

God Is a Good Father - 3. a Father Who Rebukes and Disciplines Us

by Zac Poonen

God is a loving Father who welcomes us, provides for our needs, and rebukes and disciplines us, calling us to take up the cross and endure the shame of following Jesus.

Duration: 1:02:05

Scripture: Psalm 141:5, Mark 14:4-5, John 6:67-68, John 12:3-8, Philippians 3:7-8, Hebrews 12:5-11

Topics: "Divine Discipline", "Godly Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of receiving God's discipline and rebuke as a means to partake in His holiness. It contrasts self-manufactured holiness, which can lead to pride, with God's holiness, which is marked by humility. The examples of Mary anointing Jesus and Peter's response to rebuke are highlighted to illustrate the difference between a humble heart and a proud heart in response to correction and discipline.

Transcript

During two Sundays in this month, we considered two aspects of God as a loving father. We saw him first of all as a father who welcomes lost sinners, rebellious, backslidden children when they come back. And that is the first way we know him.

And we should be very thankful that he receives us so freely and with wide open arms and doesn't put us in the servant's quarters to test us out even for a day, but takes us straight to his banqueting table, you know, just believing that we're sincere. You know, as human beings, we would find it very difficult to trust somebody who's cheated us. We're not sure whether he's really turned around.

And it's one of the beautiful parts of that story of the prodigal son is that he really came back for food. He didn't come back because he felt so sorry that he had dishonored his father's name. He was hungry and the father welcomed him.

That's a great truth in scripture that if you're coming to Jesus just for food, he'll still welcome you. If you're coming to him only for physical healing, he'll welcome you. If you're coming to him because all you want is a job, he'll welcome you.

Or all you want is a house, or you want some problem solved, he'll welcome you. But it's pathetic. You know, after you come to him, that's all you're interested in.

Then it's pathetic. To come initially like that is okay. But if you went and saw that prodigal son one year later and say, why are you here? He wouldn't have said because I get food.

He says, boy, I've experienced my dad's love. And I never want to go away, not because of the food. I couldn't care less for the food now.

So when we initially come to the Lord, we come with a very selfish motive, maybe to escape hell. Will the Lord accept you? Sure. You can come to the Lord with any motive under the sun, he'll accept you.

And usually it's a very selfish motive with all of us. If you don't, if you haven't recognized that, it means you have not grown. One mark of spiritual growth, let me tell you, is that we recognize our total selfishness and discover that in our flesh there is nothing good.

If you haven't discovered that, ask the Lord to take you out of the kindergarten to a higher class, because then you discover your selfishness. If you haven't discovered that you came to the Lord with a selfish motive yet, ask the Lord to show it to you and take you out of the kindergarten to put you into the first standard at least. That prodigal son would have discovered it as soon as he sat at the table.

He would have been so overwhelmed with the father's love that he said, boy, I didn't know my dad was this good. Well, even though I came here for food, I'm not staying here for food. I'm staying here because I love my dad and I'll never go away.

And then secondly, we saw another Sunday that as a father he provides for us. If earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, he gives more than that to God. A father gives us much more, and that's another truth we can greatly rejoice in, that God provides our need, earthly needs, food, clothing, shelter, healing.

But there again, we can still be very selfish and not realize it, because you know everybody likes to come to a God who provides our needs. And those of you who've been here in CFC through many years, you know we have never preached the prosperity gospel here. We have never preached that Jesus comes to make you healthy or wealthy, because as I've often said, if you look around the world, the richest people in the world are not believers.

They are people of other non-Christian religions. So their so-called God has also made them wealthy. So that can't be the gospel, because that is the gospel.

We have to say Jesus doesn't score as much as some of these other gods. That is the clearest proof that this wealth gospel is a deception. And the healthiest people in the world are also not believers.

A lot of believers are sick. And there are a lot of people in non-Christian religions who live to 100, 120. So if health is what God gives, then some of these other gods seem to be doing a better job.

And that is the clearest proof that healing and health is also not the gospel. But it's amazing how people can see this so clearly all around the world and still be blind about it. But God does provide our need, and I believe He provides healing where He feels that is the best thing to do.

But God is a God who provides our needs. He's a Father who provides. But when we think of these two aspects of God, He's a Father who welcomes broken people.

He doesn't break the bruised reed. He doesn't quench the, you know, dying wick. And He welcomes and provides all our needs.

All these things can delight us so much, and we don't even realize that our delight is because we are self-centered. But there's another thing the Bible says, the New Testament says, you know, Jesus tells us in Revelation 3, 19, that one mark of His love is this. Revelation 3, Jesus is the one who told us about the Father welcoming the prodigal son.

Jesus is the one who told us about the Father providing our need. And here's the third aspect of the Father's love that He disciplines us, rebukes and disciplines us. Revelation 3, 19, those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

The first, we saw that those whom the Father loves, He welcomes, like the prodigal son. And second, we saw those whom He loves, He provides all their needs, earthly needs. And we can so rejoice when we hear those things.

How about rejoicing when you hear this? Those whom I love, I rebuke and I discipline. That is an aspect of God's love, which a lot of believers don't want to know, and they don't know. And if you were to ask me what is the single reason why many, many believers do not grow spiritually, even many sitting in CFC for many years, it's because they are not willing to accept, rebuke, and discipline.

They want to be welcomed as prodigal sons, but how long will you remain a prodigal son? Are you going to be perpetually a sinner? You know, like you come and sit at the Father's table and every now and then you take a stroll down to the pig's farm to eat what the pigs eat. You know, what I mean by that is watch internet pornography or go and have a yelling match with your wife. To have a yelling match with your wife is like going to the pig's farm once again and eating what the pigs are eating.

And then you come back here on Sunday and sit at the Lord's table and then you go back to the pig's farm. The pig's farm has got many, many departments. And what sort of prodigal son is this? Coming back and then going back to the pig's farm or coming to receive the Father's provision.

If your life is like that, my brother, sister, and you know whether it's true or not, let me tell you this third aspect of God's love is what you really need to know. God is a Father who rebukes us and disciplines us. He says those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.

Like I've said many a time when I was a young believer if you asked me how do I know Jesus loves me, I would say he died for me on the cross. Today if you ask me, I'm a little more mature, a little more experienced, I'd say two things. One, he died for me on the cross and he never stops rebuking and disciplining me.

If I slip up even slightly, that is the mark of his love. He does not want me to sit in the same class for more than one year. Just like you don't want your son or daughter to sit in the same class for more than one year.

So when they get a math sum wrong, a problem wrong, what do you do? Let it go or correct it. Hey, that's not the way to do it. When he's got anything wrong, for example, if he's taking part in athletics or what

does a coach, a football coach or a cricket coach do? Keep on correcting them and say that's not the way to hit the ball.

The person who says, listen, I don't want you coach to come and tell me how to bat, that fellow will be useless. That's exactly the reason why so many Christians are useless. And I want to tell you another thing that sometimes God's rebuke does not come directly from heaven.

It can come to you through an elder brother. There's a verse in the Psalms which says, let the righteous smite me. It's like anointing oil upon my head.

Have you been praying for the anointing? Really? Do you want a righteous brother to smite you? You want to get an anointing that way? I don't think so. I don't think many people want that. But that's what David said, let the righteous smite me.

It's like anointing oil upon my head. And so in Hebrews, let me turn you to Hebrews. It says in chapter 12.

Now you must remember when you read chapter 12, I believe the introduction to chapter 12 is the last verse of chapter 11. Chapter 11 is the wonderful chapter on faith. And we'd like to do some of those things written there, right? You know, split the Red Sea and pull down the walls of Jericho and tear lions to pieces like Samson, shut the mouths of lions like Daniel.

Wouldn't that be exciting? What a testimony you could give in the church next Sunday if you did something like that. We seek so much honor that every little thing that we do, we want to testify and get some honor for it. I shut the mouth of a lion there, or I pulled down a wall the other day in the name of the Lord.

But how many have seen that at the end of that chapter 11, it says there's something better that God has reserved for us, his children. Those Old Testament people were his people, but not his children. It's like if you have servants in your home and children in your home, is there a distinction between servants and children? Do you distinguish between your servants and your children? I don't know whether you realize that that is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

Do you know that there's as much difference between Abraham and me as there is between your servant and your child? How many of you knew that? How many of you believe it? There's as much difference between John the Baptist and me as there is between the servant in your home and the son in your home. Then you realize that God hasn't primarily called us to be servants but sons. The son also serves, but the son doesn't serve for his salary.

The son doesn't serve. I mean, think of one of these shops in commercial street where a man employs people to work for him, and he's got his son also as a partner working in the shop. What's the son working for? He may not even get a salary.

He's staying in his dad's home, but he owns everything. But those people working there for a salary, they won't come to the shop if you don't pay them. And they'll go off.

When the time is up, they go home. The son doesn't go home. He stays.

There's a world of difference between a servant and a son. The sad thing with many, many Christians is they don't have that sense of responsibility for God's work. You see, a servant comes only in order to get what he can.

I mean, you go to any servant any employee in these shops, they are working there only for their salary. They don't have any great love for their master or the employer. They don't have any great love for the store, that it must prosper.

The value of the shares of this company must increase. They're not shareholders. Why should they care? They want their salary.

They want to get what they can, but to have a sense of responsibility for that company that only a son will have. And I'll tell you this. There are many of us sitting here, upstairs and downstairs.

Some of you have a tremendous sense of responsibility for this church. Every little aspect of this church you're really interested in. You want to see how you can participate in, and you're not just coming here to receive.

You're coming in here to give, to give of yourself, your time, your money, your energy, because this is your business. You're not an employee. You, my brothers and sisters, are the sons and daughters.

Then there are a whole lot of other people here, which is the vast majority, who come here only to receive. Here's a good message I can get. Here's a place where if I'm in trouble, they'll pray for me, or they'll help me out when I'm here.

I'll get some instruction on how to live a better married life, or how to bring up my children right. You have come here only to receive. Fine, you're welcome to come, but I want you to tell you, you're like the servant in the home.

You're not a son. You're not a daughter, because you don't have any sense of responsibility or commitment to this church. I want to tell you the truth.

At the righteous might, it'll be like anointing on your head. Are you willing to accept that? And you know yourself what degree of commitment you have to this church beyond just sitting here on Sundays and Wednesdays. And beyond that, in what way can you stand before the Lord and say, Lord, here's the proof of my total commitment to this church.

This is my business. This is not somebody else's business. This is my father's business.

This is my father's store. I'm not an employee here. Do you have that sense of commitment? You know what the excuses some people are? I'm a member of the worldwide body of Christ.

It's a very good thing to say. You're committed to nobody, answerable to nobody, committed to nobody. And that's why your life is so shallow spiritually, even though you increase in knowledge.

Your knowledge is increasing in leaps and bounds, but spiritual maturity is not there. And here's the reason. You have not understood the difference between old covenant and new covenant.

God has provided something better. You're still taken up with the miracles people do. And you're watching television, Christian TV programs where they do miracles.

It's a magic show. It's not a miracle show. Go and watch magicians, B.C. Sarkar and all.

They do the same type of stuff. Magicians, Christian magicians, which you call miracle workers. I'm not deceived by them.

Those are the things that impress you because you're a servant. You're under the old covenant. In the new covenant, you're a son.

A son may do miracles too, but 90% of Jesus' life, he never did any miracles. He was just a very faithful, obedient son to the father for 30 years of his life. God has provided something better for us.

And when he says God has provided something better in Hebrews 11:40, I always say, whenever you read Hebrews 11, and you probably never heard this from anybody else than me, I always say, you'll get a new Bible if you listen to me. Whenever you read Hebrews 11, always keep in mind the last verse. When you read about Abraham, Daniel, David, Joshua, Moses, remember the last verse.

God has provided something better for me. God has provided something better for me. God has provided something better for me.

Better than raising the dead. Better than shutting the mouths of lions. Better than splitting the Red Sea.

And what is that better thing? Chapter 12, verse 1 and 2, that we can run a certain race in the footsteps of Jesus. And what did he do? By faith, Moses split the Red Sea. By faith, Joshua pulled down the walls of Jericho.

By faith, Jesus denied himself, endured the cross. Hebrews 12:2, despised the shame. That doesn't sound very exciting, right? Not as exciting as shutting the mouths of lions.

That all depends on whether you want to be a servant or a son. But didn't Jesus raise the dead? Why isn't that mentioned here? By faith, Jesus raised the dead. By faith, he walked on the water.

You know, when they want to write one sentence about a man, they write the most important thing he did in his life, right? And that teaches us that the most important thing Jesus did in his life was not raising the dead. It was enduring the cross and despising the shame, not just for one day, but for 33 and a half years. Because when it says, let us run the race in the footsteps of Jesus, if this cross is speaking about Calvary's cross where he hung, I'm never going to hang on Calvary's cross in my whole life.

Even if somebody one day crucifies me as a martyr, it won't be Calvary's cross. So how in the world can I follow in Jesus' footsteps there? It's speaking about another cross which was in his life for 33 years in which we can walk in his footsteps, a race that he ran for 33 years where he despised the shame of being ridiculed by others. I can imagine how much he was ridiculed and made fun of in his own home by his four brothers and two sisters.

Have you had people making fun of you in your home because you're a disciple of Jesus Christ and those other people are not? You feel sorry for yourself, but you feel excited that you can follow in Jesus' footsteps who was made fun of in his own home by his four brothers and two sisters. It says in John 7, they didn't believe in him. They made fun of him for 30 years or as long as they were alive till he left Nazareth and he despised that shame.

Have you been made fun of and poked fun of when you made it clear in your office that you were a Christian and you were not ashamed of me? I'm not saying you went around preaching and giving out

tracts. There are many ways to make it known that you're a Christian in office. I worked in the military where you're not supposed to go around witnessing to anybody, but if I sat in an office table nobody could stop me from hanging a calendar on my room with a verse on it.

If somebody else can hang a calendar on his wall with some Hindu God's picture there, why can't I put a calendar with a verse on it? How many Christians do that in their office rooms? How many Christians want to put a Bible on their table? Who can stop you from putting a Bible on your table? Your boss, who's a radical Hindu, may not promote you if he knows that. As soon as I became a believer, I gave up all desire for promotion, increment, good annual confidential report. I gave it all up and that's what made me the Christian I became.

Some of you haven't given it up and therefore you're ashamed to be known as a Christian in your office because you're afraid of the consequences. Remember Jesus was not ashamed to hang on a cross half naked for you. So spiritual growth comes when we see this is the better thing God has offered me.

This is better for me and I thank God I saw that as a young man. Something better than splitting the Red Sea was that I could bear shame for Jesus with my home and office and people who'd ridiculed me and didn't make a difference. It is part of the shame of following Jesus.

Are you like that? Are you a servant or a son? What do you want to be? You see the reason for your shallow, defeated life, my brother, sister. You can come here for the next 100 years. You will still be shallow, still be defeated.

Your children will still go astray. They'll cause problems for you in your home because you are seeking to come to the Lord only for personal benefit. You're not coming to the Lord to take up the cross.

I want to speak frankly to you because I want to anoint you on your head. Let the righteous smite me. It'll be like oil upon my head.

I hope it will be today. So that's the better thing and we see that and he endured the cross. No one says the cross is enjoyable.

There's not a single verse in the Bible which says we enjoy taking up the cross. We endure it. But it's not a miserable, gloomy type of endurance.

There's endurance with a because it says there's a joy set before him. Why do your children study so hard for some competitive examination? Because there's a joy set before them that they'll get admission into some prestigious college. Otherwise, why in the world would they study so hard? Why do you spend so many lakhs of rupees to get your children admitted into a good school or college? Because of a joy set before you.

You endure something because you know the future. Why can't we think a little more of our spiritual future as well in the same way? I'm willing to sacrifice something now. I'm willing to pay a price now because just like that father spent so many lakhs to get his children into some good college, I'm willing to suffer something and sacrifice something because my future is not that college or something here on earth.

It's something eternal. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross. You know, that principle is there in nature.

I mean, in this world, when, as I said just now, all worldly parents, look at the sacrifices they make and the amount of money they're willing to spend. I mean, I hear of poor people who send their children for tuition for thousands of rupees just so that they will get a good result in their 10th standard examination. And you go and ask the parent, don't you think that's a waste of 40, 50,000 rupees a year? Not at all, because my child gets good marks.

Well, if they can be so wise with their worldly future, I'd like to see some Christians who are wise about their spiritual future, who are willing to spend much more than 50,000 rupees for something spiritual. That's rare to find. But I tell you, those are the sons.

The rest are just selfish servants who are just seeking their own. They've never turned around from coming to the father's table just to get some food, and never grateful to the father for all that he did for them. So here it says we must consider him.

And then what is the other better thing that God, he first talks about Jesus, that we have the privilege of walking in Jesus' footsteps. And then here's the other part of the better thing, much better than splitting the Red Sea and shutting the mouths of lions. What's that? To be disciplined by the father, verse chapter 12 and verse 5. Don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you're reprov'd by him, because it's the those whom the Lord loves whom he disciplines.

It's the same thing we read in Revelation 3. And he scourges, scourges means he takes out his belt, scourges a leather thing. He not only uses a stick, he uses a belt. He scourges every single child of his.

Then he says it's for discipline. Because which father is there who does not, verse 7, is there a son whom his father doesn't discipline? Is there a child whom his father doesn't discipline? I'm sorry to say there are some. There are some children who grow up who are rude to their parents.

The father never disciplines them. And those are the ones who grow up wayward, wild. You know, you can't bend a tree when it's already grown for so many years.

You try and bend a tree that's been growing for 15 years. This is not the shape I wanted it. Well, if you wanted it straight, when it was a plant, you should have tied it with some ropes and made it grow straight.

You can't bend it when it's 15. Very difficult. You'll break it.

A lot of people know that about a tree, but they don't know that about children. You know, people have asked me, when should we start disciplining our children? I said, three months, perhaps. Three months.

Yeah, they must know that they're not going to control dad and mom. All children like to control dad and mom. And if you don't make it clear to them who is the head of the house, they will control you.

There are many children who run their parents' lives. The parents were so nice to the sweet little darling. They don't want to hurt him.

Let him go to hell, but don't want to hurt his body. I'd rather make his body black and blue and save him from hell. Sure.

In this country, at least, there's no law against it. In some other countries, you know, you can't do it. The police will catch you for mistreating your child.

Before that law comes into India, please do all that you can for your children. I'll tell you that. Make sure they grow up in the fear of God.

Listen to the good old Bible way. What son is there whom his father does not discipline? I want to tell you, I have disciplined all my boys, every one of them, with the rod and with the belt. And I can tell you honestly, it hurt my heart more than it hurt their body.

Because almost every single time after disciplining them, I would go before the Lord, lock myself up in the bathroom, and weep. That's how I know it hurt me. I didn't find any delight in disciplining them, but I knew I had to do it because I wanted them to grow up to live for God and not for the world.

And I would not tolerate any type of disobedience, rebellion, you know, dishonoring dad or mom or anything. I would look into their school bags to see what books they were reading. When they were out playing outside, I would sneak into their room and look into their bags to see what they brought home from school.

They are ignorant. Children are ignorant. There are all types of bad children in school who can give them information which is not good for them.

Who's going to protect them? You protect your children from whooping cough and this type that, you know, immunization for this and immunization for that. What about immunizing them from all the books they get in school? That's much worse. And I tell you, it's because we're not strict when they are young that we suffer a lot when they grow up.

And they grow up. It's not just our suffering. They bring such disgrace on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the worst part of it. At least if they change their name to some other non-Christian name, fine. I sometimes feel like telling the way somebody, listen, the way you're behaving, you should change your name to some non-Christian name.

You're an absolute disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ. Change your children's name to some non-Christian name so they don't bring disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ. I don't know whether you take these things seriously.

Do you know that Jesus taught us to pray the first prayer is, hallowed be your name. How much are you concerned if even one of your children is disgracing the name of Jesus Christ in some way? You take it lightly. You and your wife should be weeping before God for that.

Which child is there whom the father doesn't discipline? But I want to tell you, God takes discipline very seriously because he loves us so much. And the whole purpose is, listen to this. He disciplines, he says in verse 10, our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them.

That means a lot of fathers discipline their children in anger or they're upset. And I think a lot of parents are upset because their testimony will be spoiled in the church. Oh, if the church hears that my children are doing like this, my testimony will be spoiled.

Wretched father, he's more concerned about his testimony, the name of Jesus Christ. No wonder God doesn't support his discipline. I would say to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, be more concerned

that the name of Jesus is being dishonored by your children than that you are getting a bad name by the behavior of your children.

Say, I couldn't care less for that. Don't ever tell your children saying, oh, what do people say if you dress like that, my girl? I couldn't care less what people say. I'm concerned what Jesus will think of you if you dress like that.

You know, I believe the parents have to change. Sure, and their motive for wanting their children to be godly. Otherwise, you'll just be happy.

Oh, my child's got a good testimony. I'm okay. And the Lord will see your heart.

He says, you're not at all concerned about his name. You're not concerned about his name. And if your child does something wrong somewhere else, thank God nobody in the church heard about it.

Isn't that great? What type of father are you? What type of Christian are you? Nobody in the church heard about it? That's all you're excited about? And the name of the Lord is so dishonored and the demons are pointing your son or daughter to God. And even if nobody in CFC heard about it, say, see, God, look at this. That doesn't bother you? Dear brother, sister, be a good father and mother.

Be a good Christian. Love Jesus more than you love your children's names and your own name. God is like that.

They disciplined us for a short time as he best to them, but he, his discipline is perfect. Verse 10. It's always for our good.

I love that. He welcomes me back as a sinner for my good. He provides all my need for my good.

And he disciplines me for my good. There's no one who loves like God. And all fathers and mothers can learn from God.

If you really love your children, don't just welcome them home and they come back in repentance. Don't just provide all their needs. Discipline them.

Otherwise, you're not like God. You're not a good father. You're not a good mother.

He disciplines us for our good. And it says here, this is amazing verse. He disciplines us so that we can share in his holiness or partake of his holiness.

I want to explain something here. There's a lot of difference between being holy and partaking of his holiness. World of difference.

One is darkness. Do you know that being holy is darkness? The Pharisees were holy. It was darkness.

Jesus had the holiness of God. That's light. So here it says, not that we might be holy.

Supposing it had read, he disciplined us so that we might be holy. That's how some people read it. They don't read scripture properly.

Disciplines us for his, that we might partake of his holiness and not have a holiness manufactured by ourselves. I believe a lot of people in CFC listen to God's word and the standards of God's word and treat

it like a self-improvement program. Come here Sunday after Sunday, and your life improves.

You don't shout so much at your wife. Great. And you're a little more patient.

You don't get upset on the roads and you don't have road rage. And it's a self-improvement program. And you become a little generous because you put a little money in the box, minimum possible.

And you feel that you're improving. It's a self-improvement program. It's not partaking of God's holiness.

God's holiness is completely different. Self-improvement program they have also for these managers in different companies. They get some psychologist or someone to teach them how to treat workers better.

The aim is to get more profits for the company. And you know, it's good to have a self-improvement. So our image is better.

And people think we are better and think people think that we are better Christians. That's not God's aim. God's aim is not that people should think we are better Christians.

I couldn't care less whether anybody thinks I'm a better Christian. To partake of His holiness. Now I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, how many of you can honestly say that you don't want your own holiness? You know, I want to partake of His holiness.

Let me show you this verse in Philippians in chapter three. It's so important to see this distinction. Because that's another distinction between old covenant and new covenant.

In the old covenant, all the holy people, they had their own holiness. In the new covenant, own holiness is like filthy rags. Philippians three, Paul says, I count, he says, first of all, in verse seven, everything that I considered valuable on earth, I counted as loss.

I've thrown it all in the garbage dump. All the things I once thought were so valuable. The things I pursued after on earth, I've thrown it in the garbage dump because it's all rubbish.

And I count everything on earth as loss. How many of you can say that everything on earth is loss compared to knowing Jesus Christ, making a lot of money, getting a big job, being somebody, being somebody in the church. It's all rubbish compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

And I counted rubbish. You know, you hear me, you use the word rubbish very often. And somebody asked me, where do you get this word from? I said, I get it from Paul.

I get it from scripture. People don't use it as much as Paul did, but it's from scripture. I counted rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

In other words, everything outside of Christ is rubbish. You've become a, you got your eyes opened when the day when you see that. I don't mean when you quote the verse, any idiot can quote a verse, but the day when you see with your heart that everything outside of Christ is rubbish, that'll be the day you'll really start making progress in your Christian life.

And he said, I counted rubbish so that, and what is the whole purpose of it? Now listen to this, read, listen slowly, listen carefully, that I may be found in Christ, not having my own holiness, but God's holiness. Do you see that? He's not talking about giving up sin. Sin and all is finished long ago.

He's now talking about giving up this self-improvement type of holiness that I control my tongue a little bit. And I don't watch internet pornography so much now. I've given it up completely now.

You're great, isn't it? You're not great. This is just your holiness. Have you known what it is to partake of God's holiness? He says, everything else is rubbish.

And here is a very important decision. I don't believe I can explain it to you because it's very difficult to explain. But to me, the difference is between a plastic orange and a real orange.

The plastic orange sometimes looks a little better, by the way. I've seen that on some tables. The real orange doesn't look so nice, but just by the way, in case you didn't know, the real orange tastes much better.

And real holiness is like that. The world of difference, your artificial plastic holiness may impress people, but the real thing is what God looks for. That which God made grow.

Plastic oranges are made by man. Real oranges are made by God. Don't be satisfied with fooling people with this plastic holiness, which impresses people.

I says, it's rubbish that I might partake of, give up my own holiness. That is the better thing in Hebrews 11. So how does God give us that? There is only one way that Almighty God has devised to make it, to make us partake of His holiness, and that is by discipline.

Let's turn back again to Hebrews 12. Verse 10. They, our fathers on earth, disciplined us for our good for a short time, as they thought best.

But He, our heavenly Father, disciplines us for our eternal good, so that we may share His holiness. In other words, Almighty God could not find any other way to make us partake of His holiness, except by discipline and rebuke. I say, Lord, if you, all wise God, could not find another way, I'm an idiot.

If I think I can become holy by attending CFC every Sunday, or by getting excited over the messages that you hear, or by listening to umpteen DVDs, it's all good. But along with that, my brother, sister, if you don't get God's discipline, you will never share His holiness. There are a lot of people around the world now, you know, watching our Sunday services, listening to our messages, and they think, oh, if I listen to these great messages, I'll be holy.

You will have your holiness. And you haven't seen that yet as rubbish. Paul saw his holiness as rubbish.

And the day must come in your life, my brother, sister, when you see your manufactured holiness as rubbish. Your self-control over your tongue as rubbish, and you partake of God's holiness. You know, when you got your own holiness, you always got to be on your guard, lest you slip up.

And I often think of an illustration, I like to think in pictures, it helps my mind, of a dog that you have trained. You know, people train dogs in amazing ways these days. They can do all types of things.

Supposing you, here's a first class dog trainer who trains his dog to meow like a cat. It's a wonderful training if you can do that. His dog that says bow wow starts saying meow, and all the time, meow, meow, meow, meow, until some other dog comes and glares at it, and then the real nature comes out and the bow wow comes out again.

That's our holiness. You know, those rare occasions when somebody really provoked you, and your real nature came out, you thought that was just a slip up. That was not a slip up.

That was the time you were not acting. That was your real self. That was the time the dog did not say meow.

It manifested its real self. What that dog needs is not training. What the dog needs is a change of nature.

That's what you need too. The power of the Holy Spirit to make you partake of His holiness, but you don't have to be on my guard. I've got to behave like a Christian now.

I've got to say meow, not bow wow. I remind myself, I can't say bow wow. I must say meow.

I'm a Christian. I'm a Christian. Is that how you live? Does a cat have to say that? You can tell a cat, you got to always behave like a cat.

No problem. That's what I am. That is the difference between your holiness and partaking of His holiness, a dog being trained to behave like a cat and a cat behaving like a cat.

Why the strain? Why this concern that something you did, somebody heard of, it might make you lose your testimony? God disciplines us. Welcome that discipline, my brother, sister. Welcome the rebukes of the Lord.

I believe this was one of the big differences between, you know, like Jesus said, as many as I love, I rebuke. You know that very well-known incident in Matthew 16 where Jesus turned to Peter and said to him, get behind me, Satan. You know, there would have been a gentler way of saying it, don't you think so? You know, all that Peter said was, oh Lord, I will never let anybody spit on you and kill you.

What would you have said there to a loyal friend of yours who says, hey, I'm going to stand by you. I won't let those cheap priests and all come and kill you. You would have put your arm around him and say, well, Peter, I really appreciate your love for me, but it's not going to be that way.

You know, I need to go to the cross. How different Jesus is from us. Get behind me, Satan.

Did he lose his temper? He never sinned. Don't forget. He didn't say, hey, Peter, don't you, do you know that you're actually the mouthpiece of Satan? No, not mouthpiece of Satan.

You are Satan. Get behind me, Satan. What a strong word to tell his senior most disciple, risking the possibility that the guy will cause a rebellion among the disciples and run off with some of them.

Jesus couldn't care less. He didn't care if all of them went away. He came here not to please people.

He came here to please his father. I tell you, God needs a lot more servants on earth like that who have zero interest in pleasing man. It's very interesting that when Peter heard that, you know, it doesn't mention it here, but in the parallel passage in John's gospel, this is not quoted in John's gospel, but in terms of time, it was the same time.

You know, it says here Jesus spoke about the cross in Matthew 16, 23. And in John 6 is the place where he spoke about the cross. It's the first time in John's gospel where he speaks about eating his flesh, drinking his blood.

And there, a lot of people got offended and went away. And he turned around to his disciples and said in John 6, do you also want to go away? John 6, 67. And Simon Peter says, John 6, 68, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of, these are the words of eternal life.

I put these two together. When Peter avoids the cross, wants to avoid the cross, he says, no, you don't want to go the way of the cross. And Jesus says, get behind me, Satan.

Peter, do you want to go away? Lord, to whom shall we go? What you have just spoken are the words of eternal life. Words of eternal life to be called Satan. There was a man who had understanding.

He was not offended by the rebuke. Would you be offended if a godly brother turned around and called you the devil and say, if you want to leave, you can leave. Go and find some other church.

And you say, no, brother, this is where I want to be till the end of my life. These are the words of eternal life. These are the words that will save me.

I go to other churches, they flatter me and say nice things to me. All they are interested in isn't my money, but these are the words of eternal life. Do you see it that way? Peter did.

That's what made him the man of God he became. I know some brothers like that in our church who never get offended, no matter what rebuke they get. And I know others in our church, they get offended pretty quickly.

One word is enough. It's the difference between an old covenant person and a new covenant person. I want to give you another example.

In John chapter 12, we read of a time when Mary took a pound of very costly nard perfume, John 12 verse 3, and poured it anointing the feet of Jesus, wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume and Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, John 12 verse 4, who was planning to betray him said, why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii? One denarii is the laboring man's wages for one day. I mean, if a laboring man gets a hundred rupees a day, 300 denarii is excluding the holidays, one year's wages.

It's like a laboring man, I don't know how many years, how many years you take to say one year's salary, 15 years, 20 years to save one year's total salary. This is what Mary did was one year's total salary to buy one perfume bottle, pour it on Jesus. Naturally, business-minded people say that's a waste, man.

It's gone. In a moment, it's gone. They think it's a waste to serve Jesus.

What a waste of a life. You could have been a big man in the world and you wasted it on serving the Lord. You could have made a lot of money in the world and you just wasted your life and time serving Jesus.

People haven't understood it. And that's what Judas Iscariot said, he could have been given, that sounds so nice, no? That kind of money could have been given to the poor. When Jesus said, leave her alone, she has done it for my burial.

You always will have the poor with you, but you won't always have me. And let me tell you something, do you know the only person, the only human being, the only woman who had the privilege of anointing the body of Jesus for his burial was Mary? Because the women who came on the Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus brought all the spices and all, they found the body is risen, it's gone, too late. One

woman had the sense to do it before the cross.

She has anointed my body for the day of my burial because in the day of my burial, nobody will be there to anoint me. And the guys who come Sunday morning will find it's too late. There is a time to pour out your all at the Lord's feet.

And if you don't take it now, you know, you'll say, I'll wait till I retire or wait another day, it won't count. Do it now. I'm glad I didn't wait till I retired from the Navy to pour out everything at Jesus' feet.

Boy, I'd have missed it completely. Don't wait. Now is the time.

Now, you know, there's a parallel passage to this. I think it's in Mark, where it says in Mark 14, the same words, verse 5, verse 4, last part. Why was this perfume wasted? For this perfume might have been sold, Mark 14, 5, for over 300 denarii and the money given to the poor.

We know from John's gospel that that was Judas Iscariot who said it. And Jesus says, let her alone. Why do you bother her? She has done a good deed.

Exactly the same words as in John 12. The poor you always have with you. And you can do them good whenever you can, but you don't have me always.

She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for the burial, verse 8. And I want to tell you something, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will be spoken of her. And it is being spoken of her.

For 2000 years, people have preached about what Mary did. And then, the important word there is then, T-H-E-N. Judas had just been rebuked, remember? With a very gentle rebuke.

Why leave this woman alone? She's done a good thing. Oh, Jesus doesn't accept my suggestion of giving the money to the poor. He's offended in his heart.

Then, Judas Iscariot went off to the chief priest. How much will you give me if I betray him to you? That was the last straw. Oh, he's going to rebuke me publicly like that, is it? Okay, I'll teach him a lesson.

There are people here waiting to give me money for me to betray him. And they were glad, the chief priest. Sure, they give you money.

And from that moment, he began to seek opportunity to betray Jesus. What was it that triggered it? A gentle rebuke. The difference between Peter and Judas Iscariot was this.

Jesus could call Peter Satan. He'd say, Lord, these are the words of eternal life. I can't go anywhere else.

But to Judas, he could just say, hey, listen, leave that woman alone. You always have the poor. Let her pour it out on me.

Was that even a rebuke? But you know how some people are. They get offended with a small little thing, and they go. Jesus didn't stop him.

Those who want to go, go. I always say that. I don't stop anybody.

You want to leave the church, go. If you get offended, go. Don't waste your time.

Go to some church where you'll never get offended. They'll pave your way to hell. Go there.

That's the sad thing in today's world, where people in the pulpit are no longer prophets. They are psychologists, you know, masseurs who massage you, make you happy, send you home, pave your way to hell, or at least pave your way to a useless life on earth. Father is not like that.

I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, love the rebukes of the Lord. Love the discipline of the Lord. That way you will share in his holiness, not have your own.

I want to say one way in which you can discover whether your holiness that you imagine that you have today is your own or whether it is God's holiness. One of the clearest tests is, has it made you humble or has it made you proud? Your holiness will always make you a little proud. I don't do this.

I don't watch internet pornography. I don't lose my temper with my wife or sling me some sisters. I don't wear ornaments.

I don't dress like these passionable sisters in CFC. That's good, but you're proud of it. That shows it's your own holiness.

It's not from God. You thought it was something God approved of. Far from it.

It makes you look down on some others. The holiness of God will never make you look down on anybody, not even the worst sinner, because you will say like Paul, who was the holiest man in his day, I am the chief of sinners. That's an infallible way of knowing whether your holiness is your own manufactured one or whether you got it from God, because the holiness from God is the holiness of Jesus.

In the holiness of Jesus, there was not an atom of pride. It was saturated with humility. You ask yourself today, have you got your holiness or God's holiness? If you haven't got God's holiness, you've got the reason today.

You're not willing to listen to rebuke either from God or from an older brother. You get offended so easily. I remember one brother who's not from Bangalore, another place who used to come here regularly, and he was also leading a church for a while.

I had to correct him pretty strongly. I've done that with a lot of our elders because I love them. When I was sitting in my home talking to him, and he said, Brother Zach, nobody talks to me like that.

Oh, I said, I'm sorry. I never realized that. I give you my word.

I'll never again talk to you like that. And I never did. He left the church, and he's just gone down the drain, down, down, down.

To tell you honestly, I don't even know whether he's safe today. Let the righteous smite me. It shall be like oil upon my head.

Let my head not refuse it. Okay, where's that reference? I'm trying to find it now. Some of you know it.

Psalms 139? 141, sorry. Yeah, that's right. You must all know this verse.

Psalms 141 and verse 5. Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me. It is like oil upon my head. Don't let my head refuse it.

What a word, what a word. Remember that verse, Psalm 141, verse 5. Let the righteous smite me and reprove me in kindness. It is oil upon my head.

I have been through that discipline myself many years in my younger days. And the Lord always told me to shut my mouth and listen. God broke me through numerous ways of disciplining me through 35 years.

And not only that, He made religious people take me to court, made me stand there like a criminal when I was 60 years old. He never stops disciplining me. I say, God is so good.

Those days, I never refused it. I said, Lord, smite me, humble me, make me look like a criminal. The word the Lord spoke to me was, Jesus was numbered among the criminals, it says in Isaiah 53.

I said, Lord, what an honor. Are you willing to be disciplined? Will you complain? Will you complain against the people who try to harm you? Or will you say, Lord, that's the Lord's discipline. He's got to make me partake of His holiness.

That's what I want. That's what I wanted for many, many years. That's what I'm passionate about even today.

I want to urge you, my brothers and sisters, be passionate about wanting God's holiness, lest you wake up in eternity and present to God an Ishmael of your own product, of your own strength. And God says, I refuse it. This is not produced by my strength.

This is your effort. I will not accept Ishmael. And you spent all your life and you never had an Isaac.

Don't let that happen. Accept the discipline of the Lord. It's good for you.

It's good for me. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to discern not only white from black, but white from gray, and white from light gray, and white from off-white.

Help us to have discernment that we don't spend our earthly life being fooled by off-white colors when we can have white, pure white, the holiness of God. Help us, we pray, each one. I proclaim your word, Lord, I'm free from the blood of all men.

Responsibility is theirs now. I pray that nobody will miss out. In Jesus' name, amen.

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