

Gods Mysterious Dealings Are All for Our Good

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not getting offended with God when prayers are not answered or when things do not go as expected. It highlights the need to trust God's mysterious ways, be content in perplexity, and embrace weakness as a means for God's strength to be displayed. The message encourages believers to seek God's best, even if it means enduring challenges and limitations, while maintaining faith and love in all circumstances.

Scripture: Matthew 11:6, Matthew 13:20, Mark 6:3, Isaiah 55:8, 1 Peter 1:8, Ephesians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 12:7, John 20:29

Topics: "Trusting God's Plan", "Embracing Weakness"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like to turn first of all to a verse in Matthew 11 and verse 6. Jesus says here about a blessed person, there are many blessings in Matthew chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and things like that. Here it says, blessed is the man who is not offended with me or doesn't take offense at me. Offended because, for what reason? Because sometimes because we expected the Lord to do something for us and he did not do it.

That's one of the main reasons why many believers get offended, you know, they pray for something and they have promises in scripture, they think they have fulfilled the conditions, the answer doesn't come and for a long, long time some sickness is not healed, some problem is not solved, and then it is possible to get offended with the Lord. Think of this verse, blessed is the man who is never offended with me in any situation. So I don't want to make any of you feel condemned, but ask yourself this situation, ask yourself this question, have you ever been offended because the Lord did not do something you wanted him to do or you expected him to work in a certain way and he did not work? You prayed, you thought you fulfilled all the conditions and no answer came.

You waited a long time and things got from bad to worse and did you get offended? Turn to chapter 13, here it speaks about different types of soil on which the word of God is sown. It's good for us to meditate on this passage, the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, verse 18 onwards, and to ask ourselves if we fit into any of these categories. I'm thinking of one particularly, verse 20, the one on whom the seed is sown in rocky places, he hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

I'm sure all of us can look back at times when we, maybe the first time you heard the word of God or sometime it would grip by the word of God and the tremendous joy we received it or some moment when faith was born in our heart or we got filled with the Holy Spirit, some wonderful experience or some amazing answer to prayers and we received God's word with joy. But because we did not allow that word to take firm root, when some affliction or persecution arose, immediately it says in the margin of my Bible, he's offended. Sometimes they fall away.

So that's another reason why we can be offended because I didn't expect the Christian life to turn out like this. I thought it would be very different. And it says here about Jesus himself, when he went to Nazareth, which was his hometown, verse 57, they were offended with him in his own hometown, verse 57, and that is because he did not do many miracles there.

They expected him to do miracles and they got offended. It's not only in Nazareth 2,000 years ago. It's possible even with some of you that perhaps you got offended.

You didn't express it because you know that it's not good to say something like that, but you wanted the Lord to do his work in some way and he did not. He did not work in the way you expected him to work. He did not do the miracle you expected him to do.

And instead of saying, well, Lord, I bow down before you, I'm a sinner saved by grace. I deserve nothing but hell. You know, a lot of this depends on our recognizing what we deserve.

I feel that with many believers, after having been believers for some time and we're faithful and going to church, staying away from sin and all these good things, after a while, somehow we feel that now we deserve something. We're being faithful. We've been good.

We've overcome sin. We've given up this, given up that, given up everything. We are doing the Lord's work, we've sacrificed and all that.

At least now we deserve something. I want to believe all my life that the only thing I deserve is hell. My life's been a very happy life.

I'll tell you honestly, I'm a very happy Christian. I was not a happy Christian in the days when I thought I deserve something from God, something good. But I've been a supremely happy person when I realized if God gave me what I deserve, it would be only hellfire.

I don't know whether all of you believe that. I know you believed it in the beginning when you were not just converted, but after some years of faithfulness, you still believe that? I believe it. So my life is very happy.

I do not have a single complaint against God for any unanswered prayer or something that did not work out the way I expected it to work out. I don't have any complaint about the way somebody treated me. I thought, why didn't God deal with him when he was cheating me like this or doing this to me and I'm faithful to God? No, I have no disappointment.

I'm trying to lead you into a life where you'll never be offended with the Lord, where you'll never be disappointed. Your entire Christian life, every single day, will be one of, like it says, the joy unspeakable and full of glory. Are you familiar with that verse? I must show it to you.

It's a fantastic verse. If you don't know it, it's in 1 Peter chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1 and here it is, 1 Peter, you rejoice with joy, unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Peter 1 and verse 8, the last part, you greatly rejoice, 1 Peter 1 and verse 8, unspeakable and in one translation it says, inexpressible or glorious, inexpressible joy.

That's the type of joy we're supposed to have all the time. You trust him. The Message Bible says, you trust him with laughter and singing.

Isn't that a good way to trust the Lord? Constant laughter and singing because God's been so good to us. Joy which cannot be expressed in words, but yet most Christians don't have that type of experience. They're offended.

In Ephesians 6 and verse 19, Paul describes the gospel in this way. He says, I want you to pray for me as I preach and as I explain to people, Ephesians 6, 19, pray for me that I'll have utterance in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness what? What should I make known? The mystery of the gospel. Do you believe there's something mysterious about the gospel or do you feel the gospel is very simple? You see, many Christians have thought the gospel is a very simple thing.

You're a sinner. Jesus died for you. Receive him as your savior and everything's okay.

But Paul uses an expression called the mystery of the gospel in this verse. Have you seen that? The mystery of the gospel. The gospel is good news, but there's a mystery about that good news.

It's not like straightforward English good news. And that's because we think that God is like us, that he thinks like us and he should do things the way we think anyone who is loving God should be blessed. But God is not like that.

God once told someone, you think I'm like you, but I'm not. So let me show you. This is one of my favorite verses in Isaiah 55.

I want to show you a number of verses in this study so that you really get established in some truths. Isaiah 55 and verse 8. Please turn to your Bibles and make a code of words so that you can know it for yourself. God says, my thoughts are not your thoughts.

This has been one of the tremendous blessings to me. This is why the gospel is a mystery. If God thought like we thought, there'd be no mystery in the gospel.

You see, even if some mathematics problem is very complicated, if you are clever and you study enough, you can understand it. There's no mystery about it. But the gospel, there's something mysterious about it.

No matter how much you study, you can't understand it unless God gives you a revelation of the Holy Spirit. Because God's way of thinking is completely different from ours. God's way of doing things is different from ours.

God's evaluation of what is good and what is not good is very different from ours. And I want to say that many believers have not understood that. There's a mystery in it.

The mystery of the gospel. And God's way of doing things, it says, my ways are not your ways, Isaiah 55 verse 8. It means my way of doing something is not your way. When I look around at the world and so many things happening, and I say, Lord, you could easily solve that problem.

You could easily solve a problem of war and you can kill some dictator during the Second World War. How many people died because one dictator lived for a long time? If he had been killed much earlier, the war would have ended earlier. And, you know, when you think of all the young children being kidnapped and exploited sexually, you say, Lord, you can deal with these people in a moment.

Just smite every one of them immediately and this thing will stop. Why doesn't God do it? I mean, if you and I had power, we'd do it. I know.

God says, my way is not your way. Have you understood it? You understand the mystery of God's ways? He says, my way is different from yours. And if you want to know how much different, it says in verse 9, as much different as the heaven is from the earth.

It's not just a slight 10 degree difference. No. It's very important, my dear brothers and sisters, if you want to live a happy Christian life, that you never have a complaint, that you never get offended with the Lord, no matter what happens or what doesn't happen, what prayer of yours is answered and what prayer of yours is never answered, or where God does something exact opposite of what you pray for.

You will never get offended if you understand one thing, that with all your cleverness, you don't have the slightest clue about God's way of thinking. Don't think it's only those dumb guys who can't understand it. You're a clever person.

You can't understand it either. That's helped me. I don't think I'm a totally dumb person.

I've got a little bit of intelligence. But it's very easy for me to think that I know everything. Not because I've read the Bible.

I know it. Well, I'll tell you, as I've studied the Bible, what I've learned, that God's way of thinking is completely different from mine, as different as the hellness from the earth. And once I recognize that, I'll never be offended.

Blessed is he who will not be offended with me, says the Lord. And you'll never be offended when your prayer is not answered, when God doesn't do things the way you're expecting to do in your family, or when you face some problem and the problem is not resolved, and you thought something would work out for your good, but it didn't appear to work for your good, even though you say, Lord, what is it? The Bible says everything will work for my good. But it doesn't look as if it's working for my good.

And then you can get offended. Because of one reason. You're not understood.

Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9. The God's way of working is as different from your way, as the heaven is above the earth. It's a very simple thing. So, to understand that, let me just give you a few examples.

For example, you know, in the Old Testament, God did not deal with people the way he deals with us today. For example, in the Old Testament, they did not have the Holy Spirit within. So God made a lot of allowance for that.

And for the Old Testament, if you read through the entire Old Testament, there was only one way the Israelites understood God is with us. All our enemies will be defeated. If our enemies are not defeated, God is not with us.

It was just black and white. If we are defeated, Israelites said, God is not with us. If there's a famine, and we don't have crops, and we don't have enough food to eat, it means God is not with us.

But if there's plenty of rain, and plenty of crops, and we become rich, God is with us. It was just black and white. The entire Old Testament.

And so when the Old Testament people spoke about God blessing them, it was only in their human understanding. It's like we understand God will make us wealthy, he'll make us healthy, he'll defeat all our enemies, and we will be, Israel will be the greatest nation on the earth, and everybody will be afraid of Israel. So, God is with us.

But when Israel was defeated, that means something is wrong. God is not with us. They didn't have the Holy Spirit, so God didn't expect them to understand.

But I'm sorry to say there are many Christians who think they have the Holy Spirit, who behave exactly like the Israelites. Everything goes well for me, humanly speaking. God must be with me.

But if something goes wrong, and some prayer of mine is not answered, some sickness is not healed, then what has happened? God is not with me. They're offended. So, take this matter of God permits us to be humble.

In the Old Testament it was never true. God permits us to fall. Not that we fall, but God permits us to fall.

I'll give you an example of that. In Luke chapter 22, the Lord is telling Simon, in verse 31, Simon Peter, this is the last day before he went to the cross. It's almost his last words before he went to the cross.

Luke 22, 31. Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. Now, you read that, and Jesus loves Simon intensely.

He loves you intensely. I want to tell every one of you in Jesus' name, the Lord loves you intensely. Does he permit those who are intensely loved to be sifted by Satan? We're not talking here about Judas Iscariot or Caiaphas the high priest being sifted by Satan.

This is the closest disciple of Jesus, Peter. Satan wants permission to sift him like wheat, and he has been permitted. And his prayer, he says, but I prayed for you.

Praise the Lord. Jesus says, I prayed for you. And what is he praying? Father, don't let him be sifted.

No, that is not his prayer. That's not his prayer for you either. His prayer is, let him be sifted, and let him deny me.

Not once, not twice, three times. He told him that in verse 34. I say to you, Peter, before the cock crows today, you will have denied me three times.

And I say, Lord, you may say like this, Lord, why don't you pray that he will not deny you? Why don't you pray that he'll be in such circumstances that he will not deny you? Isn't it a terrible thing to deny the Lord?

Jesus once said, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father. He never said if you commit murder, I'll deny you before my Father. He never said if you commit adultery, I'll deny you before my Father.

But He said, if you deny Me before men, I'll deny you before My father. So, which is the greatest sin, murder, adultery or denying Jesus? You know the answer. It's only concerning denying Him before men that He said, I'll deny you before My father.

He never said that in relation to any other sin that you commit. And yet that worst sin of all, the Lord did not stop Peter from doing it. He should have prayed, Father, don't let him deny me.

That's not what he prayed. What he prayed in verse 32 was that Peter's faith will not fail after he has denied the Lord and that after he has denied the Lord, he will repent, turn again, and then strengthen his brethren. God's ways are so mysterious, no? You wouldn't pray that for your children.

Wouldn't your children are going to some difficult place, college or something like that, would you pray that they never deny the Lord or they should deny the Lord, deny the Lord, deny the Lord? No, we pray, oh Lord, don't let that happen. And yet, God allowed Peter to be humbled. And I'll tell you why.

God's ways are mysterious. There's always a purpose in God's ways. Because God was going to use Peter in a very mighty way, six weeks after that, on the day of Pentecost.

I mean, seven weeks or so after that, on the day of Pentecost, he was going to use him in a very mighty way. So mighty that 3,000 Jews would be converted with a 15 minute sermon. I've never in my life heard of 3,000 Jews being converted by anybody's 15 minute sermon.

To convert one Jew to Christ is a difficult thing. Imagine 3,000 Jews being converted. And if you read that sermon, that's not such a fantastic sermon, Acts chapter two.

You read that, if you heard somebody preaching the Bible sermon in Acts chapter two, would you go away impressing, boy, what a fantastic sermon? Not at all. You read it and see. How in the world did 3,000 Jews get converted by listening to that? Only one reason.

The power of the Holy Spirit. Some of these exciting sermons that you hear are not necessarily great sermons in God's eyes, because they accomplish very little. And when that happened, I can imagine all the other disciples rushing up to Peter and saying, wow.

Peter, I never expected such a revival to take place. What a mighty anointing that was upon you. And Peter would not be fucked up because he knew that just seven weeks earlier he had denied the Lord so terribly.

That failure was necessary for Peter to remain humble on the day of Pentecost. Those are God's mysterious ways. He permits failure to humble a person so that when a mighty miracle takes place, like the conversion of 3,000 Jews, he will not suddenly get a puffed head.

Because what will happen if Peter got a puffed head? From that moment, God would have to resist him. Because it's an unchangeable law of God that he resists the proud. It doesn't matter who it is, even if it is Peter, even if it is you or me.

God will resist the proud. That is as certain as the law of gravity. Everything falls down.

The law of gravity pulls it down. Everywhere in the world, the law is the same. God resists the proud is a law unchanging.

It's unchanging in all eternity. It was unchanging in the past when he cast Satan down for pride. It's been throughout the ages how God has humbled preachers who are proud.

And it will be true in all eternity and future. The proud are always resisted. It doesn't matter whether they are believers or unbelievers or preachers or anybody.

God is against the proud. There's a verse in the Psalms which says in Psalm 138, I think, God keeps the proud people far away from him. I sometimes tell people in my church also, when I see a proud person, I keep them far away from me.

I'm not interested in fellowship with him. If God keeps him far away, I keep him far away. I want to be like God.

And so God didn't want to keep Peter far away, so he humbled him by failure. That is part of God's mysterious ways. Don't be offended when God allows you to fail.

That is a preparation for the ministry God has for you. Okay, let me give you another example of that when the disciples went fishing. It's always very interesting.

These are expert fishermen, you read in John 21, who went fishing. You know, it starts like this. Peter, John 21, verse 2, Peter and Thomas, Didymus, and all were together.

And Peter said, I am going fishing. Now, you've got to understand this. Let me expand Peter's message here.

John 21, verse 3. Brothers, I tried for three and a half years to be an apostle. I'm a total failure. So I've given up being an apostle.

I won't even attempt that. That's not my calling. But boy, I know the one thing.

I've been an expert in one thing, fishing. I can fish, even if I can't be an apostle and bring people to the Lord. I'll go fishing.

And it is as it were, the Lord said, okay, Peter, try it. You're the expert fisherman, right? Try it. And some of these others were also fishermen.

They said, yeah, you're also pretty good at fishing. And it says, that night they caught nothing, verse 3. I'm sure they were not the only fishermen out there at night catching fish. Many people who lived around the Sea of Galilee, their livelihood was fishing.

And I'm sure if Peter went fishing at night, there were many other people going fishing in the evening, late in the evening, too. And the interesting thing is that all those other fishermen caught fish. But if Peter's was the only boat, the fish never seemed to come near it.

Isn't that amazing? As a Christian, you see other people around you being blessed in so many ways, and you're the one who's being left out. That's what happened here. And they carry on, I imagine they started at 6 o'clock in the evening till midnight.

No fish, and they said, no, we won't give up, we'll try, we'll try and try at 4 o'clock in the morning. Finally, they say, we're going to give up. I don't know why those fish don't come anywhere near.

These other guys have finished long ago, and their boats are full of fish, and they've gone to the shore, and here we are struggling. God's mysterious ways, with his special children, he deals in mysterious ways. And if you're one of his special children, he will deal with you in mysterious ways, very different from those third-rate believers who are not serious Christians.

Many of you who have come to RLCF, I believe you came there because you wanted serious Christianity. You're fed up with the third-rate, compromising Christianity that you saw elsewhere. So you came to CFC because you wanted a whole heart of Christianity.

And you find it looks as if a lot of other people seem to be doing well and not you. A lot of other people, everything seems to go smoothly, but you have a lot of confusion. Even when you try to do something good, it turns out into confusion.

You sincerely try to do something good, and it was confusion. And that's what we see here. There is where you need to learn God's word, which says, my dear child, my ways are not your ways.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. I don't work the way you think I should. I allow you to be humble.

I allow you to be misunderstood. Even your good intentions are misunderstood. You go out with a good intention to fish and you get nothing.

Everybody else seems to be blessed but not you. You look like a failure and you're supposed to be a wholehearted disciple. And then the Lord says, he doesn't leave us helpless.

It was a lesson he was trying to teach them. That one lesson, which is one of the greatest lessons, the Lord wants to teach all his children. Without me, you can do nothing.

John 15, 5, without me, you can do zero. Now, I think most Christians haven't understood that. Maybe they'd say that on the day they are converted.

But after having been a believer for some years, they say, well, I'm not in the state I was in when I was first born again. I'm a bit of a mature Christian now. That's no longer true.

But I'll tell you, I've been a believer now 63 years. And I'm more convinced of that today than I was ever convinced in my whole life. That without Christ, I cannot do anything.

That I cannot preach an anointed, powerful message today. If the Lord does not anoint me and help me. All my years of experience, and I've been preaching for nearly 60 years.

56 years I've been in Christian work. But no, I can't do it. Without Christ, I can do nothing.

Whatever I think I do will amount to zero. I want to ask you whether you've understood that. I don't believe most Christians have.

If you did, I'll tell you. If you really have understood it, you will cry out for the power of the Holy Spirit every day. Tell me, do you cry out for the power of the Holy Spirit every day? If not, you haven't understood it.

That's the clearest proof, you have not understood it. You think you can manage without the Holy Spirit. I thought so for years, till I've discovered I cannot.

That's what the Lord wanted people to learn. Without me, you can do nothing. You think you're an expert fisherman, and the Lord will say to me, you think you're an expert preacher because you've preached so long? You will be a flock today, because you're leaning upon your own ability.

Lord, help me that such a day will never come in my life where I can lean back on my past experience and think, yeah, I can speak because I've spoken so much. Some of you think that it's my years of experience that you preach, well, no. How many years of experience did Peter have to bring 3,000 people to Christ on the day of Pentecost? It's only the power of the Holy Spirit.

If your preaching or serving comes as a result of your experience, you'll get the glory. I'll get the glory if I depend on my past experience, on my Bible knowledge. You can share a word in a church meeting, and people are blessed, and you think, no, thank God, I know the Bible.

Really? Without the power of the Holy Spirit, nobody will be blessed. You intellectually stimulate people. Oh, you don't need to be even born again to intellectually stimulate people.

There are unconverted Christians, nominal Christians, unconverted, who are very clever. So many preachers in the dead churches, they can say stimulating things. It doesn't last for eternity.

Without Christ, you can do zero. And so God allows us to fail. He allowed them to fail.

And then he said, now, cast your net on the right side. See what will happen when you listen to me. And it says they cast their net on the other side, and their net was so full of fish.

And it says here in verse 21, John 21, 11, 153 large fish. They'd never caught such a catch in their whole life. And even though there were five or six of them working together, if they divided it among them, they still got more money that day by selling that fish than they'd ever got in their whole life.

And then the Lord said to Peter, in verse 15, Simon Peter, do you love me more than these? I used to think he was asking, Simon Peter, do you love me more than these other disciples? I don't think so. He never asked you, do you love me more than the other disciples? How can I compare them? The Lord says, don't compare yourself with other believers. No, he was asking Simon Peter, do you love me more than this fish you're going to make money with? That was the question.

Oh, now you look at this fish and your eyes became wide. Wow, look at the amount of money I'm going to make selling you and my share. I get 25 fish out of this, and I can sell that.

I've never made so much money in one day. And the Lord says, do you love me more than that? And you had to ask him three times. And he said, take care of my lambs, take care of my sheep.

That is more important than making money through selling all this fish. I mean, the Lord has to say that sometimes even to his servants today and to elders. Do you really believe that taking care of God's people is more important than making more money through your work? I'm not saying you should give up your job.

You must earn your living, and I always say earn as much as you can. Because the cost of living is going up. The point is, does that affect your ministry in some way? Do you love the Lord and his church more?

Do you love me more than these? The question is not do you love me? You'll all say yes.

But do you love me more than this other thing that you have suddenly become rich or suddenly become something? Do you love me more? There's nothing wrong in this fish. By all means, Peter, go and sell your 25 fish and make that fortune that you made in one day. But that's okay, I'm not saying you don't do that.

Earn your money, you've got a family to take care of. But do you love me more? God's ways are mysterious. Don't get offended when he does not work in the way you think.

He's always got a good purpose at the end of it. Think of Job, it says in the book of James in chapter five. A lot of people think that the story of Job is a fiction, just written as a fairy tale, like the Aesop's Fables or some fairy tales that are written.

No, that's why it says in James 5, he says, think of Job, verse 11. It's not a fairy tale. The Holy Spirit writes through James, the younger brother of Jesus.

Above all brethren, James 5, verse 11, we count those blessed who endured, who didn't get offended. You have heard of the endurance of Job and seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings. And the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

Job lived before the Old Covenant was established. He was an Old Testament saint, but the Old Covenant was established only through Moses, 500 years after Job lived. Job lived 500 years before Moses, there was no Old Covenant then.

But he feared God, and he knew God. And like other people, his friends who spoke to him in the book of Job, they all thought that God's blessing means I'll prosper, my children will prosper. It'll go well with my children, it'll go well with me and with my household.

And yet, it did not, he lost everything. But he says here, what was God's ultimate purpose? You see the Lord's dealing with Job, he says, blessed. He was a blessed because he endured.

See the final end of the Lord's dealings. That's the outcome. That is the meaning.

That means these written things in the Bible, see the final end of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and merciful. In Job's case, because he was an Old Testament man, he was blessed with children and prosperity. Got double of all his wealth became double.

But for us, it is not, I would not be excited if my wealth became double. I'll tell you honestly before God, I will not be excited if my wealth becomes double. Some Christians maybe, but not me.

I say, Lord, if you make me more Christ-like, that would be, honestly, before God, a million times more important to me than an increase in my wealth. If I have enough to live and take care of my family, that's enough for me. That's how my wife and I lived all these 54 years.

That's how we brought up our children. Not feeling that we need such a huge amount of money to do this and that and buy all types of things for them, which other parents buy for their children. We could not buy those things.

We don't have children. We don't have that money. I remember once when one of my children asked me if I could buy me a pair of, I could wear my pair of Nike running shoes.

I said, I'll get you a Chinese counterpart which looks just like that. And he said, no, Nike is the one. I said, sorry, I can't afford that, it's too expensive.

It's fine. If he can't afford it, he can't afford it. I'm not gonna get in debt.

Did he lose out by not getting a pair of Nike shoes? No, all my children are following the Lord. It's not by pampering them and giving them everything they want that they follow the Lord, no. They learn self-denial at a young age.

No, God has not given us enough to provide you for that. I've never regretted it. My wife and I have been so happy with the fact that I had to ride a scooter for 42 years in India, but we could not afford to gas for running a car all those years.

We're extremely happy. I'm not saying other people shouldn't do that. I mean, standard of living is different in different countries.

I'm not judging anybody. I don't judge a single other human being. I'm just saying I learned to be content with what God gave me.

And never, never did we compare ourselves with anybody else, not even with my own brother or sister who are much better off than me. God bless them, I don't envy them. Or with my wife's brothers or sister, no, God bless them.

But we are content with what God has given us. Because God's dealings are always full of compassion and mercy. Read that verse 511.

Think of Job, he says, and much more. And that man who lived in the Old Covenant, and much more in the New Testament. So God permits us to be humble and to lose things and doesn't seem to answer and I will not get offended.

Decide that today itself. Another thing I can say is, God allows us not only to be humble and to suffer loss, but to be perplexed when we are seeking his will. Lord, what shall I do here? I don't seem to get an answer.

I want to do your will, Lord, please tell me what it is. You know the number of times in my life that I've said, Lord, I'll do it if you tell me what you want me to do. No voice from heaven, no answer.

It's as if I'm left in a mysterious vacuum, not knowing what to do. 2 Corinthians 4, 2 Corinthians chapter 4. It says here in many things, this is the way, the mystery of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7 onwards. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel so that the greatness of the power will be seen as of God and not of ourselves.

So how does God deal with his children in the new covenant? Listen to this, verse 8, afflicted in every possible way. Aha, is this how you deal with your children, Lord? Yes, but not crushed so that they lose hope. Perplexed, perplexed, that's what I'm talking about.

Completely confused, what should I, should I take this road or that road? Tell me, Lord, I'll do it. No answer. Should I turn left or right? No answer.

Perplexed, but I don't despair. Persecuted, verse 9, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

People in the Old Testament, if they had experienced this type of thing, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. They'd have said, definitely God has forsaken us. Paul says, no, those are the indications we are walking with the Lord.

The exact opposite of the old covenant. God says, my ways are not your ways. Perplexed, I was talking about that, just one part there, perplexity.

When I was a young Christian, when I was just newly in the Lord, I remember the days when I would read my daily portion in the Bible and I would have clear directions what to do. I even remember once when I asked the Lord, Lord, when shall I book my ticket for which I have to go somewhere? I got a date from the Bible, and that was exactly according to the right thing. But as I've grown older, I never seem to get it, very vague.

Then I was comforted once when I read the biography of a great man of God called Hudson Taylor. You must read his biography. Hudson Taylor was a missionary in England from England in the 19th century.

About 150 years ago, who went to China, accomplished a great work for God there in China at a time when nobody went there, no missionaries had gone there. Anyway, he said in his testimony that when I was a young Christian, this is Hudson Taylor's testimony, when I was a young Christian, I seemed to see everything clearly the Lord showed me. But as I've grown older, it looks as if I'm walking in a fog.

I don't know where I'm going. And I said, Lord, that's exactly my experience too. Uh-huh, that means I've grown, I've become mature.

And I said, Lord, can you give me some illustration about this from, the Lord always uses earthly parables to explain spiritual truths, and I understood it. When I read the Bible, I try to, and to understand God's ways, I try to picture it in the parable way. Then I understand it better.

That's why I use a lot of illustrations in my messages, so it becomes clearer. And I got an answer to this. I said, Lord, why do you make clear directions when I was a young Christian, but you don't tell me now? And the Lord said, when children are little, you tell them everything.

Go brush your teeth, change your clothes, have a shower, and time to go to bed, time to get up. So many things you tell them when they're four or five years old. That same child gets, becomes 20 years old, you tell him, go and brush your teeth, go and change your clothes.

As they grow up, you tell them less and less and less and less and less, why? Because they have grown mature. And the Lord said to me, that's a sign of maturity. I'm leaving it to you, I trust you.

I said, thank you so much. That perplexity is part of the mystery of the gospel. I'm excited by perplexity now.

I'm not saying, God, you must show it to me. No, I'm not a three-year-old. I'm a mature adult.

He leaves it to me. Go and brush your teeth whenever you feel like. Change your clothes when you feel like.

Go and have a shower when you feel like. I'm not going to tell you to do this, that, and that. Applying it spiritually in different situations.

Perplexity. You know, once the Lord asked Ezekiel a question. It's a great verse.

It's one of the most profound verses in the Old Testament. And Ezekiel 37, Ezekiel 37 and verse 3. The Lord asked Ezekiel, he was in the midst of a valley of dry bones. And the Lord asks Ezekiel a question.

Son of man, can these bones live? And here is one of the most profound answers in the entire Old Testament. Oh, Lord God, you know, I don't. That is humility.

You know, Lord, I don't. Perplexity. I don't know what are the way forward, but I trust you.

I trust you that I will not go astray. I remember many times, you know, as believers, we say, Lord, I wish I could see you just once. Just once.

You know, Paul, you let Paul see you. Just once in my lifetime. I just want to see you.

After that, I'll never ask for that again. Just one, just half a minute. Let me see you.

Give me a vision of yourself. But he's never given it in all these 82 years. The answer always is, the Lord gives me is from John chapter 20.

John chapter 20, where, you know, Thomas also said this to the other disciples. I want to see unless I see, I won't believe. And so the Lord appeared to Thomas and said, see the nail prints in my hands.

But then he said this to Thomas. That's the word the Lord spoke to me. John chapter 20.

Verse 29. He told Thomas, because you have seen. You have believed.

But more blessed. Are those who have not seen. And have believed.

And the Lord spoke to me. You know that you are more blessed than. Those apostles who saw me.

They saw me after the resurrection and believe you have never seen. You have never heard my voice in this year. You have never seen me with your eyes.

You've never felt what some people say electric shock and all that. I've never felt it. But yet you have believed.

Blessed are you. So I'll tell you honestly, when I hear about some people saying that the Holy Spirit came, I thought an electric shock. I'm not praying for that.

I'm praying for the greater blessing described here. Of not experiencing those things and still believe. How many of you believe.

That that is a greater blessing. When you hear a man give a spectacular testimony, I saw the Lord. Or he spoke to me with an audible voice or an electric shock on my body.

See, I wish I had that. I'll tell you, there's a greater blessing. In not having experienced any of this.

I have not experienced any of those things. I have never in my life seen. Any vision with my eyes or heard with any voice from heaven with my ears.

I've never had any shaking in my body or anything of the Holy Spirit. But yet I know. The Lord's Holy Spirit has worked through me and through my tongue.

I've seen the results of it in many, many places. But I never experienced it. I am in that more blessed category.

Do you want to be there? Or do you want to be in the lower level? Of sight and feeling and sensation. God permits us to be perplexed. He permits us to be weak.

You know what Paul said? When I'm weak. Then I'm strong. I'll conclude with that.

Second Corinthians chapter 12. When Paul had some fantastic revelations. There was a and you know, he wrote scripture and he planted churches.

There was a tremendous danger that he would be popped up. Any man who's greatly used by God. Whether in a small way or a big way.

Is in danger of being popped up. Even if you're being used by God in a very small way. Just to preach one anointed sermon.

Which blessed so many people just once in your life. And so many people came to you and said, boy, brother, that was a tremendous message. Just once.

You're in danger. Of pride. You're in danger of meditating on that for the next few days.

Or later on. How the Lord used you then. Imagine Paul.

Tremendous danger. Planted churches. Wrote scripture.

And this is because of this. He was in danger. Second Corinthians 12.7 of exalting himself.

You realize that if God has blessed you in any way. Even in a small way. You are in danger of exalting yourself.

Over other believers who have not been blessed in that way. And so what did God give him? Not a vision. He gave him a sickness.

A thorn in the flesh. And when I compare this with what I read in Galatians 4, I think it was. Infected eyes that he had.

Because he says in Galatians 4 that he told the Galatians. You are ready to pull out your eyes and give them to me. Because those Galatians saw something wrong with Paul's eyes.

Maybe pus coming out or whatever it was. That was in the thorn in his flesh. And it was such a botheration to him.

He prayed and prayed and prayed. He said it was not a. It was a messenger of Satan. He called it here.

You're a messenger of Satan. We're seven. Does God give a messenger of Satan to his children? To afflict his children? Yes, sometimes.

Satan has desired to sift you, Simon Peter. And he has been given permission to sift you. But I pray for you.

Not that you will not deny me. Not that you will not be sifted. But that after you're sifted and after you repent and come out of it.

That experience will help you to strengthen your brothers. That's what heroes of Paul. The Lord said to Paul.

I'm not going to take away that. That will remain. You prayed, you prayed and prayed.

No. Paul, my final answer is no. You will not be healed of that.

But I'll give you my grace. And that will be sufficient to help you to overcome this limitation. But it will also keep you humble.

See, that verse has helped me many times. When I've had small sicknesses or different things. When I'm sick, even with a fever or anything.

I said, Lord, I ask you to heal me. That's my number one request. In Jesus name.

You have power to heal me. And this is limiting me, this sickness in some way. But if you feel that I must keep this sickness.

But you give me grace to overcome. And if you feel in my case, grace is better than the healing. I'll choose that.

You decide. If healing is better for me, give me healing. But if you think that in my situation, grace is better than this healing.

I'm happy with grace. Because I don't know what is good for me. I want your best.

I don't want your second best. And I tell you this. Those who are determined to get God's best.

And determined not to be satisfied with the second best. They will get God's best. There's no doubt about it.

That's what I've sought all my life for myself. I say, Lord, I can't understand your ways. You permit me to be perplexed.

You permit me to be sick. You permit me to suffer. You permit me to be.

You permitted me to be taken to court. By religious people. Because I spoke about their wrong doctrines for 10 years.

I had to go and stand in court like a criminal. Why does God allow that? And the Lord said to me. I remember the day I went to court.

The Lord said to me, don't be afraid. Religious people took me also to court before you. So look for my footsteps.

I said, what footsteps are they, Lord? And he said, the footsteps of faith and love. Faith in a heavenly father who watches every detail of your life. Who knows the hair on your head.

And who cares for the sparrows. You think he doesn't care for what is happening to you right now? He cares. Total faith.

And secondly, love for your accusers. Don't hate them. Love them.

I said, I'll do that. So I shook hands with him at the end of that first day in court. And I said, God bless you.

Those are the steps of Jesus. Faith and love. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

That's for sure. You may not always understand his ways. The gospel is a mystery.

The good news, there's a mystery about it. It's not the way worldly people think of good news. It's far, far superior to that.

It's a way by which sickness is not healed and perplexity remains. And you lose earthly things. But you become spiritually rich and you become more Christ-like.

And that is God's will. And he always asks you, do you love me more than all these? I hope your answer will be, yes, Lord. More than everything on this earth.

More than health. More than wealth. More than honor.

More than comfort. More than everything. I love you more.

Let's pray. My love heads about in prayer. Ask God to imprint his message on your heart so to not forget it in the time of need.

Heavenly Father, please help us all. We are such forgetful creatures. We hear one thing and one month later, it's all forgotten.

Remind us, Lord, in our time of need of what we heard today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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