no need for a new covenant.

There's no need for Jesus in the Holy Spirit. The first covenant itself was good enough. Why was it not good enough? Because it told people, listen, this is where it was faulty.

Not because some commands were wrong in it. All the commands were perfect. But it was faulty in this sense that it told people what they should do, but never gave them the power to do it.

That's a terrible fault. You tell people what to do, but you don't give them power to do it. It's like you go to work in a factory and the boss tells you to do certain things, but doesn't give you any tools to do it.

How will you do it? You don't have tools. If you tell your children to write something and you don't give them a pen or a pencil or a paper, how can they do it? You tell them to do something which is right, but you don't give them the tools to do it. That was the fault of the Old Testament.

If you're a father who tells your child to write something and you don't give him paper and pencil or pen, there's something lacking in your command. You have to tell him to write something and then give him a paper and a pen to write it. That's what was missing in the Old Covenant is faulty.

And was it a mistake God made? No. Why did God give the law to Israel for 1,500 years to teach them one lesson? One lesson primarily. No matter how hard you try, you will never come to my standard.

Have you understood that? My dear brothers, let me ask you personally. Have you understood that no matter how hard you try, you can hear the finest preacher in the world and try hard to live up to the standard that is proclaimed in the New Testament, you will never be able to live that standard. That's the first lesson to learn.

I have to go through that Old Covenant lesson. It's like the kindergarten lesson. I cannot make it.

Well, some people learn it in one year. Some people take 25 years to learn it. Some people take 40 years to learn.

I cannot make it. Israel took 1,500 years. Some of us have heard these truths.

This is not the first time I'm speaking this. Some of us have heard these for many years. And I don't know whether you still understand it.

My dear brother, I'm saying it lovingly. I'm not criticizing you. No, God forbid that I should criticize anyone.

I'm a sinner saved by grace. How can I look at anyone else in any other way? But I want to say to you what's good for you. Recognize that you cannot make it.

And then because there was a fault with the Old Covenant, God says in Hebrews 8 verse 8, I'll make a new covenant. And then in the New Covenant, here it is. What is the terms of the New Covenant? Middle of verse 10.

I will put my law in their mind, number one. And I'll write them on their heart. That's the first part of the New Covenant.

Who's going to do it? God. In the Old Covenant, man had to try and live up to God's standard. And man failed.

And once they understood it, then God says, I will do it. And I will put my law in your mind. And I will write it in your heart.

It's elementary lessons. I preached it for 45 years. But I find I need to preach it again and again because people forget or people don't understand it.

What does it mean when it says God will put his law into my mind? I will make you desire to do my will. Remember Philippians 2? Desire. What does it mean when it says I'll write it in my heart? It means God will give me grace in my heart.

Hebrews 13 says, Hebrews 13 and verse 8, verse 9, sorry. Hebrews 13, verse 9, in the middle. The heart needs to be strengthened by grace.

See, my heart is like a weak hand. Can't even hold a pencil. But that hand, when it's strengthened, it can hold a rod of iron and not lose its grip.

And the heart is strengthened by grace. I can hold on to God's laws and obey them. The heart can be strengthened only by grace.

And God promises, he first of all put a desire in my mind to do his will. That is why I say, first of all, be humble. And if you have a desire to do the will of God, remember that it is God who put it.

Don't ever take the credit to yourself. If I have understood anything in the Bible, it is 100% God who made me understand it. It's not that I'm cleverer than others.

I'm more spiritual than others. No, I came to God as a sinner. Lord, I'm no better than any other child of Adam.

Work in me to desire to do every area of your will, just like Jesus did it. And then give me the strength to do it. My life is yours.

My body is yours. You can take it all. So that is the new covenant.

And come back now to Philippians chapter 2. And you see there, the connection between what we just saw and Philippians 2.13. God is at work in you to write his will in your mind, that is to will his good pleasure, to want his good pleasure, and then to write it in your heart, that is to do his good pleasure. His good pleasure means his perfect will. So it's God.

It's God who's gonna do it. And the Lord Jesus tried to teach that to his disciples in so many ways. Many of the miracles were, let's take the first and the last miracle in John's gospel.

First miracle, last miracle. What's the essential lesson in that? The first miracle is, was it a wedding? And there was no wine. What did we learn from that? You know, anyone who's arranging a marriage for his son or daughter, one thing they'll be very careful about, even if the flower arrangement and the curtain arrangement is not great, they say the food arrangement must be perfect.

It doesn't matter if the flowers are not perfect or the curtain is a little crooked. What if food runs short? Anyone who arranges a marriage is most careful there must be enough food. Supposing 25 extra people come, they shouldn't run short.

Let's make some extra food. We pay for it. I'm sure in that marriage they took care of, there must be enough wine.

I believe it was grape juice, not alcoholic wine. I'll tell you why, because there's a verse in Proverbs that says, don't look at the wine when it stirs itself in the cup, when it is fermenting. And I believe Jesus obeyed that law.

So he wouldn't drink alcoholic wine and he never made alcoholic wine for anyone. Those who, well, it says, why does it say in the Bible, take only a little wine, don't get drunk with wine. I believe it's referring to anything that will make you lose control of yourself.

Anyway, that's besides the point. The point is there was a shortage there and it's teaching us one lesson, no matter how carefully you plan the wedding, something will go wrong. And, but thank God Jesus was there.

And when they came to zero, first of all, Mary came to Jesus. You know that story in John chapter two and said they have no wine. Well, I don't think it was zero at that point.

It was becoming less and less and less and less. And Mary thought I better warn Jesus before it finishes completely. They have no wine here.

And Jesus said, my time has not yet come. You know what that means? It means it has not yet become zero. Huh, there's a little bit there.

There are four or five glasses left. Yeah, I know there are 50 people at the wedding, but there's still four or five glasses left. Yeah, Lord, that's not enough.

Nevermind if it's not enough. When it comes to zero, I'll work. So my time has not yet come there.

And that's what he told his mother. And then a little later, when the last glass was empty, then the Lord told the servants, now pour the water into the water pots. And you know how much he gave them? Each water pot contained about 30 gallons, 180 gallons is about more than 700 liters of wine.

Whenever God gives us an answer to prayer, it's in abundance. They had enough grape juice to last for many, many months in that home. But the first lesson is it had to come to zero first.

You've often heard me say that God wants to bring us to a zero point before he can do something in us. And if God works mightily in anybody, it's because he has come to a zero point in his life. And it's very important that we come there.

That's the first miracle. When you come to a zero point, God will give you such an abundance, far more than you can ask or think, like it says in Ephesians. What's the last miracle? The last miracle that Jesus did was after his resurrection, in the multiplying of the fish.

He did that multiplying of the fish once in Luke chapter five. But in John chapter 21, you know how Peter got fed up of being an apostle. He said, I'm a failure, let me go fishing.

Because at least there's one thing I can do properly. I'm a failure as an apostle. I denied the Lord.

I can do fishing. And it is as if the Lord said to him, oh, you think you can do fishing? Okay, go and try. And he was never in his life had he experienced such failure event that night.

I don't know what time they went fishing, maybe seven o'clock in the evening or something. Eight o'clock, no fish. Midnight, no fish.

Two o'clock in the morning, no fish. And they're wondering what is happening. There are plenty of fish in the Sea of Galilee.

And we have never had such a failure ever in our life. And all those expert fishermen in the boat, everywhere they go, no fish, no fish, no fish. Finally, it comes about 4.30 or five in the morning.

And Jesus is on the shore. Do you see a sense of humor there? Some people think Jesus had no sense of humor. It was the sense of humor that he asked, so boys, did you get any fish last night, by the way? He knew they didn't get it.

I like that. There's humor in Jesus. I find in my relationship with the Lord, when he talks to me, there's humor there.

Do you find that? You know, when a person is humorous with you, it's very easy to have a relationship with him. Many people have a strained, strict relationship with Jesus because they think he's a humorless person. He's not.

I found him to be the most enjoyable person in the world. I'd rather have fellowship with Jesus than with anyone else in the world. He says, hey, boys, did you get any fish? And they know the answer is no.

Okay, cast your net on the other side. And there were so many fish, they couldn't even pull it up. Such large fish, it says in John 21, that would get them many Durham's worth of money.

And that's when Jesus said, Peter, you're calculating how much money you get from these 153 fish? Do you love me more than these? That's a question the Lord asks you when God gives you success in your job. In the Gulf. And you make a lot of money.

You know what the Lord asks you when you got a lot of fish and you're calculating how big a house you can build with it and how long you can live with this money? Do you love me more than all the money you have saved and accumulated in the Gulf? I enable you to get that job. The Lord says, you love me more than these. It's very easy to be taken up with a basket of fish.

What's the lesson there? When you come to zero, God will fill you. So we have to come to the place where you say, Lord, I cannot do it. I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit and strengthen me to live in life that's pleasing to you.

And so what is the first thing that God wants to produce in us? Back to Philippians 2, 13. God is at work in you to will and to work his good pleasure. And then what is the first thing he's gonna do? He's gonna teach you how to do everything in your life, all things, Philippians 2, 14, without grumbling or disputing.

So Lord, why do you want to fill me with the Holy Spirit? Yeah, this is the new tongue I want to speak in. You want to speak in new tongues? Here is a new tongue, a tongue that never grumbles or complain. That's a new tongue.

That's the other language I want to learn to speak. Because I did not grow up as a young person learning that language. All human beings have grown up speaking the language of complaining and grumbling and all types of things like that.

And now I'm learning this new language of giving thanks and everything. And no grumbling or complaining. Have you learned that language, brother, sister? Some of you say, I'm filled with the Holy Spirit.

I speak in tongues. Oh, what about this tongue? Where there's no grumbling or complaining. Have you learned that tongue? I'd rather speak in that tongue than any unknown tongue.

I'll tell you honestly, I want to have a tongue that does not ever grumble or complain about anything in my life. Anything that goes wrong in the office, in the home, anywhere. I lost my visa.

Okay. As if God did not know about it. He knew about it before you were born.

That on such and such a day, you would lose your visa. And he'd show you what to do after that. But you have, we have a father in heaven who runs this universe.

Who's more powerful than all the sheikhs and kings and presidents and prime ministers in the world. That's our father. That's why Jesus said, whenever you pray, whenever you pray, begin with our father who art in heaven.

Two things, my father who loves me and in heaven means he runs this world and he runs everything in the world. If I don't start there, I cannot pray because I don't have faith. Those simple words, our father who art in heaven means two things.

I'm talking to someone who loves me intensely. I'm talking to one who can, who controls everything in the world and who can do anything. Are some of you facing some problems today? Pray our father who art in heaven and then tell him.

Yeah. So then I don't grumble or complain. You know, I often tell parents when you're dealing with little children, here's a simple rule in bringing up children, even teenage children.

When you tell your child to do something, even if it's a small four year old, trying to build something with Lego or some toys and you say, I'll help you, my son. I'll help you, my girl. They say, no, no, no, dad.

I want to do it on my own. Okay, good. But that's not the way to do it.

No, no, no, I know what to do. And they do it and they mess up. They can't do it.

And they come to you and say, dad, sorry, couldn't do it. What are you going to tell him? That shows what type of father you are. What do you tell him? You say, I told you in the beginning itself, you're a bad father.

If you say that, never speak like that or a teenage daughter of yours who you warned her not to do something and she did it and messed up. And you go to her and say, I told you. I told you is the language of the expert.

Don't be an expert. Don't talk to your wife like that. I told you.

How many times I've told you? We exaggerate a thousand times. Maybe you told two or three times, but that's how we are. It's the language of the expert.

No, you know how you should approach your child? Nevermind. Let's fix it. That's the language of encouragement.

Nevermind. Let's fix it. When we fix, don't worry.

Did your teenage daughter mess up something? My girl, let's fix it. Try that method. You'll have much more fellowship with your children.

And things will change much quicker in your home that way. I'm not talking as one who never made a mistake. I learned from my mistakes only.

But I'm giving you the benefit of what I learned from my mistakes so that you don't make the same mistakes if you're with your children or with your wife or with anybody else. Yeah, I've learned a lot from my mistake. I learned that fire burns not by reading it.

By putting my hand in the fire, I learned it burns. But that is a much stronger lesson when you learn that way. And I've learned some strong lessons in my life by my failures.

I tried fishing all night and I failed. That's when I came to the Lord and he filled my boat with fish. I didn't do that.

I cannot take credit. I've often publicly said, I have never in my life built one church. I've never planted one church anywhere in the world.

The Lord planted some churches and told me to go and pour the water on that plant. Okay, I just went and poured water. That's all.

The Lord planted every single church and I praise the Lord. I can never take credit for any of that. I mean, a gardener doesn't take credit because he poured some water on a plant and some beautiful roses came out of that.

It's God who does that. So learn to give thanks and everything to the Lord. And it says in Philippians 2.15 that if you allow this to happen in your life, that is how you prove, that is how you show to the world that you're a blameless and innocent child of God.

How many of you want to be a blameless child of God? I want to. Blameless means 100 out of 100. Every answer correct.

No mistakes. 100 out of 100 child of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I'll tell you something, my brothers and sisters.

Even the so-called Christianity around us in so many churches is a crooked and perverse generation. A lot of preachers don't like to say that because they're always interested in collecting money from people. I'm not interested in collecting money from anybody.

So I can tell people the truth. It's a crooked and perverse generation you find imprisoned on today. And in the midst of that, we have to shine as a light.

It's all darkness there. It's all darkness. But in the midst of that, we have to shine as a light.

And that light is, how do I prove in the midst of a crooked? Okay, let me go one step at a time. What is it? Why is it this Christendom or this world is called a crooked and perverse generation? I'll tell you because of verse 14. See the connection.

The world is full of people who murmur and grumble and complain. I mean, if you were in God's position and looking down at the sphere called the earth, every corner of the earth, God sees somebody's murmuring, complaining about something or the other. Even when things are good in 90% of the area, they're still grumbling about the remaining 10%.

Have you found that in your life? Grumbling, complaining, murmuring is what God hears from every corner of the world. And in the midst of this, this is what makes the world dark. And in the midst of this dark world, here and there, there's some lights.

You know, sometimes when you travel in a plane at night at a lower level and you see the ground and you see all is dark. And there you see one house with a light, another house with a light. That's a picture I have in my mind, a world full of darkness, grumbling and complaining.

And in the midst of it, God sees one family. Ah, no grumbling and complaining in that home. Yeah, giving thanks, a light.

Seek for that, my brothers and sisters. Value that more than all the money you make in the dark. Value a life of being like a light.

I'm speaking from my own experience. The most important thing is the life of Jesus. That's the light.

I want that more and more. In conclusion, let me turn you to Romans chapter one. Romans chapter one.

We are told here about how the world goes down into sin, deeper and deeper into sin. It starts with Romans one, you know, after saying in Romans 1 17, the last part, about faith and the righteous man will live by faith. Salvation, how it comes.

And he's beginning to explain the gospel in Romans all the way for the rest of the gospel, the rest of Romans. He's explaining how man is a sinner. Religious people are sinners.

Non-religious people are sinners. How we are justified by faith. How sin need not have dominion over us, chapter six.

And how we get free from the law, verse seven. Life in the spirit, verse eight. And about sovereignty, faithfulness, righteousness in nine, 10 and 11 and yielding our body in chapter 12.

And finally, Romans 16 20. The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. That's the end of the gospel.

But here it begins. And in order to begin, he first shows the terrible sin of man. Against which God is angry.

Romans 1 18, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness. It goes on to describe step by step by step by step, going down, down, down, down, down till you reach the last three verses of Romans 1. Men become, verse 29, full of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife, deceit, gossips, verse 30, slander, haters of God and many, many things. That is the pit, the bottom of the pit.

But now I want to show you what is the first step that goes into this bottom pit, you know, because it says here three times that God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. Verse 24, therefore God gave them up. They went one step further down.

After some time, verse 26, God gave them up a second time. They went still further down. Verse 28, God gave them up a third time.

Then they went to the bottom of the pit. Have you seen this? But what is the first step downward, which finally reached the bottom of the pit, the first step of backsliding, the first step of going into sin? Listen to this, excuse me. Verse 21, even though they knew God, they did not honor him and give thanks.

What is the first step downward towards backsliding? You don't give thanks to God for what he's given you. You stop this habit of thanking God and you already started backsliding. You know, Jesus said that he would give a person a reward even for giving a cup of water to one of his disciples.

Imagine a glass of water. Jesus is going to thank people who gave one of his disciples a glass of water. That's the cheapest thing in the world.

And he gives thanks for that. I learned something from that. I said, Lord, I must learn to be thankful to people for the smallest little thing they do for me and never to forget it.

Imagine Jesus calling somebody up in the day of judgment and says, hey, come here. I remember 2000 years ago, you gave a glass of water to my disciple Peter. Here's your reward.

That's the meaning of what he said in the last verses of Matthew 10. Thankfulness. That's one of the characteristics of Christ and we don't have it.

And I find we in the Indian culture, people seem to be very reluctant to say thank you very much. Of course, in Western culture, it becomes a habit, which is meaningless. They say thank you for anything, but you got to mean it.

I know sometimes when I've given someone a gift, say an envelope or something. They never say thank you. They say uh.

The uh means thank you. Okay, I've learned that now. That uh means thank you.

Okay. That's their language, you know, speaking in tongues. Why have you noticed that? People are reluctant to say thank you, brother.

Very kind of you to do that. It's not in our habit. And it's particularly among, of course, men, a lot of Western people say it's just a meaningless repetition, but it's good for us to learn this habit because it's a very good habit because we don't even give thanks to God.

How many times can you look back in your life and examine yourself? The number of times you prayed for something and when you got it, did you imagine, did you immediately go to God and give thanks for it? No. We have to be reminded. So it's not a habit that comes automatically.

Murmuring and grumbling is automatic. We are born with it. We will be filled with the Holy Spirit and get rid of that habit.

If you want to become Christ-like, dear brother, sister, ask God to fill you with the spirit of thanksgiving. One last verse, Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians 5, the one verse in the Bible which says be filled with the Spirit. You know, there's only one place in the Bible where you have a command to be filled with the Holy Spirit continuously.

The, in the original language in Greek, the meaning in Ephesians 5, 18, last part is be being filled with the Spirit. Be being filled, which means be continuously filled with the Spirit. That's the meaning.

It's a, in grammar, the present continuous time, not walk, but he was walking. Be walking, be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. And when you are continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, what do you do? Verse 20, you'll always give thanks.

You see there? This is the opposite of Romans chapter 1. There, they did not give thanks and they went all down to the pit where God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. So maybe you can't do miracles. Maybe you can't preach a sermon.

Maybe you can't do the wonderful things that other believers do. But can you do one thing in the morning when you get up? To learn to thank God for whatever he's given you. Gradually, you will learn to thank your wife.

I still say thank you to my wife when I get a cup of coffee in the morning. What do you say? Okay, that is your way of saying thank you. Fine.

I'm not objecting to that. If that is your language, fine. Now, I'm not saying we should say the words thank you.

It's an attitude of gratitude. Don't misunderstand me. Because you keep on saying thank you.

It may be like a lot of Western people. It can be a meaningless repetition. So I'm not talking about the words.

Learn to have an attitude of gratitude, even if you don't say the words thank you to your wife for giving you a meal or anything. An attitude of gratitude is most important. And towards God.

Lord, I've learned today the first step towards backsliding. And I want to never have that in my life. The first step towards backsliding is not giving thanks.

Which will lead to murmuring and grumbling. I want to be thankful to God. I want to be thankful to God for his blessings in my life, for physical health.

But leading me to the truth of the new covenant. For wonderful brothers and sisters in my local church. You may think there are a lot of problems with them.

But think of other believers in other churches who are much worse than the brothers and sisters in your church. Be thankful. The Bible tells we must be thankful for one another.

In Colossians chapter 3. Please read Colossians chapter 3. It's around verse 15 or 14 somewhere. It says, you're called in one body. Be thankful, it says.

Be thankful for one another. Have you learned to be thankful for the brothers and sisters in your body in your local church? Develop that habit. It's the first step to backsliding when you stop giving thanks.

So I trust that this conference in Sharjah, whenever you're having Zoom, will not be just one more conference to tick off. But Lord, I learned something today that's going to change the rest of my life. I hope it'll be so.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we commit ourselves to you. Please help us to honor you by the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bless these dear brothers and sisters in Sharjah and the other places. Listening in the Gulf countries and other places. Help us all, Lord.

Help me and help every one of us to live in a spirit of thanksgiving, filled with the Holy Spirit. To be a light in the midst of a dark world. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/jAuepAqc3Rs.mp4>

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