

Freedom From Discouragement And Condemnation

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding discouragement and self-condemnation in the new year. It highlights the need for Christians to focus on spiritual progress rather than worldly achievements, to understand the balance in the Christian life, and to seek transformation into the likeness of Christ. The key points include overcoming discouragement, understanding the ministry of transformation, avoiding self-condemnation, and fixing our eyes on Jesus for spiritual growth.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16, Romans 8:1, Hebrews 12:1, Galatians 5:24, Psalms 36:9, Romans 7:24, Luke 7:47, John 7:53, 2 Corinthians 3:18

Topics: "Overcoming Discouragement", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

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Transcript

As we look back over the last year, you know, we come to the beginning of the new year, we look back over the past and we look into the future. Now, if you're a worldly type of person, I hope none of you are like that, but let's talk about the people in the world. The thing that they'll get discouraged about in the last year is they didn't make enough money or they couldn't travel, the travel crazy people couldn't travel around the world, a lot of things like that.

But a true Christian, particularly if you're taking seriously what you hear in NCCF, it's possible for you to be discouraged that you didn't overcome certain sins, that you didn't make as much spiritual progress or you didn't read the word of God enough in the last year, spiritual reasons for being discouraged. And it's important that we understand, have a balanced understanding of the Christian life. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, where the apostle Paul also faced this, but did not yield to it.

He faced discouragement, but he did not yield to it. He was tempted to be discouraged, but he did not get discouraged. And the word he uses is in verse 1, we do not lose heart.

We do not lose heart is another way of saying we don't get discouraged. And he repeats it again in verse 16, we don't get discouraged. Now, when someone says, an apostle like that says it twice in one chapter, it must be that he was tempted to be discouraged, just like all of us are.

I remember in the early days of my Christian life, before I knew there was such a thing as sin shall not have dominion over you when you're under grace. Before I understood that, discouragement was my constant companion. Frequently, many times a day, sometimes for days on end, and particularly when we went through some bad patches in ministry and things like that.

So here is something that we must really ask God to help us overcome in this year permanently, even if it takes time. I think it is easier to overcome discouragement than to overcome certain other things like anger for some people, sexually dirty ways of thought, and love of money. Those are a little more difficult.

I mean, sometimes people think they've overcome the love of money, they haven't. Because love of money is like an onion with many, many layers. But discouragement is something we can overcome.

I'm telling you from my own experience. Completely. Finish with it.

Even if some of the other things you're struggling with take a little time. Let's finish with certain subjects like in school. You study certain subjects and say, well, I got through that, so that we can concentrate more on the difficult subjects.

So here, 2 Corinthians 4 verse 1 says, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, and I think you've been long enough in NCCF and the New Covenant groups to recognize that there is a difference between mercy and grace. Mercy is a word frequently used in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant. Frequently in the Psalms it says, His mercy endures forever.

His mercy endures forever. There's a Psalm which is full of that in every verse. Mercy refers to the past, our failures.

When we are asking God for mercy to forgive our sins. Jesus never needed mercy. Every human being needs mercy because we've all failed.

Grace refers to the future. Power to overcome sin today and tomorrow and the coming days. We still need mercy because when we slip up, we need mercy.

But here he says, as we have received mercy, we don't get discouraged. Not talking about grace here. Paul knew very well the difference between mercy and grace and he uses the word mercy.

So what is this ministry that he says? We have this ministry. One of the things that I have frequently pointed out to people is, it's unfortunate that some chapters close at the wrong place and break up the sequence of thought. So I would give you a little suggestion when you read the Bible.

When you come to the end of any chapter, please read into the next three or four verses of the next chapter. Because you may discover something. I've discovered that in numerous places in the Bible.

The people who translated the Bible were not necessarily, they were scholars and theologians perhaps, but not necessarily spiritual men. They knew Greek and Hebrew, but they probably didn't know the Lord as well as some of you do. So when it says this ministry, it must be referring to the previous verse.

So we go back to the previous verse, which is 2 Corinthians 3.18. And there we read, we don't read about ministry. When we think of ministry, we're thinking of serving the Lord, going out preaching the gospel, or perhaps preaching in NCCF, or witnessing to somebody, or even giving food to the poor, some ministry like that. But 2 Corinthians 3.18 is talking nothing about that type of ministry.

It's talking about becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, being transformed into the image of the Lord, from glory to glory, as we look at the Lord in a mirror. The mirror is the word of God, as we read in James chapter one. Whoever looks into the perfect law of the Lord is like looking into a mirror.

So as we look into the mirror with an unveiled face, unveiled means the veil that was there in the old covenant is removed. You know, the flesh has been crucified. You read in Hebrews 10.20, the veil is the flesh.

It's been crucified. That is not removed in the old covenant. That's why they couldn't go into the most holy place.

But now it's removed. We can see the glory of the Lord, of the Lord Jesus. God manifests in the flesh.

And seeing that glory, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, we are being transformed. And the very important phrase here, which will save us from losing heart or getting discouraged, is from one degree of glory to another. It's not a sudden thing.

It's from one degree of glory to another. You can express it in various ways. You can express it sometimes.

I say the flesh is like an onion. You peel off one layer, you haven't got to the center yet. Layer after layer, you peel off, or from one degree of glory, like going up a ladder, going up to heaven, becoming like Christ.

You know, more and more light on ourselves, various ways in which we can consider this, or like running a race in Hebrews chapter 12. We run the race, and we haven't reached the finishing line, but with every step, we're making some progress. We haven't become like Jesus, and we will not become like Jesus until we reach the finishing line.

So, discouragement often comes because I think I should have become like Jesus already. No. We don't faint because we have a ministry, as described here, that goes from one degree of glory to another.

And if you compare yourself with other believers around you, you will get discouraged, because you're not supposed to compare yourself with others. That's the other thing. That's also in that verse.

We are in a mirror, we see the glory of the Lord, and we compare ourselves with the glory of the Lord. You're not supposed to compare yourself with the spiritual level of another believer. That will discourage you.

You'll lose heart. Or, if you don't lose heart, you look at someone who's much worse than you, you'll feel proud. Both are evil.

To become proud that you're better than somebody else, you can look around at people in NCCF and be proud that you're better than them, or you can preach better than them, or some stupid thing like that, or you can get discouraged because you're not as good as them, or because somebody preaches better than you. These are the foolish things the devil puts into our mind to get us discouraged. And probably

that has happened to a number of you in the past year.

It must not happen this year. Because we are going to be transformed from one degree of glory to another, and if someone is way ahead of us, well, praise the Lord. I'm happy that he's running the race and he's gone ahead.

I can look at him as an example. And if somebody's behind us, we must be there to encourage him, not be proud that we are ahead of him. So there are things like this, that if we understand that spiritual growth is from one degree of glory to another, and this is a ministry.

Some of you who can't preach or don't have any opportunity to go much outside the home like mothers with small children, you say, I don't have a ministry. Please read these two verses. This is your ministry.

This is the ministry the Apostle Paul had. And this is the greatest ministry. Out of this, Paul's traveling, preaching, Apostle ministry all came.

And your ministry may be as a mother with small children. But this is the primary ministry. We have received this ministry of being transformed into the likeness of Christ more and more and more.

And that's what he goes on to say further in verse 16 of the same chapter, 2 Corinthians 4, 16. We don't get discouraged. I told you twice in the same chapter.

We don't get discouraged. We don't get discouraged. And this time it says, we don't get discouraged because our outer man is decaying.

You know, people get discouraged because they're getting sick. Outer man is decaying means you're getting old. Well, we're all getting old, but we're not to be discouraged.

I mean, I may have more weaknesses in my body at the age of 81 than all of you have, but I don't get discouraged. I tell you honestly, I don't. I just recognize that the outer man is decaying.

And that's a process that takes place whether you want it or not, whether you like it or not. It's the way God has ordained our human body. But beyond a certain age, we just start decaying.

Some people say from the age of 25 onwards, everybody's decaying. And we're decaying day by day. But we don't get discouraged with that.

Don't get discouraged with some limitation in your body. Don't get discouraged because you've got an allergy. Don't get discouraged because you've got some weakness that other believers around you don't have.

It's very easy to get discouraged because of some decay in the outer body. We must not be so taken up with, we must be healthy. We must eat healthy, have healthy practices.

We must do some exercise every day, all that walking or whatever it is. But we must not get discouraged by anything in our body that is limiting us in some way. Our outer man is decaying.

Okay. That's accepted. But we don't get discouraged because even though, even though it's decaying, you know, in the case of the apostle Paul, he had a thing which he called a thorn in the flesh, which it was, I believe it was some sort of sickness of his eyes, which my understanding is some sort of pus used to

come out of his eyes, which made him repulsive in the eyes of others.

And you can take time to look at that in Galatians chapter four, where he says, you did not reject me, even though I looked repulsive. And you were even willing to pull out your eyes and give them to me. That's how I know that his problem was his eyes.

And he called that a thorn in the flesh in second Corinthians 12. But he heard from the Lord, my grace is enough for you. Nevermind if people look down upon you because of this physical weakness that makes you a little repulsive in the eyes of others.

He must have prayed so much as he says in second Corinthians 12, Oh Lord, heal me. Why? I mean, when I stand up to preach and they see this thing dripping from my eyes, I got to keep wiping it. What do they think? It'll hinder your ministry.

And they say, Lord, and the Lord said, no, it'll just humble you. That's all. You're having such a mighty ministry.

You're raising the dead. You've gone up to the third heaven. You're in great danger of pride, Paul.

And I need to give you something like this to humble you. And those are, and people who have a much larger ministry than you have, God will give them something in their life to humble them. He does that because he loves them so much and he wants to keep on giving them grace.

And I'll tell you this, the mightier your ministry is, the more you probably need some humbling experience like a thorn in the flesh. Paul experienced that. And that part of what he says is my outer man is decaying.

It sort of doesn't seem to be getting better. And, um, but I'm not discouraged. And the reason he doesn't get discouraged is he says, I couldn't care less for this outer man.

I tried my best to take care of my eyes and my body, but there's a limit to how much we can do. And all of us, you know, those of you who've got any type of physical limitation or weakness, you know, that there's a limit with the best doctors and the best medicine and the best treatment. There's still a limit to how much you can do to preserve yourself in health.

You can follow all the rules of eating and everything else. Still, the outer man will decay, but don't get discouraged. Provided, provided, and this is very important, that you are making sure your inner man, verse 16, is being renewed.

That means the same thing we saw in chapter 3, verse 18, becoming more like Christ. The only type of renewal, which is worth talking about, is becoming more like Christ, not more Bible knowledge. The Pharisees had more Bible knowledge, I believe, than any of us have.

They could have beaten us in any Bible knowledge quiz. They knew it. Bible trivia, Pharisees would come first.

But it did not transform them. Bible knowledge doesn't make a person spiritual. You know who's the person who's got the maximum Bible knowledge who can pick out a verse like that? The devil.

He could pick out verses even to tell Jesus. But that's the clearest proof that Bible knowledge does not make spiritual. Two examples, the Pharisees and Satan.

And there are other apostles who show us that they don't know the scripture so well. You know, I think of a verse in Hebrews where the writer says, someone somewhere says. He doesn't know the exact reference in chapter one.

I like that. I know the reference where he says, someone somewhere says. But he was so inspired by the Holy Spirit to write scripture.

So don't think Bible knowledge makes a person spiritual. It's obedience to scripture that makes a person spiritual. So when the inner man being renewed day by day is not just more Bible knowledge.

Thank God for memorizing Bible verses. That's good. But memorizing doesn't make you spiritual unless you apply it.

The reason we memorize Bible verses is so that sometime, you know, when we are in need, that verse can come back to our mind and that's how I believe verses came to Jesus mind when he was tempted by the devil. Jesus could immediately quote a verse because he had memorized it when he was a child. So our inner man is being renewed and that is why we don't get discouraged.

And there again, we can get discouraged because we feel our inner man is not as renewed as we want to be. We'd like to be more spiritual. Which sincere Christian does not like to be more spiritual? I want to be more spiritual than I am today.

I'll tell you honestly, I'd like to know the Lord much more. I would like to know the will of the Lord clearly. Many times my prayer is Lord, I'm willing to do anything you tell me, but I don't seem to clearly understand what you're saying.

Even now, I was very encouraged, you know, in my younger days, sometimes I got a clear verse from scripture that would guide me. Even concerning my travel, which day I should travel, I'd get a word from scripture. Or some particular situation, I'd get a word from scripture.

But I find that so rare nowadays. Then some time ago, I read the testimony of a man called Hudson Taylor. He was a great English missionary to China in the 19th century.

And he said in his testimony that when he was a young Christian, he seemed to be getting clear guidance from the Lord about many things. But as he grew older, he looked as if he was moving in a fog. He couldn't see clearly.

That encouraged me. I said, that's the mark of spiritual growth, that you don't hear the Lord speaking so clearly as you did when you were younger. And then I thought of that, you know, I like to think of the Bible in terms of illustrations, because that's how Jesus spoke.

And so whenever I think of a thought, I say, can I think of an illustration that helps me? And here's the illustration that helped me. When a child is two or three years old, you tell him every single thing he needs to know. Brush your teeth, go and have a shower, change your clothes, put your dirty clothes away, and stop playing in the mud, and don't take that sharp knife.

Every little thing you have to tell him because he's small, three years old. But when he's 20 years old, you don't tell him brush your teeth, don't play with a knife. In fact, you tell children less and less as they grow up.

That's how God says less and less to us as we grow up. It's a mark of spiritual growth. It's not that we don't receive God's word every day.

We live. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I used to misread that verse in my younger days as if it meant, this is Matthew 4.4, which Jesus quoted to the devil, as if it meant I must hear God something new every day.

Well, in the early days of my Christian life, when I hardly knew the Bible at all, I did discover something new every day because everything in the Bible was new. But over six, seven years, I got so thoroughly, I mean, I knew the Bible so thoroughly that as time has gone on now, I've been a believer for 61 years. I don't hear something new.

Then I, when I went back to that verse, I discovered that the Lord did not say I must hear something new every day. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In other words, I have to live by the words that have proceeded from God's mouth to me, whether yesterday or today or last week or last year, words that have come to me from scripture, I want to live by that every day.

So I don't necessarily have to something new today, which I never heard before, because to tell you honestly, I don't hear something new every day, which I don't know before. But sometimes it's a reminder of what the Lord has told me before. I remember when I was a very young person, he's a new Christian.

One of the first words the Lord spoke to my heart was from Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and Martha being busy serving, because I was, as a very young Christian, I was very active in evangelism, getting out tracks in the train and the buses I traveled with. I always have tracks in my pocket and would stand on the streets and preach ministry, ministry, evangelism mostly. But then as I grew older, I found hardly anybody got converted and I discovered that I need to hear God more and more and more.

And the first words God spoke to me is, Martha, Martha, you're worried about so much ministry, cooking, doing this for me. Mary has chosen the good part to sit at my feet and listen to my word, Luke 10 42. That's important.

That's the one thing that's needful. That's one of the first words the Lord spoke to me early in my Christian life, that listening to him at his feet was more important than ministry, even evangelism. It helped me a lot.

And I remember many years later, I think about 25 years after that, one of my birthdays, I was saying, Lord, can you give me a word for my birthday? And the Lord said the same thing I told you 25 years ago. One thing is needful, sit at my feet and hear my word. It was a repetition, but it was a word from the Lord.

So very often the Lord has to tell us again and again. So if we respond to that, we will be renewed day by day. Now, the other thing I got encouraged from 2 Corinthians 4 16 is, you know, in school, our children get promoted once a year.

They go from second grade to third grade or third grade to fourth grade is once a year. And we say at the end of the year, like 2020 is over now, have a spiritual checkup. Have you made some progress from where you were in the beginning of 2020? Have you made some progress? We have a checkup on our life every year, which is excellent.

Is your relationship with your wife better, your husband better than it was one year ago? Have you overcome anger in your home better than it was a year ago? Maybe not perfect in 2020, should be more perfect in 2021. Are you serious about it? Is it a little better? Don't get discouraged because, oh, I did lose my temper there. But was it less? Once a year checkup.

Now see where Paul reached. Paul reached a standard in 2 Corinthians 4:16 where he says, I make progress not once a year. I get a promotion every day.

Wow. What sort of transformation that is, that Paul could say, I'm a little more Christ-like today than I was yesterday. Now don't say that lightly because your wife may not agree and your husband may not agree.

But here's a goal. Lord, I want to make progress every single day of my life. And it takes me a long time to get there.

I want to experience a little bit of what Paul says. My inner man is being renewed every day. Don't get discouraged because it didn't happen as quickly as you want.

Maybe your progress is once a year, praise the Lord. Try and make it once in 360 days in future or once in 11 months and gradually say, Lord, I want to make more and more progress sooner. And one way to do that is if we judge ourselves.

We spend so much time judging other people. Let's spend a little more time in 2021 judging ourselves, saying, Lord, no need to judge your wife or your husband so much. Judge yourself.

You can get somewhere near what Paul says. We've been renewed day by day. Even if you don't get to day by day overnight, at least there's a progress over a period of six months or a period of three months, that some sins are gradually disappearing from your life.

But work on it and don't get discouraged. Discouragement is like putting your foot on the brakes. Then no matter how much you press, the accelerator is going to screech and you're not going to make much progress.

Discouragement is putting your foot on the brakes. Take your foot off the brakes. And even if your progress is slow, let there be progress.

Please remember this. We do not lose heart. This is very, very important for us to keep in mind.

And how is this possible? Come back to 2 Corinthians 3:18. We all see the glory of the Lord in the mirror, which is the word of God. So when you go to the scriptures, if you want to make spiritual progress, you don't want to get discouraged. If you have this ministry, this ministry of being transformed into the likeness of Christ, mentioned in verse 2 Corinthians 3:18, from glory to glory, glory.

It's not sudden. Like I said, the race, you've got to keep running. It's a marathon race.

It's by looking into God's word and seeing the glory of the Lord. Now I tell you, this requires a discipline in our life. Because when we read the word of God, very often, I know from my own experience, I'm looking for clever thoughts.

That was in the early days anyway. And if I get a clever thought from some verse and comparing this verse with that verse and the other three verses combined together, I say, wow, I've got a message here.

I'm not being transformed.

I just got a message to share in some meeting and get some honor. That's not what he's talking about. When I look into the word of God, I must long to see the glory of Jesus.

Make that your pursuit in this year. To say, Lord, as I look into the word of God, I want to see the glory of my Lord more and more. We behold, as in a mirror of God's word, the glory of the Lord.

And if you see the glory of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, it says here, the Lord, the Spirit will change you from glory to glory. That's his job. You know that the Christian life is a cooperation.

Take my yoke upon you, Jesus said. That is, one end of the yoke is on his neck and the other end is on mine. It's the Holy Spirit who leads us in step by step to the Lord.

And as we look into God's word, and you're determined to see the glory of Jesus as you read God's word, the Holy Spirit will almost unconsciously, as you're gripped by that glory that you saw in Jesus, transform you into that likeness. You know, there are many, many places like that where we can see the glory of Jesus in scripture, particularly in the Gospels. Don't just look for the stories in the Gospels, but beyond the stories in the Gospels, look for the glory of Jesus.

You know, sometimes we can miss it. I'll give you two examples, which I'll often quote it. Many of you may have heard me.

Let me repeat it for the benefit of those who haven't heard. In Matthew chapter 12, one example of seeing the glory of Jesus in scripture. When you fulfill a ministry and people are jealous and say you're seeking honor or something like that, when you are not seeking honor, it says here in Matthew 12 that Jesus cast out a demon, verse 22, and the man who was blind and mute was healed immediately.

He spoke and he saw. It's a rare case of a man who was blind and dumb and immediately healed of both. And all the crowds were so excited and said, this is the son of David.

And whenever people appreciate your ministry, you can be sure that certain people are going to be jealous of you because some people are appreciating you. Others are jealous because they don't have your gift. Well, these people, the Pharisees didn't have Jesus' gift and they got jealous instead of being excited that somebody was blessed.

They said, no, this man, verse 24, Matthew 12, 24, is casting out demons by Beelzebul, another name for Satan, the ruler of demons. I mean, it's a terrible thing to call Jesus the ruler of demons. The Pharisees knew the scriptures better than anybody in Israel.

But what they saw in the scriptures, it says, Jesus once opened the same scriptures on the road to Emmaus, and it says in every book of the Bible, he showed those two disciples walking to Emmaus, things concerning himself. Here you see the Messiah, the Christ, in the seed of the woman, Genesis 3. Here you see the Messiah in the lamb slain in Exodus, all the way to Malachi. There, he could see Jesus.

He pointed out Jesus in every one of those 39 books. But what the Pharisees saw was, this Jesus is not the one spoken of in the Old Testament. This is the prince of demons.

You see how blind you can be? Now, when you compare with when Miriam, Moses' sister, criticized Moses for a simple thing like, why did you marry a non-Israelite woman? Just that question. You know

what Miriam got? Leprosy. Just for criticizing a woman, criticizing her brother, saying, why did you marry a non-Israeli? Now, compared to that, what should the Pharisees have got for calling Jesus the prince of demons? Much more than leprosy.

But you know what they got? I'll tell you what they got. Turn to verse 31 and 32. Matthew 12, 31, 32.

They got forgiveness. Not leprosy. When young men criticized Elisha for his bald head, some bears came and ate them up.

It was not leprosy, it was not bears, but forgiveness. Then I see the glory of Jesus that blessed me so much that I said, Lord, whatever people may say about me behind my back to my face, I must always be ready to forgive. I've seen the glory of Jesus in an immediate forgiveness.

And not just that, please read scripture carefully. Matthew 12, this is what blessed me. Matthew 12, verse 31 and 32, 32 especially.

Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. Now, he was not just telling the Pharisees, you are forgiven. I believe that verse refers to 2,000 years.

Let me paraphrase verse 32. For the next 2,000 years, anyone who speaks a word against me is forgiven. Advanced forgiveness.

Have you ever heard of advanced forgiveness? It's blessed me, because it's shown me the glory of Jesus, this thing called advanced forgiveness. You've probably never heard it before. But it's helped me because, you know, sometimes somebody tells me, hey, Brother Zach, do you know those fellows said something about you over there? I say, I'm forgiving them straight away.

I don't know what they said. I don't know where they said it, but I'm forgiving them before they come and see me. Advanced forgiveness.

Or, Brother Zach, do you know those people wrote something about you, that you're a heretic and things like that? I'm forgiving them. I say, Lord, I forgive them. Get into the habit this year of advanced forgiveness.

See the glory of Jesus as an example. You will not get discouraged. Your life will be so exciting as you see more and more of the glory of Jesus in different places.

Let me show you another passage. John chapter 7, where Jesus went to Jerusalem. This is another thing I've mentioned many times.

Jesus went to Jerusalem and there in the temple, he lived in Capernaum after the age of 30. Before 30, he was in Nazareth. From Capernaum to Galilee is about a three-day journey.

So he was not at home. He was in a strange town, Jerusalem, where he didn't have a home. And he was preaching in the temple, and it says so many people were excited.

They said in John 7, this is certainly the prophet. Imagine, they were so blessed by his words, which he spoke about being filled with the spirit in the previous verses, John 7, 27 to 39, and they said, this is the prophet. But the interesting thing is, when it says here in verse 53, everybody went to his own home.

And again, don't stop at the end of the chapter, go to the next verse. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now just think about it.

I meditate on that. Do you think if somebody there had told the Lord, Lord, I'd like you to come and stay with me tonight. You think Jesus said, no, I won't come to you.

I cannot imagine that. He would have gone there and he'd have blessed that home, just like in Emmaus, when they asked him to come into their home, he went. And if somebody had asked Jesus to come to his home that night, he would have gone.

But not a single person thought that this man has come from out of town. He's not living in Jerusalem. Where is he going to stay tonight? They were all blessed by the message.

They never thought about where he's going to stay tonight. So Jesus went and slept under the trees in the Mount of Olives. And the next morning, verse 2, he came into the temple, John 8, verse 2. And all the people again come to listen to this wonderful prophet speaking.

And he did not say like some preachers would have said, well, last night as I was sleeping under the trees in the Mount of Olives, just a little hint, you know, none of you invited me home. None of all that. I learned something from that of the glory of Jesus.

Don't ever say things as a hint for people to realize how they did not care for you. No. Die.

Die to yourself. What a wonderful example. I'm just giving you two examples of how you can see the glory of Jesus that can come into your life.

Maybe your husband or wife was a bit thoughtless about something. Please don't remind him or her. Die.

Dead men don't get offended by something not done for them. It's a wonderful life. We are transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

And I pray this will be more and more true this year in your life. We do not get discouraged. The other problem we can have is that we can condemn ourselves.

You turn to Romans chapter 7, Romans chapter 8, sorry, Romans 8, verse 1. Therefore, there is now no condemnation. So far, we were talking about discouragement. The other habit that many people have, sincere Christians, is to condemn themselves for something.

Oh, oh, rotten I am. I shouldn't have done that. And yeah, you shouldn't have done that.

But don't just say you're good for nothing. Don't condemn yourself because that self-condemnation is as bad as discouragement. It will prevent your growth.

And it says in Romans 8, 1, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Zero. Do you believe that? That you're never supposed to feel condemned, convicted? Yes.

Some little thing the Lord tells you, you're convicted and you go and set it right. You ask somebody's forgiveness or you set the matter right. Your conscience is clear, but no condemnation.

No self-condemnation. Again, ignore the chapter division. Why? It's written therefore.

And like the old saying goes, whenever you see the word therefore anywhere, see what it is there for. Why is it therefore there? The previous verse. Thanks be to God.

He's saying, first of all, Romans 7, 24. Oh, wretched man that I am. I want to do what is right.

Verse 23. But I find another law in my members. And we all know this experience.

The law reading my mind says, I want to follow Jesus exactly. But there's a law in my members, in my flesh, the law of sin. Fighting with the law in my mind and preventing me sometimes from doing what I should be doing.

And Paul says, oh, wretched man that I am. When will I be free of this? This body of this death. When will I be free? I want to be like Jesus, but something pulls me down.

And he says, thanks be to God. There's hope for me. Jesus Christ is going to deliver me completely from the flesh.

So then, what does he say? It seems to be such a contrast. That next sentence in verse 25, many people can't even understand it. On one hand, he says, praise the Lord.

Who will deliver me? Verse 24. Praise the Lord. Jesus Christ is going to deliver me.

Thanks be to God. But the next sentence seems to be the exact opposite. So then, on the one hand, with my mind, I serve the law of God.

But with my flesh, the law of sin. Therefore, hey, Paul, what does that mean? Therefore, you're serving the law of sin with your body. But with your mind, you serve the law of God.

But there's no condemnation. This is what we need to understand. See, we get self-condemnation because we say, why in the world did I do that? I have such a high opinion about my spirituality that I think I would never do such a thing.

I'd never think such a thought. But Paul says, let me paraphrase it. However spiritual you may be, until the day you become completely like Jesus when he comes back, there will be a law of sin in your flesh that will keep on pulling you down.

Like the law of gravity. But because we are being pulled down by the law of gravity all the time, does not mean that you have to stumble and fall all the time. When we walk on the road, we don't keep on stumbling and falling.

We walk without falling. Occasionally, you may trip over a stone or something and stumble and fall, but that's rare. Children, of course, fall more frequently.

So, but the law of sin, the law of gravity is always working, trying to pull us down. We can trip anywhere. We can break a bone.

But because of that, it doesn't mean that we have to keep falling all the time. And I don't have... The point he's saying is, just because there is a law of sin that is continuously working in you, the flesh, does not mean you have to feel condemned. Don't feel condemned because you just slipped up there.

Confess it. Get the blood of Jesus to cleanse you and move on. Don't sit there and condemn yourself.

This is another thing that I used to keep doing in my younger days before I got light on this. The connection between Romans 7.25 and Romans 8.1. There is a law of sin in my members. I can't do anything about it.

Till Jesus comes, I will have this wretched flesh. God could have removed it, but he didn't. But with my mind, I'm determined.

I think most of you anyway would be saying with your mind, you only want to serve the law of God. Recognize there's a law of sin in your flesh. But don't allow that to condemn you.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ because we walk, verse 4, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. We do not walk according to the flesh. That means my conscious mind, I'm seeking to stay away from sin.

And if that is true, and I think that's true with most of you, I would say you need not live in self-condemnation. You slip up, what should we do? Immediately confess it. Get our conscience clear with the blood of Christ.

It does not take long for the blood of Christ to cleanse us. It's immediate. As soon as you confess, you're cleansed.

And the Lord says in Hebrews 8, 12, I will not remember your sins anymore. That's immediate. I don't keep trying to remember the foolish things we did to condemn us.

You can remember the foolish things to recognize how much God has forgiven you. That's good to know how much God has forgiven you because that will help you to be merciful to other people when they slip up, when you realize how much you've been forgiven. You know, Jesus said about the woman who was anointing his feet, he who is forgiven much loves much.

At the end of Luke chapter 7. So, awareness of how much we've been forgiven helps us to love the Lord more. It certainly has helped me. You know, how much God's forgiven me, I must love the Lord more.

But never to condemn us, never to sit remembering, oh, I did this, I did this. Of course, there are many things we did in our past life. We wish we had not done.

Which of us has not done foolish things? Foolish, stupid things. We've all done it. But don't condemn yourself.

It will prevent your spiritual growth. Don't get discouraged by things that happen and don't condemn yourself. There is no condemnation for those who untrust Jesus.

So, the secret of everything is like it says in Hebrews chapter 12. Let us run the race looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Turn to Hebrews 12.

Verse 1 and 2. Take verse 2. Fixing our... Last part of verse 1. Let us run with endurance of patience the race that is set before us. You really need patience to run this race. It's a race.

It's like a marathon race. And we should try to make a little progress every day. Don't measure your progress because that will discourage you.

If you have children and you measure their height every day, you really get discouraged. You say, my child is not growing. Which parent measures the height of their child every day to see if the child is growing? It is stupid.

For a period of time, you see the child grows. Just leave it in the Lord's hands. So, don't try to measure your spiritual progress every day.

But run this race. Make sure that your attitude to the flesh is fixed. Galatians 5.24. Those who are Christ's, their attitude to the flesh is crucified.

Finished only once for all. But I need to apply that every day. And I run with endurance, patience, the race that is set before me, fixing my eyes on Jesus who endured the cross for the joy set before him.

And he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And I'm supposed to follow him to his throne. You know that Jesus said he overcomes, would sit with me on my throne.

So, just like I sat with my father on his throne, he says. So, this is a very real truth. He has sat down with his father on his throne.

And he tells me to overcome and follow him. And I will sit one day with him on his throne. This is my goal.

And the only way there is by enduring the cross. The cross which he himself bore every day. Of putting the flesh to death.

Of saying no to his own will every day. So, that is a race that we have before us in this coming year. We need the power of the Holy Spirit.

Back to 2 Corinthians 3.18. Let's conclude there. 2 Corinthians 3.18. Without any veil in our face now, we look at the glory of Jesus in the word of God. And the Holy Spirit, if we don't transform ourselves, we cannot do that.

Any transformation you make of yourself will be a human holiness which is fit for the trash can. The Holy Spirit will transform you into genuine Christ-likeness. And I'll tell you this one thing.

Please remember this. You will not be aware of it. It's other people who will see Christ in you more than you yourself.

If you keep thinking that you're becoming more Christ-like, you're going to probably deceive yourself. Your job is to be open to see the glory of Jesus and say, Holy Spirit of God, fill me. Show me any area in my life that's not yielded to you.

And convict me anywhere I'm wrong. Let me set it right. I'll ask forgiveness from anybody.

I'll set everything right immediately. Free me from the love of money. Free me from impure thoughts.

Free me from carelessness in my way of life. Free me from an undisciplined way of life. Help me, Lord.

Show me little by little. I don't expect the whole onion to be peeled off in a moment, but at least layer by layer. I want to judge myself every single day.

That's something you can do. God is my witness for many years now. I have judged myself every single day.

I judge myself after I preach a sermon. You can be pretty sure I'm going to judge myself after I preach this sermon. I judge myself every single day as you say, Lord, not looking inward.

No, if I look inward, I'll get depressed. I look at the glory of Jesus. And in the light of Jesus, I see where I've come short.

That's the best way to do it. We must see what we are convicted of, but we don't look inside first. We look at Jesus.

Looking at him, we are convicted. In his light, we see light. You read that, I think it's in Psalm 36 verse 9. Lord, in thy light, we see light.

Don't try to see light without his light. In thy light, we see light. That's what I seek to live by.

We see the glory of the Lord. That's the best way to be convicted of sin. Not by looking in and examining ourselves.

We judge ourselves when we get light from his light. And thus the Holy Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another. So I have a little picture here.

No entry roads. Can you see this? Two no entry roads for the new year. Discouragement.

Self-condemnation. Just like you obey the no entry roads when you drive a car. Follow this no entry signs throughout this year.

These are the rules of heaven. The traffic rules of heaven. No entry into these two streets.

God bless you all.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/g5O-tVT9bwE.mp4>

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