

God Will Honor Those Who Honor Him

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of honoring God, being faithful to His commandments, and seeking to fulfill the plan God has for each individual's life. It highlights the need to repent of past failures, overcome ignorance, and run the race set before us with diligence and passion. The message encourages believers to be overcomers, to take their spiritual growth seriously, and to aim to sit with Jesus on His throne by being faithful at their current level of understanding and obedience.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:30, Matthew 11:28, John 17:23, Acts 17:30, Revelation 3:20, Revelation 3:21

Topics: "Honoring God", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

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Transcript

There is a verse in 1 Samuel chapter 2, which has been a favorite verse of mine for a very long time. It is actually a very small part of that verse, 1 Samuel chapter 2, and it is referring to God speaking to a backslidden high priest called Eli. It says in 1 Samuel 2 and verse 27, a man of God came to Eli, who was the high priest at that time, and said to him, thus says the Lord, didn't I reveal myself to the house of your father? Because Eli descended from Aaron, you know, and Aaron was given the promise that his descendants would continue to be high priests.

So Eli became a high priest because of that physical relationship with his ancestor Aaron. And I chose them to burn incense and all that. But Eli was a very careless high priest.

He allowed his sons, he had a couple of sons who would steal the sacrifices brought by the meat, brought by the people as an offering to God, and they would fool around with the women who were serving there. And Eli was a very mild type of father, and he would say, oh, this is something not good that you people are doing. See what he says in 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 23.

This is a father who's rebuking his children for stealing the Lord's property and fooling around with women in the temple. Oh, why do you do these things? I hear, no, my sons, the report is not good, which I hear

from the Lord's people. Verse 24.

If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him? And he didn't say, you sons, get out of here. I'm not going to have you in my house, and I will not allow you anywhere near the temple.

Go and fend for yourselves. That's what he should have done. That's what a good high priest would have done.

But he was, he favored his children. And I've seen numerous believers in my life who favor their children. Numerous elders who favor their children.

They don't correct them and rebuke them when they do something wrong. It's a great warning, Eli. And so, he tells them in verse 29, why do you kick at my sacrifice? You have honored your sons, middle of verse 29, more than me.

They have honored a human being more than God. It may be your son, it may be your daughter, it may be your wife, it may be your husband. And someone whom you don't want to offend.

And so, honor means, what did he do? He didn't give them some sacrifice or something, he just didn't want to hurt them. They were doing something completely wrong, and he did not correct them, he didn't want to hurt them. And I tell you, that tendency is there in a lot of believers who don't fear God.

And that's one reason why the vast majority of Christian leaders and pastors, their children have gone astray, just like Eli. And the sad thing is, even though this man came and rebuked Eli, and later on, God spoke to Samuel. You see in the next chapter, chapter 3, the Lord said to Samuel in chapter 3 in verse 11, I'm going to do a thing in Israel at which the ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

I'm going to carry out my judgment against Eli, I'm going to judge, verse 13, his house forever because his sons brought a curse on themselves and the father did not rebuke. He loved his children more than he loved the Lord. And there are numerous believers like that I've seen in my life.

The number one cause of a lot of young people in God-fearing Christian families that go astray is because the parents love the children more than they love Jesus Christ. And therefore they were not disciples. Jesus said, if you love your children more than me, you can't be my disciple.

If you love your parents more than me, you can't be my disciple. There are very few true disciples. True disciples are those who love Christ more than their wife, more than their husband, more than their children, more than any relative, more than anybody.

They will not compromise to please any human being. And so the Lord told Samuel, his sons, verse 13, chapter 3, verse 13, the last part brought a curse on them and he did not rebuke them. So his sins can never be atoned by any sacrifice.

And Samuel went and told that to Eli as he was a young boy. Years later, Samuel grew up and he became the prophet and the judge in Israel. And it says here in chapter 8, 1 Samuel chapter 8, when Samuel was old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel.

There's a word in English for this called nepotism, partiality towards somebody you care for and love, even if they're not fit for the job, you put them there. And Samuel's sons were not at all fit to be judges like

Samuel himself was, because it says here in verse 3 of 1 Samuel 8, his sons did not walk in the father's ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain.

In other words, they took bribes, verse 3, and they favored the guy who gave them a bribe, just like in many corrupt courts, judges do. This is Samuel's sons. And remember, Samuel was the one who rebuked, whom the Lord said to rebuke Eli for the way Eli brought up his sons.

And that shows that you can correct somebody else and not correct your own children. Samuel is a classic example of that. And even though he was a great prophet, and there are many anointed people whose children are wayward.

And in the New Testament, in the Old Testament, it was not such a big thing, because the family behavior did not disqualify you from being a prophet. But in 1 Timothy 3, it says, in Titus chapter 1, it says if a man's children are not believers, he's totally unfit to serve God, he's totally unfit to be an elder. It's very much more strict in the New Covenant.

Now that word is not followed by most churches, because most of the pastors would have to resign if you followed that rule. And they completely ignore scripture. It's one of the major areas where I've seen churches completely ignore scripture, which says if your children are going astray, you have no right to be a pastor or leader.

Imagine how many churches would have to remove their pastors. But they don't care for the word of God in 1 Timothy 3 or in Titus chapter 1. So Samuel was like that. They're going back to the Old Testament.

And that's why most churches live under the Old Covenant. Their leaders are like Old Covenant people. And here it says, the reason, I want you to see the reason why Samuel's children went astray.

See, in Eli's case, we know he was not strong enough to rebuke them. And I believe Samuel also was not strong enough to rebuke them. Many fathers are so kind and gentle that they let the devil take over their children and they just keep quiet.

Imagine what they will realize when they stand finally in eternity and see their children burning in hell. And they realize that just for the sake of some not offending them on earth, they lost their children for eternity. I mean, I find very few people who speak so strongly as I do in this matter.

And the reason I speak strongly is because I don't want anybody to lose their children and be separated from their children for all eternity. Parents in heaven and the children in hell for eternity. Many people don't realize how serious that is.

Anyway, we read that the reason Samuel, one reason anyway, why his children went astray is turn to 1 Samuel chapter 7, it says in verse 15, Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And every year he used to go on a traveling from Bethel to Gilgal and Mespa and he judged all these places and many, many other places. And then he would come to Rama where his house was and then he would go back again.

He was on a constant tour. He was a traveling preacher and prophet and he neglected his own children. There are many preachers who travel like that, who neglect their own children.

And the next verse, it says that his children went astray. So there's a connection there between his constant traveling and his children not, chapter 8 verse 3, not walking in his ways. So coming back to

chapter 2, the Lord said to Eli, because you honored, chapter 2 verse 29, you honored your sons more than me.

I want to ask you, dear brothers and sisters, do you honor anyone in your family more than the Lord? Do you see your wife doing something wrong and you never say anything because it might hurt her, leading the children in the wrong way, the way your wife is doing something or the way your husband is doing something. But you say, well, it's not so serious. Yeah, you keep saying that.

One day your children will be in hell. It's not so serious. It doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter. There are so many older people today. I come across so many of them whose children are gone astray and they wish they had been a little more strict with them when they were younger.

If your children are only one or two years old, you're lucky to be able to hear this message because that's the age when you've got to start working with them. They got to recognize the importance of submitting to authority. What is the cause of the first, what is, what brought sin into the universe right at the beginning? It was not Adam and Eve disobeying God.

You have to understand the origin of sin. The origin of sin was the highest angel who's known as Lucifer. We don't know his real name.

That's just a Latin title they've given in one Isaiah chapter 14, but you read it in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, when the highest angel was already the highest angel, all created beings were underneath him. He rebelled against the only person above him that was God. Rebellion against authority was the first sin in the universe.

And when, by the way, in Ezekiel 28, it says the first inhabitant of the Garden of Eden was not Adam. It was this highest angel, Lucifer. It says that in Ezekiel 28, you take time to read it, when you were in the Garden of Eden, God tells this angel.

So you, that's where he was. And then he was cast out from there into, from the third heaven to the second heavens, where he is now. We read about battling with people in the heavenlies, that's where Satan is.

He was cast out from there. He had access to Eden on earth. But when he saw somebody else replacing him in Eden, that is Adam and Eve, he was determined to get them also out of Eden.

And he succeeded. How did he succeed? With the same sin that he himself committed. Don't just think it is a matter of eating something God had forbidden.

That is the elementary way of people read it. It was the same sin that Lucifer committed, rebellion against authority. Lucifer rebelled against authority and became the devil.

And he tempted Adam, he tempted Eve rather. Come on, I know God is an authority over you, but you don't have to listen to him. You know what he told him? You read in Genesis 3, you can be like God.

That is the same temptation he was, he was tempted with in Isaiah 14. He wanted to be like God and he tells Eve, Genesis 3, 5, you will be like God. That is the essential temptation.

Many people haven't seen it in Genesis 3. You only say Eve, she went and took fruit from the forbidden tree. That's true. But it was rebellion against authority and the temptation to become like God, to have the authority and power of God and the knowledge and wisdom of God, you'll be like that.

The same thing and throughout the ages, I've seen that's how the devil comes to tempt people, to rebel against God's authority. And where do we, where does it begin? It begins with little children when they don't obey parents and the parents say, oh darling, it's okay. The mother or father will say, oh, it's okay, don't, don't, don't, don't spank him.

It's not so bad. One parent says that and the other parent listens to it. That's the way to train your children to go to hell.

You got to be very strict there. And if your wife or your husband is lenient, you'd say, sorry, darling, I can't listen to you. I don't want my child to go to hell.

I've seen enough children grow up and go to hell and I don't want my children to go in that, that route. I have to teach that child submission to authority, the first sin of the universe, rebellion against authority. And that's why in the commandments that God gave, you know, there were 10 commandments for the first four are in relationship to God and the Lord, your God, and you have no other gods, but me second, don't have any idols, third, don't take the Lord's name in vain and fourth, keep the Sabbath day holy.

And then comes to the second tablet of stone, which had six commandments, which are related to man. The first was relating to love God. And the second was relating to loving man, loving your neighbor as yourself.

The two tablets symbolize these two statements of God, love your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. And the first commandment in the second tablet was commandment number five, was honor your father and mother. The longer, I mean, much before you come to the other ones, like don't kill, don't don't murder, don't commit adultery, and don't bear false witness, you would think one of those things should come on top.

No, don't murder, don't commit adultery, or all further down, children must honor their father and mother, because that is the only commandment among the 10, which has a promise attached to it. Did you know that, it says in Ephesians six, the only commandment with a promise attached to it. All the other commandments didn't have a promise.

But the fifth commandment, the first and the second tablet, honor your father and mother as a promise attached to it, it will go well with you. And you will live long on the earth, live long means you'll live as long as God wants you to live, you won't, your life won't be cut short. It may be 30 years or 33 like Jesus or whatever it is, or 95 like Adam, or 30 like James, the apostle, but you will complete your earthly course.

Honor your father and mother, the father and mother, the child does not know how to read that fifth commandment, who's going to teach that child, the father and mother. And it's very easy to hear all these things, like Samuel, and not practice them. It's a great warning.

And so it's in connection with this failure of Eli, it says the glory of God departed from Israel, because Eli failed to bring up his children in a godly way. And I see that everywhere, it's gradually coming into our churches too, where parents are not so strict in teaching their children the fear of God, teaching their children to stay away from things which are going to be harmful for them, and being very strict in teaching

their children never to tell lies. There were only two things that I insisted with my own children.

One was you have to respect and obey your parents and older people. That includes older people, whoever he is. And second is, never tell a lie.

Never try to deceive me. Those are the two things I was very, very strict on, because to me, that's fundamental. I hope all of you parents will seek to do that with your children, and if you're fortunate if your children are still small at home, and if they are under two years old, good time to begin.

Teach them from the age of one, the meaning of the word no. As the first word they need to understand, no, you can't do that. You have to obey me.

And if you do that, and you seek to honor God in that way, I can guarantee your children will grow up to be disciples of Jesus Christ. It's God's law. Those who honor me, I will honor them.

That's what he comes to in verse chapter, this is the verse I want to show you, 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 30. I had promised, the Lord says, 1 Samuel 2 30, that your house, he's telling Eli, the house of your father will be my priest's forever. That was God's plan.

But it will not be so. You know, God can have a plan for your life and it may not be fulfilled. Here's a classic example of that.

I believe God has a plan for every child that is born into the world, even the children of, especially the children of God's people. But I've seen in my lifetime, in most of the cases, that plan is not fulfilled. And it's 100% because of the failure of the parents who do not teach their children God's ways from the childhood.

And the Lord says, if you esteem your children more than me, that's what he's saying there earlier, verse 29, you honored your children more than me. You didn't want to offend them. You didn't want to hurt them.

You didn't want to rebuke them. You didn't want to correct them. You were not strict with them.

Okay. Well, then you'll be despised by me. The last part of verse 30, I honor only those who honor me.

This is the verse I was telling you has been a very favorite verse of mine for many years. The Lord says, those who honor me, I will honor. Please remember that all your life, 1 Samuel 2.30. It's easy to remember the numbers, 1, 2, 3, 0, 1 Samuel 2.30. Those who honor me, I will honor.

But those who don't honor me, I will despise them. They despise me, I despise them. So it's a very serious thing.

Think of the tremendous blessing it is if God can honor you and God can honor your family. I tell you, becoming a billionaire is rubbish compared to that. You can be a poor brother.

You don't earn so much. You don't have much in your bank account, but you're a person whom God honors. You are more blessed than all those people with their millions and billions and trillions.

It is. So, you'll see that in the long run. If you don't see it now, you'll certainly see it when Christ comes back.

Those are the people who really spent their life usefully on the earth. Those who decided in every area to honor God completely, never to do anything wrong. If they have to pay their taxes, they will pay it exactly.

Maybe there are certain income you have which the IRS can never find out. Okay. But God sees it.

Are you going to be honest about it? The Romans 13 says we have to pay our taxes. We read that even Jesus paid his taxes through Peter when the people came and asked for the temple tax. I'm talking about a small thing like that.

Honoring God, about being faithful in little things, faithful with money, never to have anything with us which we have borrowed from somebody and not returned. Never to take advantage of anybody in any way. These are the little, little things in which we honor God.

Oh, I wish I could raise up brothers and sisters in a church where everybody will seek to honor God. Not to become great preachers. No.

I never in my life had an intention to be a preacher. When I first became a Christian, I didn't even know the Bible. I read the Bible for the first time after I was born again.

But I decided I want to honor God. I have no intention to be a full-time worker or preacher. That's something God called me to later.

But I said I want to honor God in little things. Whatever this is the right thing to do, I would do it. I remember in the Navy, once, I'll give you one example.

I was appointed in charge of all the boats in the naval base in one port in India. And, you know, all the officers like me could take the boats for our own private use, provided we paid for the diesel that you put into the boat and then you pay for the fuel. But when the captain, that means the commanding officer of the whole unit, took the boat, officers who worked under him would be reluctant to send him a bill for the fuel.

So how could he show how the boat was taken? Everybody would write, ah, the captain has gone for harbor inspection in his boat. Well, he didn't go for any harbor inspection. He went for a picnic with his family.

So he was supposed to pay, but that's what every boat officer came, did. Until one day I was appointed as a boat officer. I was only about 24 years old.

And I sent the captain a bill. First time in his life he gets a bill for going on a picnic. And the one who was second in command, he was a commander under the captain, came to me and said, Lieutenant Poonen, don't you know, didn't the earlier officer tell you what to do when the captain takes the boat? Put it as harbor inspection.

I said, sir, he took it out for a picnic with his family. And he has to pay for it just like anybody else. Well, he couldn't say anything to that.

But in half an hour I was transferred out of my job. I said, fine. They shunted me off to another job.

And I said, OK, I can tell you instances like that that happened in my life in the Navy. OK, it was inconvenient and a bit humiliating to be kicked out of where I was. And but I saw I didn't know where it was finally going to end.

But the Lord watched me doing that in different situations on the ship and in the naval base over a period of years. And then one day the Lord said, I'm calling you to serve me. You quit your job.

I said, wow. You're calling me to serve you. What an honor.

Then I realized now when I look back, it wasn't just that the Lord picked out some name from somewhere. I saw from this verse that he is seeking to honor those who would honor him. And I realized as I look around, there are so many people whom God could have chosen.

I remember years ago, I said, Lord, India has got one thousand three hundred million people. More than four times the population of the United States. More than four times.

And the area is much less than the U.S., probably one third of the U.S. And I said, Lord, with these one thousand three hundred million people in India, where are the prophets? Don't you love India? Where are the prophets in this country? Haven't you called anybody? And the Lord said to me, yes, I did call some. But I have to test them. They failed.

Some went after money. Some married the wrong person. They fell in love with somebody who was not wholehearted and various things.

I test. I don't appoint a man for his ministry before I test him through many, many, many situations. And then I decide whether I can trust him.

If he honors me, I will honor him. He doesn't honor me. I just set him aside.

He won't send him to hell, but he'll miss out on what God sent him to earth for. That's the thing that ripped my heart, Lord. I did not know in my unconverted days as a young man, as a teenager or anything, what you called me for.

But when I really got converted and became a serious Christian, I realized that when I was in my mother's womb, God had a plan for my life. And that's true of all of you who are listening to me. Whether it will be fulfilled or not depends on you.

It doesn't depend on God. It depends on you. It depends on one thing, whether you will honor God in your life.

Not by attending a meeting like this or giving a little money in the offering box. God's not a beggar and he's not bankrupt. He doesn't need your money.

That's what I keep preaching. He needs people. The Bible says present your body as a living sacrifice, not your money.

God's looking for people who will give him their body and their mind, their whole personality. And say, Lord, you sent me to this earth, brought me out of my mother's womb one day to be one who will honor you in my life. I want to do that.

You gave me a family so that I could honor you by bringing up that family in a God-fearing way and teach my children to honor you. Not just feed them, clothe them and educate them and get them all established in good jobs. That's all necessary so they don't become beggars.

We don't want our children to be homeless people standing on the street asking for money. That's why we educate them. But our primary purpose is we must teach them to honor God.

Because the promise is those who honor me, I will honor. I wish you'll never forget this. God doesn't honor everybody.

He honors those who honor him. We must teach our children to stand up for the truth, even if they suffer loss. And to be different from people around them.

In our schools in India, it's very common for children to cheat in their final examinations. They don't study something and sometimes even the parents send little bits of paper in their pockets with answers written down. Or they encourage them to look at their neighbor's answer paper and copy and things when the teacher is not looking.

There's a lot of that cheating going on. One of my children, I asked him once, I say, you know all the children in your class. Tell me who all don't cheat because you know very well.

All the children know in the class who all cheat. And he said to me, Dad, there are only two of us. Who don't cheat.

And both of us are from CFC. I was so delighted to hear that. Not delighted to hear that all the others were cheating.

But delighted to hear that two children from CFC were upright. They didn't bother about whether they got good marks or not. They want to do what is right.

And it is wrong to cheat in an examination. It's a small thing. But if we teach our children from the beginning, don't cheat in anything.

Don't cheat. Be upright. Don't take what belongs to somebody else.

If you borrow something, return it. Little, little things, you know. Honoring God is not in the big things like little, little.

It's in the little things. I mean, when the children go to school, we don't tell them now, don't murder anybody today. Don't commit adultery on the way home.

No, those are not the things they are in. Small, small things. Where do we teach our children obedience? At home, first of all, from early childhood.

Honor your father and mother so that it may go well with you. And that you may live long on the earth. Don't you want your children to live their full term on the earth, whatever the length of their life is, which God has planned.

And that's different for different ones. Not everybody lives up to the age of 90 or 100. But there's a certain plan that God has for everyone.

For Apostle John, it was 95. For his own brother, James, it was 30. His head was cut off when he was 30.

So God's plan is different for everyone, but they completed their planned life on earth. And that's what we should desire for all our children. And there's only one thing you need to do.

Teach them to honor God. Honor God yourself. And don't be like Eli, who does not want to hurt the children.

Oh, they'll get hurt if I say this. And you fathers and mothers, don't fight with each other on this issue. When you see one of you is strict with the children, support your partner who's strict with the children.

Because that will be your salvation. If the dad is trying to discipline and punish the child, don't go and stand in the way and say, no, no, no. No, no, he's a nice boy or a nice girl.

Yeah, he's nice. But if he doesn't honor God, God will not honor him. It's so very, very important.

And I remember another one of my sons was playing with somebody out on the streets in Bangalore. And they're very small, five, six years old. And I saw them, you know, like children are when they fight some disagreement and they're struggling with each other.

And I asked him, why did you go fighting with him? And he's only five, six years old. I said, he came fighting with me. I said, I don't care.

If he comes fighting with you, you're not to fight back. So I said, now we got to go to his house and apologize for what you did. He asked me, what about him? Doesn't he have to apologize? No, I'm not bothered whether he apologizes or not.

You have to apologize. So I took my son to his neighbor's house and knocked at the door. And that man opened the door and I said, my son wants to say something to your son.

They were both five, six years old. And my son said, I'm sorry for fighting with you. That other boy said nothing.

Okay. He came away. And my son said, he never apologized.

I said, I don't care if you apologize or not. Today, my son is selling the Lord. Where that boy is, I don't know.

But if he continued like that, I'm sure he's on his way to hell. The father who, oh, I want to defend my son. I'm very happy that somebody else's son came to apologize to my son.

Dear brothers, take it very, very seriously. The way your children behave with others. I mean, it doesn't matter how they behave.

That's none of our business. Right from day one. In our home, we must honor God.

Never allow something into your home that you cannot have Jesus approving of. Ask yourself, everything that goes on in your home. Do you want Jesus to be in your home? Then make sure you honor him in everything in your home.

I'm not saying you can't have any entertainment. So long as it's not filthy. Even worldly sort of entertainment is okay for children.

They need something. They can't be studying their books all the time. But it must be clean.

We must not have any entertainment in our house which is unclean or evil. Or that dishonors God in any way. So be very careful in all these areas.

Learn a lesson from this that Samuel, who corrected Eli, did not do it for his own children. And it's possible that we hear all these things and we agree with it 100%. And we don't practice it in our own homes.

No. There is a feeling that because I'm a child of God, God will do everything automatically for me. I want to show you some verses in scripture.

And I want you to face up to them honestly. The words of Jesus, first of all. Turn with me to John's Gospel, Chapter 14.

Please turn in your Bibles to John 14 and become familiar with these verses. John 14. And I want you to read slowly, carefully.

In your Bible. And tell me if what I'm saying is not correct. He who has my commandments, John 14, 21.

And keeps them. Is the one who loves me. Okay, we understand that.

One step at a time. How do you know you love the Lord? All of us will say we love the Lord. I hope.

First of all, you must have his commandments. How do you have his commandments? By reading the Bible. If you don't read the Bible, if you don't have the habit of reading the Bible, you will never know God's commandments.

How did I discover God's commandments? It was not revealed to me from heaven. I read the Bible. I read it carefully.

I read it slowly. And I said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And. Once you know them, you have to keep them.

That is the proof that you love the Lord. Not how well you sing on Sunday morning. He who has my commandments and keeps them loves me.

And he who reads the Bible and does not keep my commandment does not love the Lord. That's what the Lord says. Further.

And if you love me, you'll be loved by my father. Hey, I thought God loves everybody. God so loved the world.

Do you know there are degrees of God's love? Does God love the unbelievers? Sure. John 3:16. God so loved the whole world.

Does he love the terrorists? Sure. He loves the terrorists. Jesus died for the terrorists also.

But then who is this person to whom it says the father loves this person? There are degrees of God's love. There's a way in which God loves the people in the world. I mean, you may love.

All the poor people in the world and give them some money now and then. But it's not the way you love your own children. No.

You also have degrees of love. You may love your neighbor's children. If they are in need, you may help them, but not as much as you love your children.

If some neighbor down the street is child in a hospital, you won't be as concerned as if your own child is in a hospital. It's not that you hate that neighbor's child. You love him.

But there are degrees of love. Even in your own family. Those who are closer to your family may be first cousins or very close.

Your brother and family are close to them. Someone who is a little more distant family member. You don't love them so much.

It's not wrong. We are human. We cannot have the same degree of love for a distant family member as we have for our own children.

That's what God also is saying. God so loved the world. True.

But here's a special type of person whom God loves in a much deeper way. He who has my commandments and keeps them. The father will love him and I will love him and reveal myself to him.

Boy, I'm so thankful in my life for the amazing ways in which Jesus has revealed himself to me. Particularly in this great truth that he was tempted exactly like me. In every area.

Without sinning. That's what set me on the path of overcoming sin. When Jesus revealed to me in my heart, 16 years after I was born again.

I was born again when I was 19 and a half. It's when I was 35 and a half. That Jesus revealed himself to me as one who was tempted like me.

In every point. And did not sin. That's what set me on the path of overcoming sin.

47 years ago. Changed my life. It was a revelation that God gave.

But it says here, I will reveal myself. In other words. You know, let me use an example.

Do you remember that story of the man who earned 10 talents with one talent? And then there was a guy who had one talent who buried it and he didn't have anything. And the Lord said, take that one talent and give it to the man who has 10. And the people said, he's already got 10.

Why give him some more? But Jesus said, he who has to him more will be given. That's an amazing thing. That's not communism.

Communism doesn't distribute equally. To him who is faithful with what he has, he gets more. It's like that.

Many believers get much more than other believers. They get more revelation. They get more blessing.

Because they are faithful with what little they have. And their spiritual wealth keeps on increasing. So, I will disclose myself to him.

Now I want to show you another verse in verse 23. John 14, 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him.

Again, the same thing. God so loved the world, but here's a person whom the father loves in a special way. Because he keeps my word.

And we will come to him and make our abode with him. You say, Lord, I thought anyone who asked Jesus to come into my heart, he comes into the heart. Yes.

Then what does this mean? That the one who keeps his word, the Lord will come and make his abode with him. There's a special way in which the Lord comes and resides in the heart of those who obey him. They experience the presence of the Lord with them, which the average ordinary believer never experiences.

Those who don't know the pathway of obedience to God's word, never experience that. Let me show you another verse in John 15 and verse 7. John 15, verse 7. The Lord said, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, in other words, you're obedient to my words. Ask whatever you wish.

And it will be done for you. We have read such promises and we have tried it and say it doesn't work. Be honest.

And many things you ask for what you wish and you never got it. And finally you give up saying, yeah, these are all fantastic promises, but they don't work in real life. I'll tell you, they do work.

But they don't work for those who don't keep the conditions. There's a big capital IF in verse 7. If you abide in me, you have to be free and free from sin to abide in him. And my words abide in you.

You're really serious about obeying my words, the Lord says. You ask whatever you wish. It will be done for you.

I want to experience that more and more in my life. Because when I abide in the Lord, I'm not going to ask him to give me a better job or better money or any such thing. I'm saying, Lord, I want my one life on earth to glorify you.

I don't want to be famous. I don't want to be a great preacher. I don't want to be well known.

I don't want any honor in this world or even from Christians. I want to live my earthly life completing the work you planned for me to do when I was in my mother's womb. Like it says in Psalm 139, before my first day on earth, God had already written down in his mind or his book all the things I was supposed to do.

And my prayer has always been, Lord, I want to finish the work you gave me to do. That's how long I want to live. If you want me to live up to 100, I'll live up to 100.

If that takes that much time to finish the work you gave me to do. But I don't want to live beyond the time I finish. Once I finish the work God gave me to do, Jesus, 33 and a half, he went.

But I must finish the work God gave me to do. Definitely. And if you have a passion like that and you say, I will not let anything else interfere with that in my life.

I don't care how many people I offend and I don't care what people think of me if I say, sorry, I can't do that. I get invited to lots and lots of places and I say, sorry, I don't have any meaning to come there. I don't have any meaning to come there.

People try to entice me with money and all that and I say, I'm not interested. Money doesn't hold any attraction for me. I want to finish the work God gave me to do.

You have a passion, my brothers. You're in secular jobs. And God knows that.

Jesus was a carpenter for 90% of his life he was a carpenter. He was not a full-time worker. It was only 10% of his life.

90% of his life he was a carpenter. He was in a secular job and he completed the work God gave him to do. If you're in a secular job, there's a work God gave you to do, complete it in faithfulness.

But it must be the one you are called to be. And Jesus prayed and God gave him a particular job as a carpenter or whatever it was. And that's what he did.

So, when you abide in the calling God has given you. Okay, here's another verse, John 15 and verse 10. If you keep my commandments and abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I spoke to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full. That's amazing. I can have a life of continuous joy.

What does it mean joyful? That means up to the brim of joy. There's no room for complaint or grumbling or anything. Because I want to keep his commandments and abide in his love.

These are some amazing promises that sometimes we have just skimmed through. Turn with me to John 17. John 17 is a great chapter with amazing promises.

One of the most fantastic promises in the whole Bible or assurances is in John 17 verse 23. To me, that's my favorite verse in the whole Bible. I've often said my favorite verse in the whole Bible is not John 3, 16, God so loved the world.

It's John 17, 23. That my heavenly father loves me as he loved Jesus. John 17, 23.

That the world may know that you love them even as you have loved me. Can you imagine what that means to me? That my father in heaven loves me, who was a sinner for so many years, redeemed by the blood of the lamb. But today he's given me his Holy Spirit and loves me just like he loved his son when he sent his son to the earth.

And what he did for Jesus, he will do for me. Can you imagine the assurance that brings to my heart? The comfort it brings to my heart? The deliverance from fear and anxiety that it brings to my heart when I know that what he did for Jesus, he'll do for me. Because of John 17, 23.

That's why it's my favorite verse. But it's not for everybody. That's what I want to say.

It's not for everyone. It says in verse 9 of John 17, 9, who it is for. He says, I'm asking for these people who are totally committed to me.

These 11 disciples are totally 100% mine. I do not ask on behalf of the world. I'm not praying this prayer for people in the world.

I'm praying it for these whom you have given me. That's not a prayer for a worldly believer. That's not a prayer for someone whose ambitions are all in the world.

To get on and become some big shot in the world. These are for those who say, Lord, I may have an earthly profession. But my goal in life is to finish the work you gave me to do.

Whatever it is. It's like Paul, you know, we know that Paul was a tent maker and he earned his living that way and supported himself. And later on in his life, when he became too old to stitch tents, he got an inheritance from his father.

Which was denied him when he became a Christian. His father was a rich businessman, a Jew in Tarsus. But when Paul got into prison, we read that he sent Paul's sister's son, came to him with some money.

And that's how Paul could live for two years, paying rent in the richest city in the world, in Rome. Have you ever wondered how Paul lived paying his own rent in Rome for two years? As you read in the last verse of Acts 28, the last few verses. God provided for him.

God took care of him. God honors those who honor him. But if you ask Paul at any time in his life, what are you? He'd say, I'm an apostle.

He'd say, oh, I thought you were a tent maker. He says, that's just to earn my living. That's not my calling.

His job was only a means to earn a living. I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, whatever job you may have, you have a calling in the body of Christ. To be a finger perhaps, or a tongue, or an eye, or an ear, or a hand, or a leg, or perhaps just a nail.

But you have a function in the body of Christ. Something that God has appointed for you. And he chose you to be a part of that body before you were born.

That's what you must fulfill. And your earthly job is only a means of earning your living, taking care of your family so that you don't become a homeless man. And educating your children, feeding, clothing, educating your children, all that is necessary so that they grow up and don't become a burden on society.

That's why you have a job. And as the cost of living goes up, God gives you better jobs and all that, and that's great. But don't think that is your calling in life.

No. You'll have tremendous regret when you stand before Jesus Christ one day, if all you lived for was your earthly job. If that was primary in your mind and you never looked at your earthly job as a means of earning a living.

You say, well that was for Paul who was an apostle. Well, no. An apostle is one part of the body of Christ, and you are another part of the body of Christ.

Some have a more important function, I agree. That some parts of our body are more important, like my tongue and eyes and ears may be more important than my nails. But the nails are also needed.

And some parts of the body fulfill a function nobody else can fulfill. For example, if I'm cleaning itchy somewhere, my eyes and tongue and ears are useless. It's only my nails that help.

So there are certain functions only some ordinary believers can do. So there's no member of the body who is unimportant. Not a single member of the body is unimportant.

You, I don't care if you're a sister or a young person, not gifted, don't know the Bible much. You have a function. You must believe that you have a function in the body of Christ.

That's not to have high thoughts about myself. High thoughts is if you want to be an apostle or a prophet. Say, Lord, I'm not asking you to make me an apostle or a prophet or any such thing.

I'm asking you to help me to fulfill that particular function you planned for me from my mother's womb. I want to fulfill that. And I want to work and earn my living so that I don't become a burden on society.

And I want to bring up my children in godly ways so that they can be a testimony for you. And our family can be a good testimony for your glory. Now forget past failures.

Many of us are older. We have made mistakes in the past. We cannot do anything about that.

And we must not sit weeping over past failures. No. God overlooks our times of ignorance.

And I believe that many of you and others who have come to CFC churches have heard certain truths in a CFC church that you've never heard in any other church in your whole life. That's the truth. And if you're honest, you'll acknowledge that.

You probably never knew there was a difference between the new covenant and the old covenant. You probably never knew that when you're under grace, sin can never rule over you. And that God gives his grace only to the humble.

These are things we preach in CFC which are not preached in most other churches. And many other things like the way we bring up children and all that. But what shall we do about all the years when we did not hear this and we were in some dead system and we made so many mistakes in our past life.

Here is a verse for all of you. One of my favorite verses. Acts 17 verse 30.

Please remember it so that you don't live under condemnation about your past failures. Acts 17 verse 30. God overlooks.

You know the meaning overlooks? He ignores the years when you were ignorant of his ways. Hallelujah. God forgets about all the years when you foolishly did a lot of stupid things because you were ignorant of his ways.

He overlooks it. He says forget it. Forget it my son, my daughter, forget it.

Don't worry about it. Don't condemn yourself for it. You were ignorant.

I overlook it. But now change your mind. Repent means change your mind and seek to fulfill for the rest of your life the plan I had for you from your mother's womb.

Those who honor me I will honor. You say but I wasted so many years of my life. Let me give you the example of a man who wasted 30 years of his life.

I mean I've heard of a man who wasted 30 years of his life fighting Christianity, killing Christians. You know him, the Apostle Paul. You know what he said at the end of his life? He got converted around the age of 30 and he lived another 37 years.

When he was 67, the Lord told him, okay, your time on earth is over. Let me tell you what he says in 2 Timothy 4. He says I'm ready to be, 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 6. I'm ready to be poured out. That means I'm about to die.

The time of my departure has come. He had a warning. Paul, you're about to die.

What is my testimony? Paul says, I fought the good fight. I finished the course. I've kept the faith.

I have finished my appointed course, which Paul says, you know, I was chosen from my mother's womb. For 30 years, I went astray, but God overlooked the times of ignorance. And from the age of 30, I began to be a serious Christian.

And so I got only 37 years, but I finished the course. You see, can a man who wasted almost half his life, not only going astray, but killing Christians. Can such a man finish the course? Yes.

It's a wonderful thing about God. That he overlooks the times of ignorance and makes us fulfill his plan, even though for so many years of our life, we messed it up. I'll tell you why.

Because God in his foreknowledge knew that this guy, Paul, will get converted only when he's 30. He didn't grow up in a Christian home where from the age of two, he was taught God's ways. No, he grew up in a home where he became a violent opposer of Christianity.

But God turned him around because the guy was sincere. And from the time of 30, you know what his attitude was? I have to make up for lost time. I've got to run faster than the others because I wasted so many years.

You know, when God opened my eyes, when he filled me afresh with the Holy Spirit, when I was 35. And opened my eyes to wonderful truths about the new covenant and how I could fulfill God's plan for my life. I looked back over my life and said, Lord, what have I been doing these last 16 years since I was born again? Yeah, I was preaching and doing so many things, but I never took seriously to finish the course, to finish what you appointed for me to do.

And this is what comforted me. That God, who sees the future, overlooks the times of ignorance. And I'm so thankful that he overlooked my times of ignorance.

I never had a spiritual father to teach me like I'm teaching you, step by step, how to be an overcomer. And I, well, God had mercy on me. So I look at young people, I looked at young people in my church and said, you guys are 16 years old and you're hearing these truths.

I never understood them till I was 35. So you have a greater chance of running ahead of me and accomplishing more, but I don't think you will. Because I'm so repentant of my past failures that I run at top speed now.

I don't know whether you guys will run at top speed. And because I'm so repentant of my past failures, I run at top speed now. And you guys will take it easy.

I'll beat you in the race. Don't take it easy. Be thankful if you got to understand these truths at a young age, much younger than I was.

Be thankful if you come to a church to hear the truth at a very young age or soon after you're converted. You're a blessing. Our children are so blessed to know these things from a young age.

But it's not guaranteed that those children will go ahead of their fathers spiritually. Because they may not take things as seriously as their fathers did. It's all a question of how seriously one takes it.

Okay, I'll conclude with Revelation. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. You know what it says in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Five out of the seven churches were backslidden. The elders were backslidden.

And they are given strong warnings. Two out of the seven churches were good churches and they were encouraged. But to all seven, to all seven, the Lord says, to those who overcome, I will give this reward.

To those who overcome, I'll give this reward. To those who overcome, I'll give this reward. And I think particularly of the last one, Revelation 3.21. If you overcome, and imagine this is spoken to the worst church.

Laodicea was the worst of the seven. And even to that church, if you feel you're the worst believer who got converted, this is for you. If you overcome, even though you've been a lukewarm, half-hearted, Christian like a Laodicean, neither hot nor cold.

Never mind, God overlooks your past life. Now, he says, change your mind. I'm standing at the door and knocking.

Revelation 3.20, I want to make you an overcomer. Open the door. And if you overcome, verse 21, you will sit with me on my throne.

Really? This Laodicean elder, who was such a backslider, the worst of all the elders, he's going to sit with Jesus on the throne? Exactly. If he takes seriously what he heard, at least from now. I want to say to every one of you, my dear brothers and sisters, and I mean it.

You have an opportunity to sit with Jesus on his throne. What honor on this earth, what accomplishment on earth is greater than that? What money on earth is greater than that? To sit with Jesus on his throne. That's what I want.

May the Lord help us all to be overcomers. According to the light we have, when a child is in first grade, he has to overcome little things like addition, subtraction. Very simple things.

He's not asked to overcome trigonometry and geometry and calculus. That will come later. He doesn't have to study sodium and chloride, make salt or any such thing.

No. 2 plus 2. CAT is cat. So, at each level, to be overcome is to be faithful at the level you're in.

Be faithful. God bless you all. Thank you for listening patiently.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help each one of us to take the one life you've given us seriously. We know that you don't treat all believers the same, because you honor those who honor you.

And those who overcome will sit with you on their throne, and the others won't. We want to be overcomers. We want to honor you.

Yes, Lord. I have desired that for everyone who heard me today. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/0-UCXaCf8Qk.mp4>

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