

# Five Warnings the Lord Gives

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the critical need for personal devotion to Christ and warns against the dangers of losing that love amidst church activities.*

**Duration:** 1:06:28

**Scripture:** Revelation 3:15

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Spiritual Discipline"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the messages given to the churches in the book of Revelation, emphasizing the need for repentance. It highlights the dangers of losing one's first love for Jesus, the deception of being busy with good deeds but lacking true devotion, the warning against being led astray by the love of money or immorality, the importance of maintaining integrity and humility despite reputation, and the call to be either on fire for God or completely worldly, avoiding lukewarmness. The message concludes with the assurance of God's love in reproofing and disciplining His children for their ultimate good.

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## Transcript

I want to speak today on the message the Lord gave to the churches in the book of Revelation. This is important for us because of one reason and that is they were the last messages that the Lord gave to the churches and we want to look particularly at not all seven, but the five churches which the Lord asked to repent. The last, you know, a lot of people say, ask this question in Christian Christendom, what is the last message that the Lord gave to the church? And they say to go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

I said no. No. The last message the Lord gave to the church is in Revelation.

Repent. It was long before that, it was 60 years before that, that he said go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples of all nations. So many have neglected the last message that the Lord gave to the church and that's here in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. So if you look at the five weaknesses that the Lord saw in these churches, here are the five things that the Lord tells us in our time.

First of all, here is a church in Ephesus, Revelation chapter 2, to whom the Lord says you, I mean there are many good deeds you've done and your toil and your perseverance, you cannot endure evil men and you're put to the test those who call themselves apostles. You know there's so many good things there. Toil, perseverance, you can't endure evil, you test the false teachers, a lot of things that are true of our

church and of many of you who are serious about your Christian life.

And you have persevered, endured, for my name's sake and you've not grown weary, with all those good qualities which we have, we can think we are okay. That's the great danger of many many Christians. They can look at all these good qualities and I believe every one of these are good qualities that every Christian should have.

You look through verse 2 and 3, every one of these qualities we must have. You meditate on them sometime. But the whole thing gets canceled out because you've left your first love.

It's like you know you fill a vessel with something valuable, milk or something like that, and then you make one little hole at the bottom. It's a waste of time having filled it with milk because that hole at the bottom drains out everything in it. It becomes of no value.

And this is what happens to us when we lose our first love for Jesus Christ. And that is very easy to lose because with many many Christians I have seen, their personal devotion and worship of Christ is not as important to them as all their activity. Particularly maybe some of you are very active in the church which is a very good thing because so many others are lazy and do nothing.

And definitely we are thankful for those who are willing to serve the church in some way, do something for the church, volunteer and do things even without volunteering. Excellent. The great danger for you is that in the midst of all your activity and all your devotion and your faithful Bible reading and everything else, that that personal devotion to Jesus Christ goes.

And it's the things that you once did out of love for Christ is now become a burden because you do it still, but it's not with the same spring in your step and the light in your eyes. No, it's become different. And that's a great tragedy.

To love Jesus is to worship him. And there's a principle that the Lord taught in the reply he gave to Satan when Satan asked him to worship him. In Matthew 4 and verse 10, Jesus said, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

And what the Lord taught there is we cannot serve the Lord in any way if we haven't become worshipers first. And I believe this is the great tragedy with a lot of Christian work today. The people who are serving the Lord are not worshipers.

If they were worshipers, there would be a different tone in their service, in their ministry and they wouldn't easily fall into sin like so many preachers are doing nowadays. It's all because worship and love for Jesus is gone. Turn with me to 2nd Corinthians in chapter 11.

2nd Corinthians 11. Paul was burdened for the Christians in Corinth for one particular thing. And we have looked at this verse many times and I'll tell you honestly, I never get tired of looking at it because I want to make sure it never happens to me.

Paul says, I'm jealous for you. Verse 2, 2nd Corinthians 11-2, with a godly jealousy, because I betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. He's talking there of a bride getting ready to marry her bridegroom.

And that is how the attitude we should be in all the time till Christ comes. When Christ comes, we read the marriage of the Lamb is going to take place. And think how a bride looks if she's really in love with her husband.

Think how eagerly she looks forward to that day and is just waiting and she's not thinking of what she's going to cook or she's not thinking what she's going to do. She's just thinking that she loves her bridegroom so much and she wants to be with him. That is how it must be with the true Christian.

So I'll tell you honestly that I'm not looking forward to go to heaven to find a comfortable place and freedom from pressure and problems and sicknesses. No. If you're looking for that like a lot of Christians are, you know a lot of people who are sick say, Lord take me away from here.

A lot of people have problems, Lord please take me away. I'm sick and tired of this world. See I don't think such people are really in love with Jesus Christ.

They are looking forward to heaven where life will be comfortable and easy. And the great danger of that is that even on earth we will choose a path of Christianity that is comfortable and easy which does not require too much sacrifice and self-denial. Because what we are looking forward to in heaven is comfort and ease and big mansion and gold and plenty of gold on the streets, plenty of money and also Jesus.

So people are looking to go to heaven for all those things and also Jesus will also be like that on earth. They say well thank God that we have so many things. We've got a good job.

I get a good salary. I got a good house and a lot of comfort and ease and also Jesus. Jesus is not primary.

Just search your heart and see if that is true what I'm saying or not. Think of a bridegroom is looking forward to the house that she's going to live in and how much money her husband's going to earn and not him himself. That's not a very healthy, it's not going to be a very healthy marriage.

And unfortunately a lot of marriages in India are like that. Because this is where when it says here in the next verse the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness. See when a person tries to deceive you with a counterfeit gold or counterfeit currency note, he has succeeded only if you think you're not deceived.

If you think you are deceived he has not succeeded. You say his effort was a failure. He tried to fool me but he couldn't.

But here it says Satan deceives people with his craftiness and don't imagine oh no no I'm not deceived. Maybe you're not but maybe you are and you don't realize it. And we need to check ourselves.

I mean if there's a lot of counterfeit currency going around in the city you'll be very careful about anything that you receive even in a shop. So it says here the way the devil deceives us is our mind is led astray from simple pure devotion to Jesus Christ. It gets taken up with some other thing not with evil things.

I mean if the devil gives you something evil, there are evil things the devil offers us like telling lies and stealing and lusting after women and all that. But there there's no deception. There's no deception there at all.

It's obvious. You see the devil asking you to do something which your conscience tells you is wrong. Where's the deception there? Zero.

It's when we are doing so many things which we know are absolutely right and we're zealous and it's just that we have cooled off in our devotion to Christ. And that can happen in a church after some years and it can happen to a Christian after some years. And so if we are not careful, if we don't keep checking ourselves that can happen to you.

Please remember this. And if you have lost that, say you've lost the most important thing in the Christian life. It is the most important thing.

The most important thing is not coming to church regularly. It's not even reading the Bible regularly. It's not praying always.

It's not witnessing. The most important thing in the Christian life, I hope I can impress this upon your heart strongly, is personal devotion to Christ every single day. And I believe it should increase in our life all the time.

It's like when a couple get married, as I said, if they're only looking forward to a comfortable life or looking forward to sex and things like that, it's not a good marriage. Any worldly marriage will be like that. A good Christian marriage is where they are devoted to Jesus and devoted to one another.

They love one another deeply. And I often ask married couples this question. Do you love each other today more than you did on the day you got married? If not, your marriage is going the wrong direction.

I don't care whether you had enough money to build a house and you earned enough to take care of your family. Those things are not the main thing. Do you love your wife more than you did on the day you married her? Do you love your husband more than you did on the day you married her? It's a very important question.

It's a way any married couple here can check up on your own life. Don't just be satisfied that we don't fight with each other. We don't quarrel with each other.

No, if your marriage is healthy, you really love one another because that's the main thing Jesus said should characterize a marriage. Apply that to our relationship with Christ. I go to church regularly.

It's not the important thing. I read the Bible regularly. No.

Is your personal devotion to Christ today more? Do you love to talk to him? Do you love to spend time with him? If you don't love to talk to your marriage partner, you don't love to spend time with him or her, it's pretty obvious you don't love them. You really long to talk to Jesus. Any waking moment, if you're free from other things, say, I want to spend some time with the Lord.

I love him. I want him to know that I love him. So when it says here that the devil led Eve astray in the Garden of Eden from devotion to Christ, I mean, Jesus was there in the second person of the Trinity, even there.

And in God's mind, he was already Jesus Christ. So that tree of life which the devil led Eve astray from represents devotion to Jesus Christ. So this is the one verse that interprets in the New Testament what the tree of life meant.

There you read it as tree of life and you don't know what it symbolizes. Here is the one verse in the New Testament that teaches us what it symbolizes. What the devil led Adam and Eve astray from was devotion

to Jesus Christ, which is the tree of life.

And that is the tree of life today. And if the devil succeeds in leading you away from devotion to Jesus Christ to anything else, that's the same mistake that Adam made in the Garden of Eden. Because when you think of a tree of knowledge of good and evil, have you ever thought of that? What is wrong in knowing good and evil? Doing evil, I understand is wrong.

But knowing good and evil, is there anything wrong in that? Why did God say to Adam, in the day you partake of this knowledge of good and evil, you will die. You need to understand that. When our children are small, they don't know what is good and evil.

They even put stones and mud in their mouth. They don't know what is good and what is evil. As they grow up, they begin to learn what is good and evil.

But that's not the most important thing that we want our children to learn. We want them to learn in a home anyway, love and submission to their parents. Not just what is good and what is evil.

Not just getting 100% in math and science. So in the same way, there's a lot of knowledge of good and evil, which can satisfy us. Knowledge of doctrine, for example.

I feel it is possible that many of us could be satisfied that we hear truth here, which people don't hear in many churches. I've met numerous people around the world, tell me, Brother Zach, we're so happy to be able to go to the internet and hear you and learn so many things. And I find that they don't join a local church there.

We have a local church there, but they don't want to come there. They're not interested in personal devotion to Christ. They're just interested in listening to good messages.

And I want to ask you, are you a person who just likes to listen to good messages that challenge you, particularly if it is an intellectually stimulating type of message? I think Paul may have been more intellectually stimulating than Peter. Peter was an unlearned fisherman. But they both love Jesus.

The knowledge of good and evil, the important thing is not even to be stirred by a message. The important thing in the Christian life is to be devoted to Jesus Christ. Never, never forget that.

And I'm never tired of emphasizing it. It's a thing in which I have tried to preserve myself all these years in the midst of all other ministry and writing and everything else I do. I say, Lord, all these things are useless if I don't preserve myself in a fervent love for you.

And if I'm not a worshipper, if I'm not taken up with you. A worshipper of Christ, we can say, is one who's taken up with Jesus. Nothing else interests him, not even his ministry, not even what he does, not what people think of him.

It means nothing. You know, when two lovers, husband and wife, really love each other, they don't really care what others think of them. Are you like that? Can you honestly say that you live before Jesus in such a way that the opinion of others in the church doesn't really bother you? Consider that seriously because when the Lord spoke to the elder in Ephesus, he said, you have fallen.

Listen to this, Revelation chapter 2. What all does he have? Verse 2 and 3. Deeds, toil, hard work, perseverance, cannot endure evil people, test the false teachers, expose them, persevere, endure for the

name of Jesus, not grown tired. And such a person is a fallen Christian. He's a backslider.

Who would ever call a person who has all the qualities in 2 and 3 as a backslider? I don't think you would consider yourself a backslider if you had the qualities of 2 and 3. With all your activity for the Lord, going here and doing there, some of you are going to different meetings and helping people and doing so much in this building. Yes, you could be a backslider. You could be a thorough backslider.

Fallen from the place where the Lord wants you to be and fallen so badly that the Lord says you've to repent. And if you don't repent, what is that? To come back to your first devotion to Christ, which I'm sure all of you had when you were first born again. Think of those days when you were not known, you were not respected, and you just loved the Lord because he had forgiven your sins.

But now so many activities have taken the place of that. And he says if you don't repent, the danger is he says I'll take away that anointing from your life. The moving of the Holy Spirit in your life will disappear.

And it has already happened to a number of people where the anointing of the Holy Spirit that makes everything fresh in their Christian life is gone. It's become a stale routine just like in many marriages where that fervent love they had for each other is gone. And now it's just a dull routine every day.

The husband and wife are bored to talk to each other etc. So that's number one danger. And we go to number two, which is the church in Pergamum.

The Lord says, yeah, once upon a time you had a verse 13, a faithful brother called Antipas, but he's died. But now you, the new elder in Pergamum, I have something against you. You have there who hold the teaching of Balaam.

Now there are a lot of things in the teaching of Balaam. It's mentioned here about idolatry. But the main thing we understand about Balaam from the Old Testament, and if people were there having this influence, they probably got it from the elder, was that this man was directed by money more than by the Lord.

You know, Jesus said in Luke 16, that early two masters, God and money. So when Balaam was invited, you read that in Numbers chapter 22 to 25, when the king Belak invited Balaam to come and curse Israel. Balaam, believe it or not, he was a man who was in touch with God.

In fact, there is a prophecy of a star rising from Jacob of the coming of Jesus Christ, which Balaam prophesied, believe it or not. Balaam prophesied about the coming of Christ. That's how much he was in touch with God.

And so he said, I've got to ask God whether I should come and curse Israel or not. And when he sought God, God said, no, don't go. And Belak, he was a clever guy, he says, I know how to win all these preachers.

Just give them a little more money and a little more honor, and they'll forget about their God. That's exactly what happened. That's what's happened to a lot of preachers today.

This man who was a powerful king told Balaam, I'll give you more money. I'll give you more honor. And then he says, in a pious language, let me pray about it again.

Pray about it again. You ask yourself sometimes when the Lord has spoken something to you, and then you find you're missing an opportunity to make a lot of money. You know what the Lord has spoken to you, and you say, hey, I think I better pray about it again.

Maybe I got my guidance wrong. If it was less money, you'd say, no, no, God's told me not to go there. But now it's different.

That's more money now. I'm not talking about a situation where God has said nothing to you, but where you felt clearly God was leading you in this direction. You know, when I was, when the Lord spoke to me to leave my job in May, I remember the day, 6th of May, 1964, the Lord spoke to me clearly from Isaiah 49, that I was a servant and I had to quit.

And I was on vacation that time. As soon as I went back to the naval base, and I wrote my letter of resignation the day I went, my senior officer said, hey, do you know that you've been selected by naval headquarters for the most prestigious course in the Navy that everybody wants to get? It was like the devil offering me all the riches of this world if I would bow down to him. I didn't even have to think about it.

I said, no, sir, I'm not going to accept it. And that chap said, you're crazy. So many people long to get this course, and here it's come to you in your lap, and you throw it away.

I said, Lord, the Lord Jesus has called me to serve him. That's it. You'll find sometimes that when the Lord has called you to something, like King Belak offered something to Balaam, something else comes up.

I'm not saying a higher salary is necessarily not God's will. I'm just saying, be careful, it may not be money, maybe something else, but God's shown you something. And then as you see something more attractive in this world, you choose that.

See, for example, I've seen people who are really growing in fellowship, and they've got a good job. They have more than enough for their needs. But there's a strange covetousness in them that makes them want to get more, to get more and more and not to survive, just to raise their standard of living.

And then they make their wives to work, and end result, children go astray. And 15 years later, they say, Brother, please pray for our children. They've all gone astray.

I've seen that happen in CFC, and in some other churches related to CFC. Or it could be something like that, where something else becomes more attractive. And you put a spiritual reason behind it, and you do it, and God is not fooled.

They, when they seek for a place, I realize that sometimes we may get a job in a place where there is no fellowship. I'm not saying that we should always look for a place where there's a good fellowship. But if you have an opportunity to go to a place where there's a good fellowship, with a slightly lesser salary, and another place where there's no fellowship, with a higher salary, which would you choose? It's a good question to ask yourself.

Remember Balaam? He had to pray again. And you know what God said to him? Go. And you ask, why does God say, go? And then get angry with him for going, and put an angel in the way to stop him.

Because if you keep on persisting, and asking God for something, He'll give it to you. He said, I can see that that's what you want. Go ahead.

Have it. Go your way. Because God does not force anyone to choose the narrow way.

Never, never, never. If He does not see in your heart an eager desire to choose His highest, to choose the best, He will not force you to go that way. Turn with me to a verse in Psalm 106.

You know the meaning of craving for something? C-R-A-V-E. Crave for something. It's more than asking.

It's a desperate desire for something. And it says in Psalm 106 and verse 14, in the wilderness, the Israelites craved for something God had not given them. He gave them manna.

They craved for meat. Give us meat. Manna was good enough to keep them healthy.

What did God do? They tempted God, it says. They put God to the test. Can you give us meat here in the wilderness, where there are no animals? He gave them their request.

But along with it, the margin of my Bible says, He sent a leanness, a thinness into their soul. Their soul wasted away. A wasting disease into their soul.

But He gave them their request. He said, you're more interested in your body than your soul. Okay, have it.

But your soul will suffer. And that's exactly what's happened to a number of people. I think of many people who've come through the years to CFC and been gripped for a while.

And then something attracted them. I know brothers who were tremendously gifted, and it's not here in Bangalore, but in some other CFC churches, were tremendously gifted. And they were going to be great brothers in the church and could have been a great blessing in their state to the other CFC churches.

But they wanted more money. And they found that with their preaching gift, they could make money in other churches. Whereas in CFC, you can't make any money with your preaching gift.

And so with some excuse or the other, they left. And then they joined some other Pentecostal type of church and go off making money in America and different places and then get a lot of money and build their own church building. And they want to still preach our messages to give the impression that they are still preaching the same thing.

God is not deceived. He's not deceived by any Balaam. He gives them their request.

But from that day onwards, a leanness, a sickness comes into their soul. Be careful that you don't get deceived by the doctrine of Balaam. The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, the Bible says.

Not having money. Having money is not a root of all sorts of evil. But loving money.

In fact, you see in the same chapter, both those things are mentioned together. Turn with me to 1 Timothy 6. 1 Timothy in chapter 6, we read verse 9. Those who long to get rich. Getting rich is not wrong.

But those who have great longing, I want to be more and more rich. Listen to God's word. The Holy Spirit says you'll fall into many temptations.

You'll fall into a snare. You'll fall into foolish and harmful desires. You'll fall into ruin and destruction.

Because, there's a reason. Because the love, not money. Money is not the root of all evil.

The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. And some by longing for it, not by having it, but by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. See what all dangers there are.

Verse 9 onwards. One temptation, snare, foolish desires, harmful desires, ruin, destruction, all sorts of evil, wandering away from the faith, pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Nine things mentioned in those two verses that can happen to a person who makes money his God, pursues it.

On the other hand, what should rich people do? Verse 17, same chapter, just a few verses later. Instruct those who are rich in this world not to give up all their wealth. No, no, no.

He doesn't say empty your bank account and give it, put it in the offering box. We never teach that and the Bible doesn't teach that either. Not to be proud, number one.

There's a great danger of rich people becoming proud, looking down on people who are poor, and sometimes giving money to poor people in a foolish way, by becoming like a benefactor. Here I am the rich man, you poor brother, sister, here is some money for you. The best way to give money to a poor brother or sister is by not allowing him to know that you gave it.

And that is why I've said, it's what the early church did. They put the money in the off, the mark for the poor, and the elders decided who was more needy and gave it. That way you get no credit, and those who are in need get the money.

Those early Christians were wise. They laid the money at the apostles' feet and the apostles distributed knowing who is more needy. Otherwise what happens is one poor person gets a lot because he makes everybody know that he's poor.

Another person who doesn't want to tell anybody he's poor doesn't get anything. It's always wise to let the elders decide such matters. If you know that somebody is poor, inform the elders so that they can help.

Don't be proud, that's one. Second, don't fix your hope on the uncertainty of riches. It's advice to rich people.

Many of you are rich. It was not like that when we started CFC. 42 years ago when we started CFC, nobody had a car.

Everybody came to the meetings on a bicycle or by bus. Everyone. I was the only one who had a scooter from my naval days.

That's all. But we had such wonderful fellowship. We didn't need money to make us happy.

When you open the offering box in those days, there'd be two rupees inside it. Fine. We didn't need more than that those days.

We loved one another. Have those spiritual values remained? I'm not saying that you shouldn't have a car or any such thing. Times have changed and we need many of these vehicles nowadays to be transported.

That's fine. All I say is don't let these external things take away your putting God first in your life. Don't fix your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but always fix your hope on God who will always richly supply you.

Not only what you need. I like this verse. He supplies you with things to enjoy.

Do you think God will ever tell you to have an ice cream? No, no. He can't. You say he can't do that because he doesn't want us to enjoy anything.

Absolute rubbish. I mean if he tells me not to have ice cream, that's because it's for my good at my age not to increase my cholesterol level. But you young people enjoy.

God's not a person who's trying to make your life miserable. That he always wants to give you the hardest job to do and make you go and live in the most difficult place and choose the house which is least convenient. That's a lie.

God is a loving father. He wants you to enjoy things but don't let those things destroy you. And then in addition instruct rich people to do good.

You have a lot of opportunity to do good and not just to be rich in money but to be rich in good works, to be generous, to be ready to share. That's what a rich person should do. So if any of you are rich, you want to know what to do, read verse 17 and 18.

There are clear instructions. It never says give up your money but it tells you what to do. And that's the Holy Spirit's instruction and if you follow it, it goes well with you.

Thus you will store up for yourself a great treasure for the future. Okay, that's so much for the doctrine of Balaam. Now the third one to the messenger in Thyatira, the Lord says in Revelation 3 18 onwards.

Again a lot of good things. Verse 19, I know your deeds, your love, your faith, your service, your perseverance, and your deeds of late are much more than in the beginning. You're more zealous and more wholehearted in doing things for the church and for the Lord than you were in the beginning.

And you say wonderful here's a wonderful brother or sister. No, hang on. But there's a spirit there and it's represented here by the name of a woman Jezebel who you know was the queen of Ahab led him astray from being devoted to God by all her scheming.

And it says here, it leads some of my bond servants to commit acts of adultery, immorality. That means with all these deeds and love, verse 19, and faith and service and perseverance and great zeal, these people began to slip up sexually. I've seen that happen.

I've seen pastors, I've seen myself, pastors with great zeal and all of a sudden they've fallen into adultery with different people in their congregation. There are actual cases like this in the United States more because there the men and women are more free with each other. It's very interesting that I noticed in America the men hug the women and they shake hands with the men.

Believe it or not, it's true. It's crazy. People come to hug my wife and she says we don't do that in India, thank you.

Some women come to hug me and I say hang on, I'm okay. No wonder there's so much immorality, it leads to adultery. And some pastors like to give a really tight hug if it's a sister.

This is the type of evil that goes on in Christendom. You don't, you got to see it to believe it. But there's a lot of zeal, tremendous power in preaching and perseverance and all that and big mega church, thousands of people, but immorality.

Now how does this apply to us? You can be very zealous in so many areas in your life, Christian areas, and yet you maybe have an impure way of thinking. You watch impure things on the computer and yet it doesn't reduce your zeal for the Lord and His work. It's a tremendous deception.

You think you can make up for that immorality in your thought life and private life by a lot of activity. No, you can't. The Lord says, verse 21, I give you time to repent.

The Lord always gives us time to repent. But I want to show you a verse in Genesis, in chapter 6, when there was a lot of sexual sin in the days of Noah. And the Bible says the last days will be like the days of Noah.

And so days of tremendous amount of sexual sin, people are very wealthy in the days of Noah. There was a lot of violence like we see nowadays. What a lot of violence and murder in the newspapers nowadays.

It was characteristic in the days of Noah that there was so much violence, violence, violence, violence. Genesis 6.11, the earth was filled with violence, corrupt in the sight of God. That means killing, murders, fighting, quarreling.

And on top of that, there was sexual sin. Verse 2, the sons of God saw the daughters of men, they're beautiful, took wives. And when the Lord saw that sexual sin and the violence, you know what He said? I gave you time to repent.

But, verse 3, this is the verse I wanted to show you. My Holy Spirit will not strive with you forever. There's going to be a limit.

They didn't realize that. Noah warned them, God's Spirit is not going to strive with you people forever. He's spoken to you again and again and again.

And Noah preached for 120 years. I mean, 120 years may appear a long time in our days, but remember those days people lived up to more than 900 years. So it was only about one-eighth of their lifetime, 120 years.

So in terms of today, it would be like 10 years, let's say. One-eighth of your lifetime. God's saying, I'll give you 10 years and then I'm going to come down in judgment.

Maybe for some of you, that 10 years is almost getting over. I will not strive with man forever. With the worldly person, God says, oh, let them go.

They can live in adultery. They can live stealing, murdering, whatever they like. But when you claim to be a child of God in the church and you play the fool with God by fooling around with sexual sin, privately being unfaithful to your wife or to your husband and fooling around and also indulging in thoughts which are impure, I want to say you're in danger.

Acts of immorality. I gave you time to repent. My spirit will not always strive with you.

You know, the best way to avoid sexual sin is to love Jesus. The second best way is to fear God's judgment. So if you don't choose the first way, choose the second way.

My Holy Spirit will not keep on striving with you. I've been patient with you for a long time. And then you remember in Noah's day, one day the rain began to fall and the door was locked and it was too late to repent.

Sexual sin is an area where God is taken very, very seriously. I was looking at a concordance one day to see where does the fear of God, where is the word fear of God mentioned first in the Bible. The first time God told a man, I know you fear me, was when God, Abraham, offered up Isaac on the altar.

That's a proof that I fear God, that I give up that which I love so much. I say, Lord, it's yours. I will not hold on to anything.

You're first in my life. You'll always be first. That's a mark of a man who fears God.

But the phrase fear of God comes two chapters before that. And it's very interesting to see where the phrase, the fear of God, comes and that's in Genesis chapter 20. Abraham uses it.

You know, he had gone to Abimelech. He'd gone to the territory of Abimelech, a king. And Abimelech, he wanted Sarah's, I mean, Abraham's wife was very attractive and good looking.

And Abimelech said, I want to have her. And Abraham said, oh, she's my sister. Oh, Abimelech, the king said, okay, then I can have her.

In my harem, I've got many women there, you can join her. But God spoke to him that night and said, you are a dead man, Genesis 20 verse 3, because you have taken the woman from, who is somebody else's wife. Remember in the Old Testament, even before the law was given to a heathen man, God says, you touch somebody else's wife, you're a dead man.

What do you think God would say today to some so-called believer who's married and who touches somebody else's wife or unmarried and touches somebody else's wife? You're doubly a dead man. And Abimelech says, God, please forgive me. That man said, he's my sister.

See, this man had a certain fear of God, that God could speak to an unbeliever when he touched somebody else's wife. If some of you have done something like that, did you hear God speaking to you? No. Abimelech, a heathen king, had more fear of God than you.

It shows how little fear of God there is among Christians. You don't fear God. But this man, God spoke to him.

And he said, Lord, in the innocence of my hands, I did it, verse 5. He says, where God says, listen to this, read these words, I know that in the integrity of your heart, you did this because you thought it was for his sister and you had a right to marry her. That is why I kept you from sinning against me. I did not allow you to touch her.

Why did God allow you to touch some other women? I'll tell you. Because God saw you did not have integrity in your heart. Whatever type of Christian or believer you claim to be.

To a heathen king, he said, I know in the integrity of your heart, you did this. That is why I, does Jesus keep us from falling? God kept Abimelech from sinning. That's amazing.

Because imagine he took this pretty woman and it was overnight and he didn't touch her one night. He only had a dream. God said, I did not allow you to touch her because I saw the integrity of your heart.

Brothers and sisters, value integrity in your heart, sincerity, uprightness, more than a lot of religious zeal. Now restore him, restore the woman to the man because he's a prophet. This is one place where Abraham is called a prophet.

Verse 7. And then when Abimelech called Abraham and said, why have you done this? Verse 9. How have I sinned that you brought on me such a great sin? Abimelech, why have you done it? And listen what Abraham says, I thought there is no fear of God in this place and they will kill me. That's where the word fear of God comes. Actually, Abimelech did have a fear of God.

But Abraham thought there's no fear of God. That's the first place in the Bible where fear of God comes. And I remember when studying that in a concordance the Lord showed me that the first place where the phrase fear of God comes in the Bible is in relation to sexual sin.

And that is why he allows people to be able to sin sexually in their thoughts or in their private life and nobody knows about it. Because he's testing them to see whether they fear him or not. That's why he allows that secret area of our mind or our thought life that nobody can know what you're thinking.

And all the time he's testing you to see whether you fear him or not. Or in private you have so much opportunity to sin when you're with a computer or you're some other woman in your office. And God is always testing the integrity of your heart, especially when you claim to be part of CFC.

That's the third area. Number four, to the church in Sardis, to the messenger of church in Sardis, he says the problem with this chap was his reputation. Verse one, the last part, you have a name that you're alive, but you're dead.

You have a name that you're alive. Don't many of you have a name? Haven't you acquired a name through the years in CFC? That you're a spiritually minded person, you're a zealous person, you're a person of integrity. Many of us have acquired a name in the church.

And many of you have acquired a name with other Christians when they hear, oh, you belong to CFC, is it? Great. CFC has acquired a name. We are no longer a little despised group meeting in some house in a corner with people coming and going.

Nobody's staying for too long. Really, we were a despised, ridiculed, persecuted group against whom they published tracts and wrote things and we were safe those days. We're in danger today.

You are in danger. When you have a name that you're alive. I recognize that I live in constant fear of that danger.

I'll tell you honestly, Lord, I don't want to pretend that I don't face any danger. I'm facing danger every day, but I'm going to be careful. I don't want to have a name and not have that inner devotion to Christ.

Be careful, my brother or sister. Don't glory that you belong to CFC, number one. Don't glory that you understand doctrines that other people don't know.

Don't glory in any of these things. Glory, glory in the fact that Jesus died for you. Paul says, I will not glory in anything except the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6.14. Because of that cross, if you don't know that verse, please turn there. Galatians 6.14. Very important verse, particularly when you begin to develop a reputation. May it never be, may it never be, Paul says, that I should boast.

You know, Paul had a lot of opportunity to boast, occasion to boast because he wrote scripture. He raised people from the dead. He healed the sick.

Even a handkerchief that touched his body would bring healing and cast out demons. And he planted churches and he wrote scripture. Boy, plenty of, and he was taken up to the third heaven, a vision.

A lot of opportunity to boast, but he says, I will never boast except that Jesus died on the cross for me. And through that cross, I have died to the world. And the world has died to me.

Paraphrase of that verse says, I now have as little interest in this world as a dead man has. I meditated much on that. Once a man is in a coffin and buried underground, how much interest does he have in this world? And Paul says, I have as little interest in the world and its wealth and honor and glory and pleasures as that man who's in the grave.

I say, Lord, make me like that. I want to be like that. If I have a goal, I have many goals, and here's one of them.

I want to be like that man in the grave who has as much interest in the glory and honor and wealth of this world as that man. Paul said, I like that. And he said, the world is also dead to me.

Not only I'm dead to the world, the world is buried. As far as I'm concerned, it's a dead thing. It's a stinking.

It's stinking. All foul smell is coming out of this dead thing called the world. It doesn't attract me anymore.

Be careful when you get a name. Be careful when you get a name in CFC that you're wholehearted and oh, that you're preaching well. Good to hear you, brother.

Be careful. Be careful. Put your face in the dust and say, Lord, I don't want to be anything.

I love that picture of John in Revelation chapter 1. It says he fell at the Lord's feet when he saw him like a dead man, Revelation 117. I saw him, and I fell at his feet as a dead man. And I've said that to myself.

If I really see Jesus in my heart, I will always fall like a dead man at his feet. That is how he keeps us from falling. Like you heard me say, if you're standing, you can fall.

If you're sitting on a chair, you can fall. But if you're already flat on the ground before the Lord, you cannot fall. That is how the Lord keeps us from falling.

Don't stand up. Don't sit up before the Lord, fall before his face, and always lie before his face as a worshiper who's taken up with him and not taken up with how well you can serve or how well you can preach or what a reputation you have in CFC or any of this garbage. Like I often say, put that in the trash can.

Forget it. Fall down before the Lord, and then you will not glory, and you won't have a name that you're alive. Don't give an impression to people about yourself, which is not true.

I'm not saying we should confess our sins in public, but we should not try to create an impression that we are more spiritual than we really are. Have a sober estimate of yourself, and don't try to talk the type of language that you want to give people the impression that you're very spiritual. You're not.

Just be sober in the way you speak. Don't try to get a name that you're alive. If God gives you a name, let him do that, but you keep your face in the dust.

Please listen to my advice, and I assure you, he will thank me in the day of judgment. He will rejoice in that day that you were preserved. And the last one, to the messenger of Laodicea.

His problem was, he says, basically in one sentence, middle of verse 17, I have need of nothing. I have need of nothing. I don't need to grow any more spiritually.

I'm rich. You're not like the old days when you're struggling. God has blessed me with wealth.

God has blessed you with wealth. Is that the greatest thing God did for you? Somebody asked me once, Brother Zach, what is the mark, what do you believe is the mark of God's blessing on your life? I said, I'll tell you honestly, and I say this before God. This is the mark of God's blessing in my life, that almost every day, he shows me some area in my life where I'm unchrist-like.

Some hidden area, usually of some selfishness or something like some hidden area, which is, you know, this selfishness like an onion. You can peel off a thousand layers of the onion, and there's still one underneath. That God shows me that.

It's like showing me a sickness, which I never knew I had. Don't you think you'll be very thankful to a doctor who shows you, after taking a scan of your body, a sickness that you did not even know how you had it, so that you can be cured of it before it gets worse and kills you? What if you went around thinking you're healthy, and one doctor told you, hey, you've got cancer. Won't you be thankful to that doctor that you can be cured of it? That is the greatest blessing I see in my life, that God shows me areas of my life that I'm not christ-like.

I say, Lord, I want to be christ-like there, and he'll show it to you if your passion is to be like Jesus Christ. Not just that you say that in the church, yeah, our goal is to be christ-like, but it's a passion. You know, a passion is like a person who wants to get the gold medal in the Olympic Games.

His passion is day and night. He denies himself, does so many things. Passion to win the gold medal.

If you have that type of passion to be christ-like, he will show you. That is the mark of God's blessing. Wealth is not the mark of God's blessing.

It's something he throws in like a bonus. You know the difference between a bonus and a salary. Nobody works in an office for bonus.

You work for a salary, and I want to say, wealth is not a salary. It's a bonus. What I want from the Lord is a revelation on myself, because he makes me a little more christ-like.

That's my salary. Earthly money, it's just a bonus. Some months you may not get a bonus.

It's okay. I get my salary. You can't complain if you don't get a bonus, but salary you deserve.

So I say, Lord, I want to be like Christ. That's my salary. Other things, health, and even health is not a salary.

It's part of the bonus God throws in, and he's given me a lot of these bonuses in health and wealth also, but that's not my salary. I never think of that as, oh, God has blessed me with health and wealth. No, he's blessed me by showing me where I can be a little more like Jesus Christ.

So never come to the place where I say, I need nothing because I'm rich and I'm wealthy. Verse 17, you don't know that you're miserable, poor, blind, and naked. You are lukewarm.

Verse 16, you're not hot or cold, and I feel that's really a charge that the Lord may have to say against number of us here. You're not cold. If you were cold, you wouldn't be coming here, but you're not on fire for God.

Once upon a time you were, but a lot of other things have come into your life and that fire is gone. You're not cold. You're not like those backsliders.

You're somewhere in between lukewarm. Cold coffee is good. Iced coffee is good.

Hot coffee is good, but lukewarm, most people say, no, I don't want this. Make it hot or ice cold. Either way, it's good.

It's like that. The Lord says, lukewarm, it's no use. He wants us to be on fire.

How many of you believe that God wants you to be either on fire for him or thoroughly worldly? Do you believe that? That's what he says here. He doesn't say, I want you to be a hot. No, read it.

Verse 16, you choose. You either be hot or cold. Don't be in between.

Be out and out worldly like all these other people and a lot of worldly Christians or be on fire for me, but you are neither here nor there, and I want to ask every one of you in Jesus name, does that charge apply to you? And the Lord says, you're not on fire for me, but you're not thoroughly worldly either. I wish you were worldly. Can you imagine Jesus saying to a child of God, not only a child of God, this guy was an elder in a church, to an elder born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues type of elder, I wish you were worldly, but because you don't make this choice and you're sort of halfway here and there, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth.

You're in me now, but you will not be in me after some time. I'll spit you out. I don't want to hear that.

I believe God doesn't just threaten us with empty threats. And I say, I'm not going to love Jesus just because I'm afraid he'll spit me out I just love Jesus so much that I want to be on fire for him all the time. In conclusion, do you feel the Lord reproved you today? If so, read verse 19, Revelation 3 19.

I reproved you because I love you. Boy, that melts my heart. I hope it melts yours, that if you heard his reproof today, it was a mark of his love.

If he's disciplining you, verse 19, it's a mark of his love. And the Lord says, turn around, turn around and come back to the life I want you to live, because I don't want you to waste your life on earth. To me, it's a

picture of a father telling his son who's in college far away, son, don't waste all the money I'm giving you.

I'm a rich father. I'm sending you money, but you're wasting it, wasting it. You're just going out for movies and restaurants and all that.

You're not taking your studies seriously. You're failing in most of your subjects. Son, please take your studies seriously.

That's what the Lord is telling you. Be zealous, therefore, and turn around and do the things that are most important for life on earth. Don't be taken up with all these other things which are cooling you in your devotion to Christ.

I love you, the Lord says. I love that last word. I mean, I'd feel condemned going away from here if I didn't hear that.

I don't want anybody here to go away feeling condemned. Listen to the word of the Lord. If you heard my reproof today, it is a proof of my love.

If you did not hear the Lord reproving you, perhaps you become deaf. I hope not. I hope you see the mark of God's love.

So turn around. He's ready to welcome you. Let's pray.

I want you to go away from here with the assurance of God's love, a love that reproves you and will discipline you so that you don't miss out on His best. Heavenly Father, please help us in all these areas where you've reprovved us to judge ourselves. We're part of the household of God.

We judge ourselves first. You want to live in that self-judgment and rejoice in you that you love us so much that you reprove us and discipline us so that we can have no regret in eternity. Help everyone here, Lord.

We believe you love everyone here, and that's why you have spoken words to each one, I believe. I pray that everyone will have ears to hear. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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