

# God's Highest Purpose for His People

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of leading a life filled with the Holy Spirit, highlighting the need for Christians to live in the new covenant with a constant dependence on God's grace. It stresses the significance of genuine humility, forgiveness, and seeking God's presence and joy always. The message encourages believers to come up higher in their spiritual walk and experience a transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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**Scripture:** Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Peter 5:5, Luke 18:1

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## Description

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## Transcript

And as you all know, the main emphasis in my ministry the last half a century has been to lead Christians into the new covenant, because I find that so many, many Christians, though they have accepted Christ as their savior and their sins are forgiven, they live such an up and down life. Okay, that's not bad. But they're satisfied with that.

That's the bad part of it. And they have been cheated of their birthright. The devil has stolen from Christians their birthright.

And their birthright is what Jesus purchased on the cross in his resurrection, and his ascension to heaven, and sending the Holy Spirit. And I find through the years, the ministry of the Holy Spirit has also been tremendously counterfeited. There's so much of counterfeiting, and I can imagine why the devil does that.

What are the things that are made counterfeit in the world? I mean, nobody counterfeits toilet paper or brown paper. They counterfeit currency notes. They counterfeit gold.

They counterfeit diamonds. What does that teach us? Nobody counterfeits cheap, worthless things. It's only valuable things.

So there are so many things in the Christian life which are not counterfeited. But when it comes to the new covenant and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, that's been counterfeited so much, which proves to me that these are some of the most valuable things in the Christian life. I know that from my own experience, because I accepted Christ as my Savior exactly 64 years ago, in 1959, when I was still working in the Navy.

And for 16 years after that, I thought I was filled with the Spirit, but I was not. Because my life was up and down, and up and down, and up and down, and defeated, and then coming up, and then also I would be so frequently discouraged and gloomy. And I knew that was not God's will, but I didn't know how to get out of it.

I was like in a trap. But I read my Bible every day. I had even quit my job in the Navy to serve the Lord full time, but I was defeated.

But the interesting thing was that I had a gift to speak, even in those days. I mean, God gave me a gift to speak when I was 24 years old. And I was speaking to 5,000 people at that age.

And it continued like that. But inwardly, I was a defeated person. My thought life was not pure.

I'd get angry, even at home. And my attitude towards others was not always loving and good. I thought, well, that's normal Christian life.

You sin, and you ask the Lord to forgive you, and you sin, and you ask the Lord to forgive you, and you just go round and round and round and round and never get out of that circle. The devil deceived me. But I got so fed up that at one time in my life, I said, Lord, if it's going to go on like this, that I'm going to be a hypocrite, preaching things that are not true in my inner life, preaching things that are not true of me 24 hours a day, seven days of the week, and preaching things which are very clever, that impress people, but not real in my life.

I'm sure I'm not pleasing to you. And so, Lord, I will quit full-time Christian work. I'll still be a Christian.

I'll attend some church, but I'll never preach again. I'll just sit at the back and pay my tithes and just go along, try my best to live whatever Christian life I know, which is just up and down and up and down. But I cannot continue like this if there is no better way.

And I got so desperate, and I remember I had hit rock bottom, and then God did an amazing thing. One day, just like that, He filled me with the Holy Spirit. I was praying with another brother, and I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And it changed my life. All of a sudden, from that day, I had hit rock bottom. I couldn't go any lower.

The graph of my life started going up and up and up. It's not a sudden shoot up to the mountaintop. I haven't reached the mountaintop yet.

The mountaintop is to be perfectly like Jesus Christ. That's a long way. But I started the Christian race.

It's a marathon race, and I started it. And when I look back over the last 48 years, 48 and a half years actually, from that day in January 12, 1975, and God met with me and filled me with the Holy Spirit, my life has been just going upwards with the greater revelation of God and consistent growth in the Christian life. I want to ask you, dear brothers and sisters, I don't want to condemn anybody.

God's Word never condemns. Please remember this. If you hear a message that condemns you, either that guy who's preaching does not know the Lord, or you have got the message in the wrong way.

One of the two. Because Romans 8, 1 is very clear. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

So you need to ask yourself whether you condemn yourself when you listen to a message. I hope you won't do that today. Please reject it.

Reject all condemnation. Reject all discouragement and say, Lord, I'm going to seek you. I don't care how long it takes, but I want you to meet with me in a new way.

I want to experience a genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit, not to be able to testify to it about somewhere. No, I'm not bothered whether people think I'm filled with the Spirit or not. I want to be genuinely filled with the Spirit, and God must know that's true.

That's enough for me. It doesn't matter what other people think. In fact, what happened to me was I was quite a popular preacher way back then, before that experience, because I had a gift, and nobody knew about my inner, defeated life.

Mostly my thought, my external testimony was perfect, but my thoughts and my attitudes at home, particularly the way I lived, that was not consistent with what I was preaching. But I carried on like that. But when this change took place in my life, it, as I said, it was completely different.

And one of the main things that gradually disappeared from my life is discouragement. As I said, I used to be frequently discouraged, and I began to study the scriptures afresh. That's one of the things I did from the very next day onwards, from that day God first filled me.

I said, Lord, if this is really the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament will become a new book for me, because the Holy Spirit wrote it, and I'll get revelation on it, not just understanding. Please note, there's a difference between understanding and revelation. Many people go to Bible school and get understanding.

I thank God I never went to a Bible school. The preachers and the books that have blessed me the most in my life were written and spoken by men who never went to a Bible school. And I thank God I didn't go.

Jesus never sent any of his apostles to the Bible school. Paul had gone to a Bible school before he was converted, when he was a Jew. He had spent three years under a professor called Gamaliel.

And so what did God do when Paul was converted? We read in Galatians 1, God took him to Arabia for three years to get all that chaff out of his head, what he had learned in Bible school, and God could teach him something new. So I saw all these things, and I said, Lord, I want revelation. Revelation is something which, when you get revelation on the Word, it changes your life.

Understanding only fills your head with knowledge, and it may make you proud that you know so much, and you can impress others with what you know. But revelation, it does exactly the opposite. It makes you humble.

It makes you more God-fearing. And that's what began to happen when I started reading the Bible. It was the same book that I had read and studied for years, but I was getting revelation.

And I'll tell you, one of the first things I saw, I started, you know, I started after God met with me that day in January 75. I said, I'm going to read the New Testament all over again. And I started in Matthew chapter one.

And here's one of the first things I got revelation on. In the first page of the New Testament, please turn with me to Matthew chapter one and verse 21. Here we read.

This is the angel of the Lord coming to Joseph and telling him that Mary has been, has conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit and not through any other man. And then he tells Joseph to call this baby Jesus. The son that will be born is Jesus.

And the meaning of Jesus, the reason why he's called Jesus, that's his name, means Matthew 121, he will save his people from their sins. Now, I never, I mean, I read that for years, but it never struck me like it did that day, revelation. I knew I was saved from hell.

And most Christians know that they are saved from hell. In fact, they only want to be saved from hell. I tell you, the average Christian does not want to be saved from his sins.

He wants to be saved from hell. He wants to go to heaven when he dies. But here it says he'd save him from his sins.

Now there's a lot of difference between being forgiven our sins and being saved from our sins. Forgiven is something even in the Old Testament. What was distinctive about this promise? In Psalm 103, you know, the well-known Psalm of David, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of his benefits.

And who forgives all your sins. That's in Psalm 103, 1,000 years before Jesus came, David could say, bless the Lord who forgives all my sins. But Jesus was going to come not to forgive alone, but to save, to deliver us from the sin we are being defeated by, and to bring us into a consistent Christian life.

I began to understand the meaning of grace in a new way. That's another thing that God opened my eyes to. I always thought, well, listen, grace is, you know, we keep saying, well, I do this by God's grace, and God keeps me healthy by his grace, and God's given me enough for my earthly needs by his grace.

And my understanding of grace was God's goodness and his mercy, giving me things that I don't deserve. Like some people say, God's riches at Christ's expense. It's a nice way of saying G-R-A-C-E stands for God's riches at Christ's expense.

I knew all that. But I, and I read the Bible, I found that grace was much more than that. Very much more than that.

I got Revelation on Romans chapter six, please turn with me to Romans chapter six and verse 14. Romans 6, 14, where it says, again, relating to sin. Sin is the main subject in the New Testament.

Sin will not be master over you. Sin will not rule over you. That's not in the Old Covenant.

God never gave a promise to the Jews that sin would not reign over them. In the Old Covenant, the only promise was, he told the Jewish people, if you obey me, your enemies will not rule over you. That is the Amorites and the Philistines and all those otherites there were in those days, they would not rule over them.

And when Israel disobeyed God, then those enemies ruled over them. But that entire Old Testament is a picture of the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, our number one enemies are Satan and sin.

Or like they say, the world, the flesh and the devil. By flesh we mean our self-will. Those are our main enemies.

And none of them will rule over us. We don't have any enemies on earth now. No human being should be your enemy.

I mean, they may consider you an enemy, but you must love your enemies. I don't have any enemies. I mean, a lot of people hate me because of what I preach, because I preach the truth.

And a lot of Christians hate me. But I don't hate any of them. I can stand before God and say that I don't hate a single human being in the whole world, even though a lot of them have tried to trouble me, especially for my Christian faith in India.

But it hasn't made me hate them. But that was not possible before I entered into this New Covenant. So here, sin will not rule over you because you're under grace.

Aha. So this is the meaning of grace. If I really come under grace, evidence will be sin will not rule over me.

You see, it's like you're under this roof now, this building. No matter if there's rain or hail outside, it won't touch you. Not one bit of that rain or hail or anything outside is going to touch you because you're under a roof that protects you.

You go outside the door of this building, and that hail and rain will hit you. So grace is like that. As long as you stay under grace, sin cannot rule over you.

I mean, we understand that in terms of a roof protecting us from the hail and snow and rain, etc. But grace is like that. It's God's amazing power that protects you and delivers you from sin.

Sin cannot rule over you. Sin will not be the master over you. Now, there was no such promise in the Old Covenant.

This is distinctively New Covenant. Jesus will save you from your sin, and how does he do it? By giving you grace. Grace is not a word found in the Old Testament.

Mercy is the word found in the Old Testament. There's a lot of difference between mercy and grace, and I never knew the difference for 16 years of my Christian life. I thought it was the same thing.

Mercy is God's forgiveness. It deals with the past. Grace deals with the future.

Let's put it in that simple way. Mercy deals with all the miserable, wretched things I've done in my past, blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ. And as the Lord says, I will not even remember that.

Hebrews 8 verse 12. I will not remember your sins and your iniquities anymore. Praise God.

I don't want to be happy with that. I don't want to sin again tomorrow and ask the Lord to forgive me again, and again claim Hebrews 8 verse 12. Yeah, the Lord will not remember it.

Yeah, I can live with a clear conscience. Living with a clear conscience is not enough. That's excellent, because a lot of people don't even have a clear conscience.

But the Christian life is more than that. I picture it like this. If, for example, your father was a very rich man, and he left you a fantastic amount of wealth in different banks and properties around the country, and he got a record of it, and you get that file after your father's death, and there's a huge amount of money, and you're not so well-versed in all those details about bank and property and all.

You give it to a lawyer and an attorney, and he cheats you of 95% of it, and you get 5% of it and live in a little hut. Thankful that your dad gave you a little hut to live in, and you're happy. My father gave me a little hut to live in.

Thank God I never even had that. But brother, sister, your dad gave much more to you than that. Some crooked attorney has cheated you of 95% of what your dad left for you.

That's exactly what has happened with Christendom. Christendom has been cheated of more than 95% of what Jesus died and rose again, and ascended and sent the Holy Spirit to give to his people. Claim your inheritance.

That's what I'm saying. And who's the crooked attorney? It's the devil. He's no attorney.

He's an accuser, and his main aim is he's a liar and a thief. Jesus said that in John 10, the thief comes to steal, and that's the devil. And what has he stolen? He's stolen from Christians their birthright.

What Jesus died, rose again, and paid such a heavy price to purchase for us. For three hours on the cross, when Jesus died on the cross, he actually went to hell. That's another thing that the Lord opened my eyes to see, that for the first three hours on the cross, Jesus was not bearing my sins.

It was the last three hours on the cross that he bore my sins. How do I say that? Because the moment a person has sin upon them, God forsakes him. God has got nothing to do with sin, even if that sin is on his beloved son.

And there was Jesus hanging on the cross. He would talk to people. He would talk to his father.

He called him Godfather. Don't lay the sin to their charge. They don't know what they're doing.

Forgive them. He took care of his mother, because his four brothers and two sisters didn't believe in him. So he wanted to hand his brother over to his mother's sister's son, John.

So you take care of him. He was alert enough to forgive a dying thief who asked for forgiveness. So those first three hours, he did a lot of things, but he was talking to his father in heaven.

But from noon on that day till three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus experienced hell. How do we know that? Well, first of all, he stopped calling his father father. It's a very significant difference, which I never realized.

He said, my God, my God, not my father. No. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I learned two things from that simple sentence, as God gave me a revelation.

One, that at that moment, he was not talking, standing before his father. He was standing before the judge of the universe. Was his father, but now he was standing before him as the judge of the universe.

That's why he called him my God. And why was he standing there guilty? Because he was bearing my sin. How that broke me when I realized that revelation after 16 years of being a Christian, I wept and I wept and I wept.

I said, Lord, I never realized I had to sow such a light thing for me to sing that you forgave my sin. But now I realized what you went through. Forsaken by God, that is hell.

Another definition for hell is a place where God has forsaken you completely. No contact with God. And now here's another proof of that.

First that he called him my God and not my father. That means the relationship, your relationship was broken. And why was it broken? Because of my sin, my sin.

That's why his relationship with the father was broken. And the other thing I see there is he doesn't seem to know why. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I say, Lord Jesus, I can tell you why.

God has forsaken you because of my sin. How is it Jesus, whose mind is a million times sharper than mine, did not know the answer to that. I'll tell you.

Because when you're in hell, your mind doesn't work right. Your mind does not work right when you're in hell. You don't even know the answer to a simple question like that, that when you sin, you're forsaken by God.

And he has to ask the question, why? Why? Never did Jesus have to ask the father why in his entire life, except that time. That is another proof that he was really forsaken. And I don't believe that we can understand the full agony of what Jesus went through at that time.

But I hope you all see there's something for you. I mean, I remember it came home to me as personal for me. I remember when I asked the Lord for one day for revelation on the cup, which he kept saying in Gethsemane, please take this cup away from me, take this cup away from me.

What was that cup? It was this being forsaken on the cross. That's the only thing Jesus did not want. He'd be willing to suffer any amount of physical punishment or rebuke or insult or anything from man, but he never wanted to be forsaken by the father, because that was what he had been in fellowship with him all eternity.

He'd been in fellowship with the father, and he never wanted that broken even for one second. And I used to think of an imaginary conversation going on between Christ and the father in the garden of Gethsemane, when he was pleading with the father to not let him be forsaken. Don't take this cup away from me.

And I can imagine that it was not a real conversation. I'm imagining the conversation like this, that the father tells Jesus, there's no need for you to go to the cross. You can come straight up from Gethsemane to heaven, because you lived a perfect life for 33 1/2 years, but Zach will go to hell.

And Jesus, this is my imaginary conversation, Jesus says, oh, Zach will go to hell. Okay, father, I'll go to the cross. And I remember that day when that revelation hit me.

Boy, I don't know how long I wept. Every time I remember it, it moves my heart that therefore Jesus said he'd go to the cross and put your name there, my brother, sister, put your name there. It'll become personal.

He need not have gone to Calvary. He could have gone straight up from Gethsemane to heaven, but then you would have gone to hell. And because he thought of you personally, put your name there.

He said, father, I'll go. That made me love Jesus like anything. I said, Lord, I'll never again live for myself.

And I decided from that day, I would never live for myself. I would never live to make money. I would never live for man's honor.

No, if Jesus was willing to pay this tremendous price to save me from an eternal, not just to save me from an eternal hell, but so that I could be with him for all eternity. To me, heaven is not just a comfortable place with golden streets and mansions and glory and all that. I'll tell you what heaven is to me, since I've experienced a genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit, is the presence of Jesus Christ.

To me, the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not in speaking in tongues. No. I've spoken in tongues for 48 years, and it has delivered me from discouragement.

One of the main things the gift of tongues did for me was that. I never use it in public because I do what I stand with what Paul said, five words in English or a known language is better than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue in a meeting. That's in 1 Corinthians 14.

But he says, when a man speaks in tongues, he speaks to God. So that I do, but I never use it in public. But that's not the main thing to me in the Christian, the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

To me, the main thing that happened in the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus with me and awareness of the presence of Christ. And if that hasn't happened to you, my brother, sister, seek for a genuine, not only a genuine, but a continuous fullness of the Holy Spirit. The word in Ephesians 5:18, which says be filled with the Spirit really means be being filled, be being filled.

It means be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. And that is God's will for us all the time to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. So the rivers of living water never stop flowing, rivers of joy and peace, continuous fullness.

That is God's will for us. Nobody could experience it in the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant, whenever it speaks about Gideon being filled with the Spirit or even John the Baptist being filled with the Spirit, is always the Holy Spirit upon them, never in them.

Never, not even one person in the Old Covenant had the Holy Spirit within. Jesus was the first person who walked on earth as a man with the Spirit of God inside him. And that is what he gives us today.

The presence of Jesus. Now let me read to you something from Psalm 16. Turn with me to Psalm 16.

Here we read, how do I know I'm in God's presence? It's very easy to think I'm in Psalm 16. You have made known, verse 11, Psalm 16 and verse 11. You have made known to me the path of life.

In your presence is fullness of joy. That's the mark of God's presence. Fullness of joy in God's presence.

So from that I deduce something. I understand something. When I don't have fullness of joy, I'm not in God's presence.

It's as simple as that. Two plus two is four. If you get two plus two is three, something is wrong.

Two plus two is always four at all times in every part of the world. In God's presence there is always fullness of joy. Always.

And whenever I make that a law for 48 years, if I at any moment lack fullness of joy, I'm not in God's presence. Something has happened and I've sort of drifted away. I'm not talking about a conscious thinking.

No. I'm not talking about the mind. I'm talking about the spirit.

The spirit is deeper than the soul. The mind is a part of the soul. The spirit is where God dwells.

The spirit is the most holy place where God dwells, which they could not access in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, why was the most holy place blocked off? You know, 1 Thessalonians 5.23 says man is spirit, soul, and body. Three parts.

Just like the three parts of the tabernacle in the Old Testament. Most holy place, holy place, outer court. The outer court is the body.

The holy place refers to the soul, my mind, and my feelings. But the spirit is the most holy place. And God dwelt in the spirit.

He dwelt in the most holy place. The fire of God was on the most holy place of the tabernacle, not in the outer court of the holy place. That teaches me that in the new covenant, God wants to dwell in my spirit, not in my feelings.

Today there's such a lot of emotional working up of people in Sunday morning meetings, and they get all worked up with all these strobe lights and emotional singing, and imagine God is there. God is not there through strobe lights and emotional singing and beating drums. No! It's through the Holy Spirit.

So many people think of God as in their feelings. No! I don't have to feel God all the time. But the presence of God, yet one proof of it is fullness of joy.

And joy is not just clapping hands and shouting and screaming. There are a lot of people who go to Sunday morning meetings in their church where they shout and yell and scream and clap their hands, and they come home and shout at their wives or their husbands. What happened to that joy they're supposed to have on Sunday morning? It's a deception.

It's a counterfeit that the devil fooled them with. Don't let the devil ever fool you with that. I'm called through the Holy Spirit to experience the presence of Christ, not just on a Sunday morning, but all the time.

In thy presence is fullness of joy, and the Holy Spirit has come to bring the presence of God to me, to you. Remember what Jesus said in John chapter 14. Please turn with me there.

John's Gospel chapter 14. I will ask, John 14 and verse 16, I will ask the Father, he tells his disciples. So let's read the previous verse and see if it's always in its context.

Read the verse in its context. John 14 verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Okay, let's pause for a moment there. What were the commandments that Jesus gave? You will keep my commandments. That important word there is my, M-wise.

You will keep my commandments, not the 10 commandments that God gave from heaven to Moses. The commandments God gave to Moses were all external mostly. Don't kill, don't murder, don't steal, and things like that.

Don't commit adultery. But in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5, Jesus internalized all of them. He said, now I'm telling you what Moses said was don't commit murder, but I say anger is equal to murder.

Can you read that in Matthew 5? Anger is the seed from which murder comes. So he said, don't get angry. That can lead you to hell.

Now, it's amazing that Jesus taught that anger can finally lead a person to hell. Have you ever heard anybody preach on that? I never heard it in 60 years of my Christian life, but it's written there so plainly in Matthew chapter 5, verse 22, 23, 24, 21, 21 onwards, that this is the new covenant equivalent of murder in the Old Testament. If you love me, you will keep my commandments, not the 10 commandments, but my commandments.

And Jesus went on to explain. The old covenant said you shall not commit adultery, but the new covenant equivalent of that is you don't lust in your minds. Boy, go and ask any man anywhere in the world if that's easy.

I'll tell you honestly, it's easier to control your anger than for a man to control lusting in his mind. Yeah, I had a battle with it, and I know. And every strong man knows that that's such a difficult thing.

And the Lord says, if you lust with your eyes, you've committed adultery. Where do we go from here? How in the world are we going to live this life? Sin shall not rule over you if you come under grace. That's the answer.

Not just if you speak in tongues, but if you experience the Holy Spirit as the Spirit that gives grace. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace in Hebrews chapter 10. The Spirit that gives grace, and grace is better than mercy.

And so, these are some of the commandments. Love all your enemies. If there's one enemy of mine whom I've not loved, I'm disobeying God.

If there's one person on earth you have not forgiven for whatever they did against you. You know what the Bible says in Matthew 6.15? God will not forgive you. How easily we quote 1 John 1.9. If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

True. But He also said in Matthew 6.15, if you don't forgive others, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you. He's not talking about the worldly people.

Your Heavenly Father, He said in Matthew 6.15. He's talking to believers. Will not forgive you. A Father in heaven who will not forgive me? That's right.

If I don't forgive others. So, now that is the lowest level of forgiving others. Oh, I want to forgive others because then God will forgive me.

No. But when I have God's nature in me through the fullness of the Holy Spirit, it's a joy to forgive others just like Jesus as soon as He was crucified. As soon as He was crucified, He said, Father, forgive them.

Boy, what an attitude. As soon as somebody does something to harm me, Father, forgive them. That is what the fullness of the Holy Spirit does.

My brother, sister, have you experienced this? Have you experienced this life where as soon as somebody yells at you, inwardly, inwardly, immediately your attitude is, Father, forgive them. Immediately. Maybe your wife is upset with you.

Your husband is upset with you one day. And the average response is either to yell back or despise your partner saying, oh, poor person. Look at my wife, how she behaved.

Look at my husband, how he behaved. No, that's not Christ-like. Christ-like is, Father, forgive her.

How can we ever live this life? It's impossible humanly speaking. That's why when He said, if you love me, keep my commandments. And if for that moment Jesus had paused and told the disciples, just think for a moment what my commandments are.

And the disciples would have said, Lord, how in the world can we keep it? It's impossible for a human being. And the Lord says, yes, I know that. That's why.

See the next verse. Now you understand the next verse. John 14, 16.

I'm going to ask the Father, and He'll give you a helper. I like the NASB translation of this word, comforter. Helper.

Help me to do what? He's not helping me to make money. He's helping me to obey Jesus' commandments. That's the context.

We must always read a verse in its context. If you love me, keep my commandments. I know they are difficult.

That's why I'm going to pray the Father to give you a helper, to help you keep my commandments. And He will be with you forever. He's not just going to come upon you and help you for a moment to speak in tongues and go away.

No, He's going to be with you forever, so that 24 hours a day He can be with you to help you to overcome, to be an overcomer. You know, in the book of Revelation now, the Lord keeps on talking about overcomers, overcomers, overcomers. To all the churches, He says, be an overcomer, be an overcomer.

That is the Lord's message to the church today. Be an overcomer. To seven churches, the Lord said to Him that overcometh, to Him that overcometh.

What's He saying to New Life Fellowship in Beaver Springs? To Him that overcometh, I will give this, I'll give this, I'll give the crown of life, I'll make Him take part of the tree of life, I'll make Him sit with me on my throne. My brother, sister, that's God's message to you and me. Jesus wants us to sit with Him on His throne.

But how did He do it? Did He get there just because He was the Son of God? He was there from all eternity as the Son of God seated with the Father on His throne. But once He came to earth as a man, He could not go back to that place of equality with the Father on the throne unless He overcame. Now, I'm not preaching heresy.

Please turn with me to Revelation 3 and see verse 21. Let's read Scripture carefully. Scripture's got such a wealth in it that sometimes I go back, I mean, I've been reading this book for 64 years.

I've read the Bible, I think, every day of my life in 64 years. And I find new things in it today. Revelation 3, 21, Jesus says, He who overcomes, I will grant to Him to sit with me on my throne.

That's great. But see there, it says, as I also overcame and I'm sitting with my Father on His throne. So He said, Lord Jesus, how did you get back to your Father's throne? I know you were all eternity with the Father on His throne.

As God, He was equal with the Father from all eternity. But once He came to the earth as a man, He could not sit with the Father on His throne unless He overcame. That's what He says.

Even as I also overcame and therefore sitting with my Father on His throne. And the Lord says, no, I want you to overcome. Then you can sit with me on my throne.

That means you can be reigning with me. It's not some, you know, when you think of thrones on earth, you think of some glory sitting up there and everybody respecting me. Heaven's not going to be like that.

There's some wonderful meaning to sitting with Jesus on the throne, which I don't fully understand. I'll admit that. But it's some fantastic level of glory, of nearness to Christ, which we can experience if we are overcomers on earth.

My dear brother, sister, let me say to you, the quality, please listen to me carefully. The quality of your eternity is going to depend to a large extent on how you're living on earth now. I can't fully explain that, but I believe it's true.

I don't want to just go to heaven. And, you know, some people say, I'm sick and tired of this rotten old earth with this sickness and suffering and trials. Boy, it'd be great to go to heaven.

Well, I'll tell you honestly, that's not why I want to go to heaven. I want to go to heaven because I want the physical presence of Jesus. I have a spiritual presence with me now, but I want to be physically near Jesus.

And I once told the Lord, I said, Lord, I'm ready to go to hell for all eternity if you're there. It'll be heaven for me. The fires of hell won't bother me if you're there.

I'm not going to heaven because it's a cool place with no fire. I'm going to heaven because Jesus is there. I can be with Jesus for all eternity.

I hope that's what you're looking forward to. I'm not at all looking forward to the comforts of heaven. I'm certainly not looking forward to mansions.

What will I do with a 14-bedroom house in heaven? You can have that. I want to be with Jesus. That's all.

And therefore, I believe rewards in heaven. What is the greatest reward? I've thought about this myself. What is the greatest reward God can give me in heaven? Is it a 14-bedroom mansion? No.

I say, Lord, I want to be close to Jesus, my Savior, who gave his life for me. I want to be close to him, as close as possible. That's the only reward I want.

And I discovered that is going to be the reward in heaven. Closeness to Jesus for eternity. You want that? I long for it.

I mean, I've tasted a little bit of Christ's presence with me through the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and it's made such a tremendous difference in my life. I say, Lord, I want this for all eternity. I want to live close to Jesus in a deeper and a deeper way to get to know him.

And there are so many wonderful things the Lord reveals to me through his word. You know, mysteries which are in God's mind. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him.

You read that verse in Psalm 25. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him. The Lord has certain secrets.

He doesn't tell that to everybody. Every government has certain secrets. They don't tell it to everybody.

A husband and wife have certain secrets which they tell to each other. They don't publish it to the whole town. And I want to tell you, God has some secrets.

And we read in Psalm 25 that he reveals those secrets to those who reverence him. Fear him means those who reverence him so much that they do anything for him. What is the proof of my reverence for God? Okay, turn with me to Genesis in chapter 22.

This is the first time in the Bible the word fear of God comes, spoken by God himself. The first time that God says to a man, now I know that you fear me. That was to Abraham.

When did God tell Abraham, now I know that you fear me? Abraham had already obeyed God in many things. Let me give you a little background before I come here. When Abraham was living a retired, comfortable life, he had built his own home, living with his wife, Sarah.

He himself was 75 years old, living a comfortable retired life with all the wealth he had accumulated until age 75. In Ur of the Chaldeans, one day God appears to him and says, leave this place. Finish with your quiet retired life and come with me.

And Abraham says, where to Lord? No, I won't tell you. Just follow me. I'll take you somewhere.

And he obeyed. He respected God. Even his wife, he couldn't even tell his wife.

He tells his wife one day, we are packing up and going. And she says, Abraham, darling, where are we going? He says, I don't know, but we're going. We're following God.

What an amazing woman she was, Sarah. It says, Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. He just said, okay, if God has led you, I'll follow you.

And Sarah has never regretted that, following Abraham as he followed the Lord. But, and then he obeyed God in many other things. But one day God asked him for the ultimate sacrifice.

He said, you long to have a son for many years. Abraham, at the age of a hundred, you got a son, which I gave you, God said. And that son is about 20 years old now.

You're 120. I want you to take that precious son of yours and offer him as a sacrifice. The Lord said that very clearly in Genesis 22, verse two, take now your son.

And he repeats it, your only son, because he'd already got rid of Ishmael. God had told him, send away Ishmael. You're never going to see him again.

He emphasizes, this is now your only son, the son you long to have for years and years and years. The most precious thing you have, worth more to you than all your thousands of sheep and goats and cattle and everything else. Take this son and offer him as a burnt offering on a mountain to me.

And what does Abraham do? Not one word in reply. Oh, why? He never asked God, why? That's a mark of a man of God. When God says something, he doesn't say, why Lord? It says Abraham rose up early in the morning and he didn't even tell his wife.

She wouldn't have let him go to kill Isaac. And he saddled his donkey. And have you ever thought why God told him to go three days journey? It says in Genesis 22, four, on the third day, he reached in the land of Moriah where he had to offer his son.

Why did God make him walk three days? He could have taken him to a mountain around the corner and offered up his son there because God doesn't want anyone to give him a sacrifice without thinking about it. Abraham, the Lord said, I'm giving you three days to think about it. Is it worth it serving a God like me, who's asking you for the ultimate sacrifice of your son? In a moment of emotion, you may say, yes, but hang on.

I'll give you three days to think about it. You walk three days through the wilderness to Moriah and all those three days, think about it. Is it worth serving a God who's asking me to sacrifice my only son? And by the time he reached Mount Moriah three days later, Abraham's answer was yes.

It is worth serving a God who asks me for any sacrifice. And remember, he was in the Old Testament. He never knew about Calvary.

He never knew about God's love in Christ. And yet he said, yes. How much more you and I should be able to say, Lord, I will never withhold anything from you.

I want to ask each of you a personal question. You answer it to yourself. Is there anything, and ask your young people as well, is there anything in your life that you're withholding from God? Is there a boyfriend or a girlfriend you young people have who's more precious to you and say, Lord, I won't give that one up.

It'll never go well with you in your Christian life. If anything on earth is more precious to you than God Himself, something is missing in your Christian life. It's not just a question of confessing your sin and saying, I'm on my way to heaven.

That is not Christianity. That's a third-rate, substandard Christianity. True Christianity is like this, where God asks for everything and you give up everything.

Say, Lord, it's yours. I don't mean you give up your job, but you don't hold on to anything. You know, I can hold something tight in my hand, or I can say, Lord, it's yours.

My palm is open. I won't hold on to it. It's yours.

It's in my hand. It's like maybe a house that you have, it's in your name. God doesn't ask you to get rid of it.

The house is in your name, registered in your name, but don't cling to it as though that's everything, that you possess it. You have it. You don't possess it.

You have a nice car. Don't possess it. Anything on earth, even your family, don't possess it.

Have it. God has given you. If you have without possessing, then God says, if I want to take it away, will you let me take it away? Sure.

Say like Job. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

That's the mark of a man who fears. And so when Abraham went up to the mountain and laid Isaac on the altar and took the knife out, ready to stab him, it's as the knife was coming down that God said, stop. He tested Abraham until the last moment, and then he gave him a certificate.

Oh, I wish we could all get that certificate from God. In the middle of verse 12, look at the certificate that God gave to Abraham. Now I know that you fear God.

And the fear means reverence and respect God. It's an amazing thing when God can give you that certificate. Now I know that you respect me.

Now I know that you reverence me. You know, brothers and sisters, all our singing and praising God doesn't amount for much if it's not offered in respect and reverence. See, one of the things that the Lord's convicted me about and which I've learned to take more seriously is in the olden days when I used to sing songs, thou art worthy, take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee.

I didn't realize that in a church service, I was actually singing it to Jesus himself who was present there. I don't know what all songs you sang this morning. I wasn't present for the first part of it, but were any of those songs directed to Christ? There are some songs we sing about Jesus.

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. There are other songs which we sing to Christ. Thou art worthy.

Oh Lord my God, when I in awe of some wonder. Songs like that. But when you sing those songs which are directed to Christ, you recognize that Christ is there.

I mean, when you're talking to a human being, you're concentrating on him and talking to him. Do you concentrate on Jesus when you're singing that song directed to him? Or it's just a nice song. You know it so well that you can shut your eyes and even shut out your mind and sing.

That is happening to me and I'm sure it's happening to you. But when the Holy Spirit makes the presence of Christ real, what happens? When I sing take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee, I'm actually

talking to Jesus Christ right there standing in front of me in that church service. Lord Jesus, take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to me.

Take my silver and my gold, Lord Jesus. Not a mite would I withhold. Take my life and let me be always, ever all for thee.

It becomes a personal conversation with Christ. It wasn't like that very often for me. I'm just singing along like people have sing-along sessions.

Change that attitude. Concentrate on the presence of Christ. Jesus said, by two or three I'm gathered in my name.

There I am in the midst of them. The presence of Christ is the most important thing you have to realize in a meeting. I don't care if the singing is not too good, if you mean it from our heart.

God's not worried about the tune. Let me tell you this. Human beings are worried about the tune.

We say, oh, the singing wasn't too good today. I'll tell you when God says the singing wasn't too good, when you did not mean it. He's not worried about whether the tune was proper or not.

God's not worried whether the instruments were playing perfectly. Those things human beings worry about. Oh, the piano was a bit out of tune today.

Who played it today? It doesn't bother me. Did I mean what I sang to Jesus? That's the only thing that matters on a Sunday morning when you sing. What a wonderful thing the new covenant is.

Man looks on the outward appearance. Man listens to the outward sounds. God looks at the heart.

And when you come into the presence of God, I'll tell you some wonderful things happened. I can tell you my testimony. It says in Philippians chapter four and verse four, rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I say rejoice. Have you read that? Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice.

Philippians four, verse four. And the most important word there and the most difficult word there is what? Always. Always means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you're living in that verse, I'll tell you what will happen. You'll never grumble. You'll never complain against the Lord.

You'll never complain about each other. You won't be backbiting. You won't be speaking evil.

You won't be lusting after women. And oh no, you'll never watch pornography. You know the number of Christians are watching pornography? And you think they're going to heaven? What a fantastic deception.

There are Christians, Christian men born again who are watching pornography in secret, close the door and think nobody's watching them. There are hundreds of demons behind you looking at the screen and rejoicing. Aha, this child of God, I've got him in my grip, watching pornography.

And that poor child of God doesn't even know the demons are laughing and the angels are in grief. Rejoice in the Lord always. The presence of God with us always.

This is the genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit. Don't be satisfied with anything less than this, my brother, sister. The important word there is always.

There's no such command in the Old Testament because it is impossible without being filled with the Holy Spirit. Now it's not saying understand it properly. It's not saying rejoice in your circumstances always.

Circumstances may go up and down like the weather. The weather is fluctuating. But the Lord, He never changes.

And so I am to rejoice in the Lord 24 hours a day. My joy is to be found not in my circumstances, not in my bank account, not in the fact I got a promotion in my job, not that my business is prospering. No.

Thank God for all those blessings of God. Rejoice in the Lord. Not in the fact that I could marry the one who I wanted to marry.

Good. But rejoice in the Lord. Let your joy be always in the Lord.

In His presence, there is fullness of joy. That's one of the marks of being filled with the Holy Spirit. I rejoice in the Lord 24-7, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It is impossible without being filled with the Holy Spirit. We'll grumble, complain part of the time and then repent and come back. And that's second best.

Second best is grumble and complain now and then and repent and come back. But the best is rejoice in the Lord always. And I like that what it says here, you know, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes, the Philippians, rejoice in the Lord always. And Paul knows and the Holy Spirit knows that people are going to question that last word, always? You really mean always? And so he repeats it. Again, I say, I meant what I said.

Rejoice. I like that. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I say to you, I didn't make a mistake there. Rejoice. I thank God for that.

The Holy Spirit is saying through Paul, I didn't make a mistake. I meant it. And Paul is saying, I've experienced it.

Rejoice in the Lord always. You cannot live this life without being filled with the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. I'll stop with this.

A genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit brings a joy in the Lord all the time. But something else as well. 1 Thessalonians 5. Again, it says, verse 16, rejoice always.

But then it also says, pray always. Pray without ceasing. Now, what does it mean, pray without ceasing? There are people who say, you must spend one hour in prayer in the morning or one hour at night.

I never teach people such things. I teach people, pray 24 hours a day. Isn't that what it means? 1 Thessalonians 5.17. I don't want to be unrealistic.

I'll explain in a moment. But take the word of God literally, then you'll understand it. Pray without ceasing.

And let's look at what Jesus said. Luke chapter 18 and verse 1. It's a great verse. Luke chapter 18 and verse 1. Jesus said, he taught them a parable that men should pray always, at all times.

Same thing. Men should pray at all times and never lose heart. So that doesn't mean we've got to be on our knees all the time.

It doesn't mean that we have to be having our mind concentrated on the Lord all the time. Let me explain to you. Prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God.

It is saying, I cannot live this life without your help, like the branch in the tree. I cannot exist, O tree, without your giving me the sap all the time. Even if I've been in the tree for 50 years, if the sap stops, I dry up.

I need you all the time. I'm dependent on you. So prayer always is to live this life of dependence upon the Lord always.

Prayer is an expression of my helpless dependence upon God. And I want to be all the time living in that helpless dependence upon God, even if I'm not uttering prayers with my lips. My heart is expressing, Oh God, I need you.

I'm dependent on you. Even if those words are not uttered. It's like a little baby.

It's the best thing I can think of. A helpless baby who can't do a single thing. A newly born baby, utterly helpless.

I need my mother for everything. Lord, I want to be like that. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like that.

People who are helplessly dependent on the Lord, like the branch in the tree, he said, all the time. This is the real Christian life. And I want to say the Holy Spirit has come to bring, make this a reality in our life.

And when it is like that, sin will not rule over us. And this, let me conclude by saying, this is the test of your humility. If you really recognize, Lord, I cannot live this life without you.

I want your power all the time. Moment by moment, I want to depend on you and I want to cry out to you for help. Even if I don't, you say it with my lips, this attitude in our heart of helpless dependence on God.

God gives his grace to the humble. That's the last verse I want to read. 1 Peter 5 and verse 5. I hope you never forget it in all your life.

God, he resists the proud. 1 Peter 5 verse 5. But he gives grace to the humble. I told you how grace is such a tremendous power that helps you overcome sin.

But he doesn't give it to everybody. He gives it to the humble. And if I remain in humility, his grace will be upon me always.

And it'll prove sufficient for my need. The Lord told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, 9, my grace is more than enough for you. Listen to that.

My grace is more than enough for you, for every need of yours. Take it from the Lord. Lord, I can live with a little amount of money.

I don't need to be extremely wealthy to live, but I can't live without your grace. I need your grace more than I need money. I need your grace more than I need health.

I don't ask God for perfect health. I want health to be able to move around. I want money to be able to live without being dependent on others.

But I want God's grace more than health or money. Can you honestly say, my brothers and sisters, that you're seeking for grace more than for health and money? I hope so. I pray that your life will be changed after you've heard this message today.

That something will happen that will lift you to a higher plane. I always believe that a spiritual message has got one message in it. Come up higher.

The Lord's saying, my son, my daughter, come up higher. Don't live at the level you're living right now. Come up higher.

And I hope that message came through to you today. And God says, I'll help you. I'll fill you with my spirit.

I'll give you my grace. What do you have to do? Just humble yourself. Isn't that simple? He's not giving us 25 conditions.

God gives his grace to the humble. Humble yourself means saying, Lord, I need you every moment. I'm helplessly dependent on you.

I yield everything to you. The most precious thing I have, like Abraham offers his son, it's yours, Lord. You can have it all.

Please help me from this day to live my Christian life in a higher plane than I've ever experienced. Fill me with the Holy Spirit in a genuine way. I believe God will.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. One question. Please answer to God silently.

Have you forgiven everybody who has hurt you? And you think of one person you're not forgiven. Forgive him right now. Otherwise, your prayer will not be heard.

Say, Lord, I forgive this person and I forgive that person. Mention the name and then say, Lord, the others whom I don't remember, I forgive them as well. Second question.

Have you asked forgiveness from those whom you have hurt? Do you remember? Does some name come to your mind? Somebody you hurt recently? Hurt in your words or actions? Tell the Lord right now, Lord, at the first opportunity, I'm going to call him up and ask for his forgiveness or her forgiveness. Right. Now your heart is clear.

Now you can pray. Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. My heart is clear, Lord.

I've forgiven everybody. I'm prepared to ask forgiveness at the first opportunity to the ones I owe an apology to. Now, Lord, fill me.

I want rivers of living water to flow out of my life, not to get any glory or credit for myself, but so that Christ can be glorified in the few more years that are left for me on this earth. I want Christ to be glorified. I don't want to live my life at the level I've been living so far.

I want to rise up to a higher level. Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit for your glory, not for anything I want for myself, not for any honor I want from men, but for your glory and honor. Heavenly Father, I believe there are many, many sincere hearts bowed before you today, and I pray you will bless every one of them, grant them the desire of your heart, delight yourself in the Lord, and he'll give you the desires of your heart.

I pray, Lord, that he will experience that from this day onwards, lead us into that genuine spirit-filled life where our life can be a blessing to all around us. Bless this church, Lord. Make it a strong, powerful witness of burning light in a needy land.

United as one body, get rid of all strife and contention, if there is any, and pray that this will be a spirit-filled church like a flaming lamp in the desert for you. Bless the elders. Anoint them afresh to have wisdom to lead the church forward, and let this church go from glory to glory.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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