

Good News During This Pandemic

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Transcript

So we're glad all of you have joined for this meeting. It's wonderful that God has given us this technology whereby we can go separated widely around the world that we can meet together like this. And I believe that God has allowed this technology to come because of the need of the hour so many people not able to go to meetings anywhere now have to sit at home.

And it's wonderful that right in our home, we can hear God's word every day if we want to. So thinking of our subject, the good news during this time of pandemic, the word gospel means good news. And for a child of God, our entire life is one of experiencing the gospel of good news.

But to experience it in its fullness, we must begin where God wants us to begin. It's just like children when they go to the kindergarten. The first thing they're taught is to read, to read the alphabets, A, B, C, D, E, that's how we all begin our education in our mother tongue or in English.

And we need to understand what is the ABC of the Christian life. Many people try to go into a higher class without going through kindergarten. Now, if you go, if you put a child into a school and straightaway joins in the fifth standard or fifth grade or whatever you call it, a higher class, he won't be able to understand anything because he hasn't learned to read.

He hasn't learned the alphabet. So let me tell you what the alphabet of the Christian life is, what the Bible itself says. If you turn to Proverbs 9, verse 10, Proverbs 9, verse 10.

Here it says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Or I call it the ABC of wisdom. In the previous chapter, wisdom is referred to, Jesus Christ is represented as wisdom.

And that's what we need in our life more than anything else, more than knowledge. Wisdom is the knowledge of God, which is more than academic knowledge or Bible knowledge. A lot of Christians have Bible knowledge.

But I've met a lot of people with tremendous amount of Bible knowledge who don't know God at all, zero. Bible knowledge is not equal to the knowledge of God. You don't have to be educated to know God, but you have to fear God.

And the word fear here means reverence. Reverence for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, is the ABC of wisdom. So the ABC of the Christian life is reverence for God or the fear of God.

And when we get converted, that's one of the first things we need to learn. The tragedy with Christians today is they think more of the grace of God, more than the fear of God, more than reverence for God. Because Jesus came with the message of grace, and the gospel is called the gospel of the grace of God.

That's right. But the advantage that the early apostles had was that they never knew about the grace of God for nearly 30 years of their life. They were people of Israel, Jewish people, and all they knew was the Old Testament, which did not speak anything about grace.

It was only the fear of God, fear of God, fear of God. For 30 years, their parents instilled in them and instructed them about the fear of God. And then they heard from Jesus about the grace of God.

And that makes a world of difference. That's why their lives were so different when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was not just the grace of God.

They had a foundation of the fear of God or reverence for God to begin with. That's the tragedy of Christians today who, from childhood, they're not taught the fear of God, first of all. They're taught about grace.

In Sunday school, they're taught Jesus died for your sins. Grace, grace, grace. And many Christians know very little about the fear of God, and that's why they keep on sinning.

They can even hear a message about the new covenant, that sin will not have dominion over you when you're under grace. But it's only a theory. It doesn't seem to work.

Husbands and wives still lose their temper at each other. They still lust after women. Some of them even watch pornography.

And they ask Jesus to forgive them. OK, the Lord forgives them. But when will they ever overcome sin? Christ did not come only to forgive our sins.

Forgiveness of sins, as I often say, is an Old Testament message. David said in Psalm 103, bless the Lord who forgives all my sins. And so that is not a new message.

The new message in Matthew 121 is Jesus will save his people from their sins, not forgive their sins. But beyond forgiveness, he will save them from their sins. So it's good for Christians to ask themselves, how much has Jesus saved me from my sin? Not how much he has forgiven me.

A lot of Christians rejoice that they are forgiven. I thank God I'm forgiven. I'm a sinner saved by grace.

And I'll say that till the day I die. I wasn't saved because of my merit or good works or nothing like that. I was a miserable failure.

And Jesus saved me. But he saved me from the pit I was in. But he forgave my sins.

And it took me many years to understand how he could also save me. So that comes through reverence for God. When we fear God, we hate to sin.

See, there are two types of fear of God. One is, which is your people in the Old Testament knew, the fear that God will hurt me. But in the New Testament, the fear we have is the fear that I might hurt God.

You know, just like if you have a very loving father, you don't want to hurt him. And that is the fear of God I want to have. The fear that I might hurt God by my behavior, by the way I speak to somebody, by the thoughts that I think in my mind, by violating his laws and his principles, I don't want to hurt him.

Because he loved me so much that he sent his son to die for me. So if we begin with that reverence for God, and the fear that I might hurt him, I believe we are on a good foundation. And when that is missing, we need to hear the message of repentance.

If you turn to Revelation, and chapter nine, Revelation is a book that speaks about the end times. And when we think of this Coronavirus that is spread to every country on the face of the earth, without exception, in our lifetime, none of us have seen such a pandemic as they call it, that's spread to every single country in the world. Every country has had to be alert to this.

There's no disease that has spread like this. Is God ignorant of it? Or I don't say God sent it, but God permits a lot of things. You know, when Job got sick, it was the devil who gave him that sickness.

But God permitted it. And God has permitted this pandemic to go across the earth. What is the purpose? Turn with me to Revelation, chapter nine, Revelation and chapter nine.

And we read here about verse 18. Revelation 9:18 is speaking about a future day. A third of mankind, you see the world's population is 7 billion or more.

One third of that will be more than 2 billion. More than 2 billion people were killed by three types of plagues. The Coronavirus is just one plague.

And by the fire and smoke and brimstone which proceeded out of the mouth, this is symbolic language. It's speaking about evil spirits mentioned earlier on in the previous verses. And the fire and smoke are symbols of various types of, I don't know, germs or whatever you call it, that bring sickness and disease.

And what happened? The rest of mankind, verse 20, who were not killed by these plagues did not repent. What is the purpose of the plague? To get people to repent of their sins and turn to God. Did they repent? No, most of them didn't.

What did they not repent of? They did not repent of the works of their hands. The sins they commit, worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And again, verse 21, they did not repent of their murders and their sorceries and their sexual immorality in thought and action, nor of their stealing.

Sins. Turn to chapter 16 of Revelation. Revelation chapter 16, and we read here in verse 8. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and it was given men to scorch men with fire and men were scorched.

Remember, this is all symbolic language. It's not literal, but it's symbols, the reality of it we will see. Men were scorched with fierce heat and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, again, plagues, and they did not repent.

That's the point. God was waiting. At least when they get these plagues, they will repent.

But it says they did not repent. And again, the fifth angel poured out his bowl on this kingdom of the beast and they gnawed their tongues because of pain. Revelation 16, verse 10.

And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent. Notice how all these four times that word repent comes in relation to what is the result of the plagues. Instead of repenting, they just kept on sinning against God.

We need to see everything that happens like that. God's purpose to draw man away from the pit of hell, sickness. I know of people personally who turned to God because they got cancer and died of the cancer, but they went to heaven and they had no interest in following the Lord before they got the cancer.

And when they realized they got this cancer and they were not healed, they turned to the Lord. They began to thank the Lord for that which enabled them to turn to him. So it's not through sickness alone that God wants us to repent.

God wants us to turn from our sin because it is hurting us. First of all, it's dishonoring to God, but it's destroying us. Like children who pick up bad habits, babies who put mud into their mouths, and children who do dangerous things which hurt them.

God wants to keep us from things that will hurt our spirit and ruin us and finally send us to hell. And he wants to stop us in every way possible from falling over the pit into hell. And that's why he even allows sickness and plagues.

It's a loving God who wants to prevent us from falling into the pit of hell, from destroying ourselves. But he will not force us. He wants us to make our own choice.

And if we make our own choice and turn, then the blessing of God is upon our lives. So the message of repentance is not just for the world that does not repent. In the book of Revelation, the first time the message of repentance comes is not for the world.

It's to the church that the Lord says, repent in Revelation. So the good news in the time of pandemic is that we can turn to God. That's the meaning of repentance.

We can turn to God and come closer to him through all that he allows in the world and that we see around us. Shortage of food, loss of a job, everything designed to make us turn to God. Because if we seek God first and his righteousness, he has promised that all the things we need of food, clothing, and shelter will be provided for us.

That is very clearly taught in Matthew chapter six, verse 31 to 34. It says, don't be anxious because if you seek God's kingdom first, that means the kingdom of God, by the way, is described, the kingdom of God is not missionary work or heaven or all that. The kingdom of God is here on this earth and it's Revelation 14, sorry, Romans 14, 17 tells us very clearly the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness is freedom from sin, peace with God because our sins are forgiven. Peace with men because we stopped fighting with them and joy in our heart, the joy of the Lord, which is our strength all through the Holy Spirit. That is the kingdom of God in Romans 14, 17.

So if we seek that kingdom first of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, all that we need, God is not here to make us millionaires, but he's here to provide us all that we need. Food, clothing, shelter, educating our children, enabling them to earn their living. God will provide for all that.

And so he designs everything around us, even for Christians to help us to repent. So as I said, in the book of Revelation, the Lord writes messages, first of all, to seven churches, and five of those seven churches were terribly backslidden. This is just about 40, 50 years after the days of the apostles.

One apostle John was still alive. All the others had died. But so soon before the end of the first century, around 95 AD, which is about 65 years after the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell upon the 120 of the church was born with such tremendous power and wonderful churches were established by the apostles.

But 50, 60 years later, they're in such a backslidden condition, many of them, because they turned away from the truth that the apostles preached. And it's the same today. Many, many churches backslidden.

And the message of the Lord to them is the same message as it is to these five churches. Repent. Revelation chapter two.

Verse five. You have fallen from your first love for me. Repent.

What the Lord tells this church is and its leader is you don't love me like you love me at first. The day you were born again, when you were so glad your sins are forgiven, you love me. But as time has gone on, you got more taken up with your love for the world and money and sinful pleasure and so many things.

And because forgiveness was there available all the time, you thought the blood of Christ was something cheap, like tap water that you could just wash your hands with anytime. And you began to take sin lightly. And gradually, the Lord says, your love for me is gone.

Well, if it continues like that, he says, I will take away the anointing from your life. Verse five. I'll remove the lampstand, the anointing.

So to avoid that, repent. The message, the first message in the book of Revelation to the church is repent. The next bachelor in church is the church in Pergamum, Revelation 2.12. And they've also, in the beginning, they started out well with some godly men there like Antipas, verse 13.

But then they went astray with the teaching of Balaam, verse 14, which says, which is the pursuit of the love of money. Balaam went after money, a preacher who went after money. And there are thousands of them like that, if not millions in the world today.

Preachers are only interested in money. They write letters to get money. They preach to get money.

And that's their interest. Their interest is not godliness. Their interest is not to lead people to godliness.

Their interest is to get people in their church to pay their tithes so that they can become rich. That is the teaching of Balaam, verse 14. And the Lord says, repent, verse 16, or else I will war against you with the sword of my mouth.

Again, the message is repent. The next church is the church in Thyatira, Revelation 2.18. And the Lord says, in this case, you've got this woman, in some translations, says your wife, Jezebel, who's teaching people. This is an elder who allowed his wife to run the church.

You know, there are many preachers today, elders and pastors, whose wives run the church behind the scenes. They control their husbands and decide what to do in the church. Or sometimes the wives

themselves are assistant pastors and get up and preach.

And they control the church. And they don't lead the church to godliness. They lead the church to a loose attitude towards sin.

And the Lord says, in verse 21, I gave her time to repent. And to the others in the church also, he says, you must repent and hold fast what you have until I come. And then to the church in Sardis, chapter 3, again, here's a church that has got a name that is alive and the leader, but it is dead.

And to this church also, he says, verse 3, repent, turn from your sin. The fifth backslidden church is the church in Laodicea, Revelation 3, 14. And this is the worst of the lot, who is very wealthy, verse 17, and therefore feels that I don't need anything.

That's so true of a lot of people in the world today, because they have a lot of money. And sometimes they say that money is the blessing of God. Really? Well, it's true that God provides our need.

But if you made a lot of money, don't think that is a blessing of God, because the wealthiest people in the world are not wholehearted Christians. Remember that. The wealthiest people in the world are all unbelievers.

So where did they get their money from? They worship other gods, and they believe their gods gave them the money. So don't say that Jesus Christ gave you that money. Because if you say that, what you're saying is those other gods are superior to Jesus Christ, because those gods gave those people much more money, and they are much wealthier than you.

It's so foolish. Money is a gift God gives us to meet our need, not to boast about how much we have made. And it's not at all an evidence of God's blessing, because the most blessed person on earth who walked on this earth was Jesus Christ, and he was not rich.

While the greatest apostle was Paul, he was not rich. He says sometimes he didn't have enough money to buy food. How about that? But here's a church, verse 17, that said, I'm rich and I'm wealthy.

What happens to people who come to that state is they need nothing. They think they need nothing. And so they don't realize, verse 17, that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

And so God allows trials to come into their life. And he tells them, verse 19, be zealous and repent. Those whom I love, verse 19, I reprove and discipline.

Sometimes sickness is a form of discipline to help us to repent. So we see that before the Lord speaks in chapter 9 and chapter 16 of Revelation about the world not repenting, he tells the church to repent, first of all, in Revelation. The church must show the way to the rest of the world to turn from sin.

And if you as a Christian are not showing by your life that you're turning from sin, you can't blame the world for not turning from sin when the plague comes. The good news is that God wants to use everything in the world to draw us to himself. And that's one of the wonderful promises that God's children have, which most of you know.

And if you don't know it, it is in Romans 8 and verse 28, which says, it's a wonderful passage from Romans 8, verse 28, all the way to the end of Romans 8, verse 39. And it's all one section. And it begins with, we know, and a lot of people don't know that, but we should know that God causes everything to

work together for good to those who love God.

What about sickness? What about the pandemic? What about poverty? What about loss of jobs? What about other trials and difficulties and sickness? God can cause not those things individually, but all of those things together to work for our good. That's a wonderful place to come to, but it's not for everybody. Remember, this promise is not for every Tom, Dick and Harry in the world.

No, it is for a limited group of people. It's not even for those who just claim to be believers. It is for a group of people, verse 28, Romans 8, 28, who love God.

That means who love God more than they love everyone and everything else. Jesus said, if you want to be his disciple, you've got to love him more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, job, money, everything. And the second thing mentioned there is those who are called according to his purpose.

That means whose aim in life is to fulfill God's purpose in their life. They want to do God's will in their life. So I want to say to you, here's the good news.

My dear brother, sister, the good news in this time of pandemic, if you love Jesus more than everyone and everything on the earth, including your own life, and if you want to fulfill his purpose, which is, in other words, you want to do his will in your life. Just these two conditions. You love Jesus more than everything and everyone else on earth.

And you want to fulfill his will in your life. Here is God's promise. Every single thing, which the world calls good or bad, will work together for your good, for your very best, not individually, but all together.

And I want to testify that from the time I was born again, at the age of 19 and a half, more than 61 years ago, I'm nearly 81 now. This verse has been true in my life. I can boldly testify every single thing that's happened to me, the financial struggles I've gone through in the early days after I quit my job, and began to serve the Lord.

But I'd given away all my money for God's work, all my savings at that time. And the sicknesses I've experienced, the opposition, persecution, trials that have come to me from those who oppose the gospel. Every single thing has worked for my good.

It's made me a better Christian. For example, if people did not hate me, how could I obey the command which says, love those who hate you? I thank God for those who hate me. They have enabled me to obey one command in the Bible, which I would never have been able to obey if I had nobody to hate me.

If people didn't persecute me for my faith and for standing up for Christ and the truth of the New Testament, if they did not persecute me and harass me, how would I obey the scripture which says, pray for those who persecute you? I thank God for those who persecuted me. So everything works for my good, makes me a better Christian, makes me obey certain scriptures, which I could never have obeyed if these guys had not tried to hurt me or trouble me or persecute me or whatever it is. And showed me that in the midst of it all, I could have joy in the Lord, that their opposition and evil plans could not take away the joy of the Lord from my heart.

What an experience it is, every single thing. But if your only aim in life is, I want to live a comfortable life, I want to make a lot of money, I want to live in a good house, I want to get my children married and settled and have a good retired life, brother, then I don't have any promise for you. Live your life the way you like.

I have nothing in God's word to comfort you. But on the other hand, if your aim is to love Jesus supremely and to live for the glory of God, to be a blazing witness for the truth of the gospel and you want to bring up your children that way and you don't glory in your wealth or your house or your education or whatever you have accomplished on this earth, but you say the only thing worth glorying in is Jesus Christ himself and what he's done for you, then Romans 8, 28 is for you. Even in this time of pandemic, here is the good news.

It will work for your good. It's not that it'll be neutral. It's not that you will somehow survive and come through this without any problem.

That's not the point. That itself would be great news that I could come through this without a problem. But no, it's going to make me a better Christian at the end of it, whenever it comes to an end.

I don't know when this pandemic will come to an end, but here's the good news. It'll make me a better Christian by the time I come to the end of it. I want that, sure.

And if the Lord has to take me through deep waters and fire to get me there, so be it. Turn with me to Psalm 66. You know, before I get there, let me turn you to Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 is a very well-known Psalm. It's called the Shepherd Psalm. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He leads me to green pastures, et cetera. And Psalm 23, it says here, beautiful expression.

Verse five, Psalm 23, five, the last part. You have anointed my head with oil. It was referring to the Holy Spirit.

And my cup runs over. My cup is overflowing. Like Jesus said, rivers of living water will flow out from our innermost being.

This overflowing, that word overflows is a, it's translated, the Old Testament is translated from a Hebrew, and that particular Hebrew word is used only in one other place in the Old Testament. Significant, only two places it's used. Running over in Psalm 23.

And the other is in Psalm 66, where, verse 12, the last part. You brought us into a place of abundance. It's the same word.

You brought us into a place where the cups run over, running over. Now the question is, how did God bring us to this place where our cups run over? Psalm 66, verse 12. Listen to it.

Verse 10, you tested us, O God. You refined us as silver is refined that is in the fire. Spiritually speaking, we put in the fire.

You brought us into the net, which means you surrounded me with tight circumstances, financial difficulties, job loss, all types of things that made me in, like as if I'm trapped in a net. And on top of that, you laid an oppressive burden upon us. Weight upon me.

Weights, many, many weights, an oppressive burden. And on top of that, you allowed others to ride over me, ride over my head to crush me down and put me down. And at the end of it all, you put me into the fire, spiritually speaking, trials of fire, and taking me out of the fire and put me into deep waters.

And through it all, through all these trials, you brought me to a place where the rivers of living water flow out from my life, a place of abundance. So God brings us through trials to a place of abundance. We should look at trials as the machines in a gym, you know, a gymnasium where people go to exercise to build up their muscles in their body.

And usually you'll have a picture of a very muscular man outside the gymnasium to attract people to come and say, you can get muscles like this if you work in this gym. And people do build up their muscles. You know, there are so many muscles in the body.

When I see the pictures of these muscular people, I'm amazed that there are so many muscles they can build up in a gym. And so people go in there, but the only way they can build those muscles is by subjecting those muscles to strain and tension through the different machines in that gym. The muscles in the hand and the muscles in the legs and the neck and the shoulder and chest and the belly and thighs and all the muscles in the body and they're subjected to some strain and tension.

That is how they build up those muscles and all those machines in a gym are meant to subject those machines, subject people to tension in the different parts of their body. And so that is how God builds us, makes us strong also. So if you don't go through this, a man who just doesn't go into the gym just doesn't build up his muscles.

If he doesn't allow his muscles to face tension, they never become strong. And a Christian who never faces trial and never faces any tensions in his life, he's not gonna be strong. So a true Christian finds that even in pandemics, God's gonna bring him to the place where rivers of living water will flow through if he reacts to it in the right way, which is beginning with reverence for God.

I'm going to avoid sin. So Romans 8, 28 says, all things work together for good to those who love God. Let me read further in Romans 8. What do you say? If God did not spare his own son, verse 32, but delivered him up for us all on the cross, won't he give us freely everything else with him? Do you have any doubt? Here is a verse that should remove all anxiety and fear from your life.

If God did not spare his son, but sent him to die on the cross for you, why won't he give you everything else? When you were a sinner, he loved you and me. When we were sinners, and now that we are his children, won't he care for us? To use another illustration, we were like beggars on the street and he picked us up then and made us his children. And now that we are his children, don't you think he'll do more for us? Certainly.

Then it says, whatever may happen, I'm convinced in all these things. Verse 37. First of all, verse 35.

What can separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, pandemic, nothing. No, in all these things, verse 37, including in a time of pandemic, we are more than conquerors. We overwhelmingly conquer.

Conquering and being a victor itself is a great thing. But here it says more than a victor through the strength given by one who loves us. God's love for us is the thing that holds us firm in a time of pandemic.

And that's what the devil wants you to doubt. The thing that the devil wants you to doubt in a time of pandemic is God doesn't love you. Nonsense.

He loves me. He loved me enough to give me his son. He will not forsake me in my time of need.

Impossible. He will not carry me halfway across the river and say, oh, I'm fed up with you and allow me to drown in the middle of the river. No, let there be overflowing waves.

He will carry me through to the other side. Let me ask you something. When the Lord saved you, whenever he did, when Christ came into your life, do you believe that God knows the whole future? Do you believe that God knew many years ago, maybe you were converted 20 years ago or 10 years ago or five years ago or 50 years ago? It doesn't matter.

Do you believe that when God made you his child, he could look into the future and see every wrong thing that you would do in your life? Every evil deed that you would do after becoming a child of God. Do you think God knew it? Sure. And he still chose you.

He's our bridegroom. Chose us to be his bride. I sometimes ask husbands.

The Bible says we must love our wives as Christ loved the church. So I asked husbands this question. Now that you've been married for so many years, maybe 15, 20, 25 years, and you've seen all the faults of your wife, all the bad things she did and the bad ways she has spoken.

If you had known all that before you got married to her, would you still have chosen her? Searching question. Many husbands, if they're honest, would say no. Well, if you'd chosen somebody else, she may have been worse.

Don't forget that. But the interesting thing is that Jesus knew all about all the evil things we would do before he chose us. Because he knows the whole future and he knows all the evil things you're gonna do in the next 20 years or until Jesus comes back and he still chose you.

Isn't that amazing? So what should we do? Take advantage of his love and live in sin? Shame on us if that is our reaction. Lord, I'm ashamed that I've responded to your love in such a selfish way. I want to respond from now on with the same love with which you love me.

That's how we must respond to the fact that Jesus who knew every single evil thing we would ever do or think or say still chose us and made us his children. What should be our gratitude then? Repent, turn from everything that you know dishonors God in your life. Reverence for God, the fear of God, the fear that you might hurt him.

Have you hurt him? Brother, sister, examine your life. Are you hurting Jesus? Are you hurting your heavenly father by the way you speak or the way you behave towards others, the way you don't forgive somebody? That's one thing the Lord has been stressing on my heart to preach very much these days. Forgive everyone.

Many people, their lives become miserable because they don't forgive others. Let me ask you a pertinent question. Have you got a difficult mother-in-law? Have you forgiven her for all the evil she did? Have you got a difficult son-in-law or daughter-in-law or difficult son or daughter? Caused you a lot of problems, okay? Have you forgiven them? You're supposed to be the Christian.

You're supposed to be the example. You must first of all demonstrate forgiveness before anything else. Have you forgiven those who have harmed you in your office, your neighbors, your relatives, those who cheated you of property that was rightfully meant for you? Have you forgiven them? Is there anybody who has done a greater crime to you than you have done to God in your life? Our sin to God is so great and he

forgave it all.

He calls us to forgive. And let this time of struggle and pandemic and uncertainty be a time which drives us to God and enables us to forgive everyone. Have you forgiven your wife for all the foolish things and evil things he did to you? Have you forgiven your husband for neglecting you or being unfaithful to you or whatever else he did? You say, oh, it's so terrible.

I can't forgive him. Well, you know what God says, then I can't forgive you. Matthew 7, verse 14 is very clear.

If you don't forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive you. So if there's one thing we need to repent of, you know, we saw in the book of Revelation how plagues are meant to lead people to repentance. And one thing that we need to repent of is an unforgiving attitude, holding grudges, keeping in, we cannot, let me say this, we cannot remove from our memory the facts, the events that happened that will be there.

But you can't get rid of that because those things remain in our memory. But in our heart, we can forgive people. There's a lot of difference between our heart and our memory.

I cannot forget all the evil things I did, all the evil things other people did. That's a matter of memory. But I can, I know that my past has been blocked out by the blood of Christ.

So I don't have to worry about it. And I know that I've forgiven everyone who's done harm against me. So I'm clear.

Even though all those things remain in my memory, don't you remember all the evil, stupid things you did in your unconverted days or even after you were converted? But you know that you have repented and God's forgiven you, but it's still in your memory. But you don't feel guilty about it because the blood of Christ has cleansed you. And if the blood of Christ has done so much for you, don't you think you should be merciful to others? So repent of that in this time of pandemic.

The other question that comes to our mind at this time is fear, what will happen in the future? If things go on like this for, if the pandemic lasts another two, three years, will we survive or five years? We thought it'd be over in a few months. Supposing it lasts another five years. Let me show you a verse in Isaiah chapter eight.

In Isaiah chapter eight and verse 12 and 13, the last part of verse 12, Isaiah chapter eight, here it speaks of a conspiracy, Isaiah eight verse 12. All these people call it a conspiracy or instead of conspiracy say pandemic. All these people say, this is a pandemic, it's a serious, it's gonna kill many people.

They have not found a cure for it yet. But you are not to fear what the other people in the world fear. Let them call it pandemic or anything they like, but you are not to fear what others fear or being dread of it.

Instead, you must fear the Lord. He shall be your fear, verse 13. You must regard the Lord as holy and he shall be your fear.

So we should not fear what other people fear, but we must fear the Lord. Back to what I started in the beginning. The fear of the Lord is the ABC of wisdom.

And the living Bible paraphrases this, these two verses beautifully. It says, paraphrases like this. If you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

Not even the pandemic. If you fear God, you need fear nothing else. What a wonderful message.

If you don't fear God, you better fear everything that happens in the world. Not only pandemic, but everything else. But if you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

Now I wanna say to you, fear and faith are opposites. Faith in God and fear of what will happen to me are opposites. When fear comes in, faith goes out.

They can't live together in the same heart. When faith comes in, fear goes out. You had to make a choice which you want in your heart.

Faith in a loving father and in Jesus our savior or fear which is put into you by the newspapers and news on the internet and what people say around you and what they predict is gonna happen. Nobody knows the future except God, but they predict this, that and the other. And you listen to all that and listen to all that.

And you fill your mind with what people say instead of with the word of God and the promises of God. Well, then you have to live in tension all the time. But if faith comes in, and what is faith? Let me explain that to you.

Jesus taught us to pray. And he taught us that the most important thing when you pray is to have faith. First of all, you must forgive everybody.

Matthew chapter six, because if you don't forgive, God's not even gonna listen to your prayer. Remember this, there's a verse in Psalm 66 verse 18, which says, if I regard sin in my heart, Psalm 66, 18, if I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. That's a word of God.

If you've got a wrong attitude towards somebody, don't waste your time praying, God will not hear you. There are people who spend all night in prayer sometimes, all night prayer meetings. Many of them, God does not hear any of their prayers because they have not forgiven somebody.

They have not set right things in their heart. They've got wrong attitudes in their heart. They're not repentant of sins in their life.

And they pray, waste of time. God doesn't pick up the phone from a person when a person calls in prayer who's got sin in his heart. So that's important to remember that.

It says in Matthew 6 and verse 14 and 15, if you forgive others, their sins, your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you don't forgive others, your father will not forgive you, Matthew 6, 14 and 15. So if God doesn't forgive you, he's not gonna listen to your prayers.

You have this wrong attitude you have. Whenever you go to prayer, Jesus said, make sure that you're, first of all, you've forgiven others. And secondly, he said, if you have hurt somebody, Matthew 5, 23 and 24, when you come to pray, and you know that you've hurt somebody, go and ask his forgiveness first.

Otherwise, God won't listen to your prayer. So if you've hurt somebody and you haven't asked his forgiveness or somebody has hurt you and you haven't forgiven him, don't waste your time praying.

Absolute waste of time praying.

Clear your heart first. And then when you're cleared your heart, this is how you must pray, Jesus said. In Matthew 6 and verse 9, pray then in this way.

You don't have to repeat it, but this is a pattern. In this way means in this pattern. What is the pattern? When you begin your prayer, don't begin with, Lord, I got this sickness and my child is sick.

And I've got this problem. I need some money. I need a job.

I need a wife. No, that's not how you ought to begin. All our problems are because we begin our prayer like that.

Begin with God and his kingdom. You know, the first four words in the Bible, Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, in the beginning God. Those are the first four words in the Bible, in your Bible.

And that must be the first four words in your life every day as soon as you wake up in the beginning God. Talk to him first. Listen to him first.

Before you get up, before you pick up your Bible, as soon as you're awake, listen to God. Hear him. And when you pray, he says, pray like this.

First sentence, our father who art in heaven. Let's begin there. You can spend a whole hour meditating just on that.

There's a book of mine which is available. You can read it freely on the CFC India website, cfcindia.com. Go to the book section. It's called God-Centered Praying.

It's about the Lord's Prayer. God-Centered Praying. And I explained there how our father who art in heaven, what does it mean? Teaches me two things.

Before I start my prayer, very important to remain, believe at this time of pandemic. Don't pray without being established in these two truths. I told you when faith comes in, fear goes out.

And fear comes in, faith goes out. And the only way to drive out fear is by faith. Faith in our father who is in heaven.

Our father indicates that there's someone in heaven who loves me. My father who loves me more than any earthly father. Jesus said, if you being evil, he said that later on in Matthew 7 and verse 11.

If you being evil fathers, that means the best father in the world is evil compared to God. Yeah. Many of you are fathers.

You are very good fathers and mothers. You care for your children so much. You give your life for your children.

But I want to say to you, compared to God's love, your love is zero for your children. You are evil when compared to God. You're a very good father or mother, but compared to God, it's evil.

If you being evil, Matthew 7, 11, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven, Matthew 7, 11, give what is good to those who ask him. That is the first thing you need to

be established when you pray our father who art in heaven. One who is more loving than any earthly father or mother, more loving than any earthly father or mother.

In Isaiah 49 and verse 15, the Lord says, even if a mother forgets a newborn baby, I will not forget you. So God is a father and a mother. Here he speaks about you being evil fathers, know how to give good gifts to your children.

How much more shall your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him. And in Isaiah 49 and verse 15, God says, I'm like a mother and I'm the best mother in the world. I'm the best father in the world.

I'm the best mother in the world. A mother may forget her newborn baby. That almost never happens.

But even if they forget, I will not forget you. Can you get your heart established on at least these two verses? Matthew 7, verse 11, please remember it always. Isaiah 49, 15.

Matthew 7, 11. And Isaiah 49, 15. God is a loving father and a loving mother.

The best father and the best mother in the world are zero compared to God. Where on a scale of one to a hundred, God gets a hundred and the best father and mother in the world gets less than one. If you can believe that, I believe it.

I've experienced it for 61 years. I'm not talking theory. I was born in a Christian family.

My parents taught me my father was born again Christian. So he taught me to pray this Lord's prayer, our father who art in heaven, even before I was born again. Every morning when I got up, I had to kneel down in bed and pray our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come and so on.

Like a parrot, I would repeat it then only get out of bed. I never knew it in my life. Then the day came when I accepted Christ.

I knew a little bit more. But as time went on, I began to realize that God is such a loving father. I realized that he loved me as much as he loved Jesus.

That's another great verse for you to remember. John 17 verse 23. Make a note of it.

John 17 verse 23. God loves us as much as he loved Jesus. If we are his disciples, not every Tom, Dick and Harry, but if you're a disciple of Jesus, God loves you as much as he loved Jesus.

Do you think any harm could come to Jesus without God's permission? You remember the time when Herod wanted to kill all the babies and wanted to kill Jesus in Bethlehem when he was born. And God warned Joseph and Mary beforehand, they took him off to Egypt. And by the time Herod came, Jesus was not there.

Another time we read in Luke chapter four, where about maybe 200 of the people in the synagogue took Jesus and took him to the top of the cliff to throw him down to kill him because they didn't like his message. And it says there, he walked away and went away. How could that happen when 200 people have grabbed you to throw you down a cliff and you walk away? I've meditated on that.

I said, Lord, how is that possible? No angel came. There was no miraculous deliverance that the Lord pulled him out. It says he walked away from them.

And I thought about how could that happen? I tried to reason. I said, maybe these 200 people began to argue with each other as to which cliff to throw Jesus over. That cliff over there or this one here or the other one there.

And while they were arguing, Jesus walked away. And 15 minutes later, when they decided which cliff to throw him over, he wasn't there. God is such a wonderful arranger of circumstances.

I've seen that in my life. People have tried to harm me. I've never succeeded.

Romans 8, 28. This is our loving father. Remember this in a time of pandemic.

You have a loving father. The second thing you need to remember is our father who is in heaven. Not on earth.

In heaven means one who runs this universe. My father runs this universe. He's in control of everything.

And if you studied a little bit about geography and the planets and the stars, you know that the universe is so huge. And the stars are so many millions and millions of miles away. They look like a spot in the sky.

A little dot in the sky. But they're so huge. Some of them are bigger than the entire solar system.

You know, there's a star which is so big that the whole solar system can rotate inside it. But it looks like a speck in the sky. Because it's so far away.

The earth is so, the universe is so huge. And earth is like a small speck of dust in this universe. And on this speck is a still smaller speck called me, you.

And my father in heaven runs this universe. What are we afraid of? Why do we have to be afraid? Jesus said in Matthew 28 and verse 18, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me. Yeah, because he died and rose again, the father gave him all authority in heaven and on this earth.

He's in control of the pandemic. He decides how long it's got to last. And no man can stop his hand in the Old Testament.

We read of a very evil king called Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel. He was the ruler of Babylon. And he became so proud that God punished him.

And punished him in a very severe way that he became like an animal eating grass for a number of years. And then he repented when he realized that God was the one who brought him down like that. And it was God who had given him the kingdom, et cetera.

And when he repented and came back to the Lord or not came back, but came to God. I want you to listen to these words. He spoke in Daniel chapter four, verse 34 and 35.

Amazing words, which I've seen to be the most complete statement of the sovereignty of God anywhere in the Bible. And it's spoken by a heathen king when he repented. Daniel four, verse 34 and 35.

At the end of that period of severe discipline where he got healed of his mental problem. You read about that earlier on, but verse 34. I raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me.

He had lost his reason. He'd become a mental case. And I blessed the most high and praised and honored him who lives forever.

Because I realized Daniel four, 34, the middle. His dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

And listen to this. All the inhabitants of the earth, you and me and your enemies and your friends and every Tom, Dick and Harry in the world are accounted as zero. This is the verse in the Bible which says all human beings are a zero before God.

And he does exactly what he wants. Listen to this. My God, Nebuchadnezzar, this has become his God now.

My God does exactly what he wants in heaven and in all the universe, the host of heaven. And he does exactly what he wants among all of this earth and all the people of the earth. And not a single person, no human being, no demon can stop his hand, can stop his hand or question him saying, what are you doing? Or what have you done? What a fantastic statement to believe in this time of pandemic.

God does according to his will in heaven and on earth. And no one can stop his hand or question him saying, what are you doing? Why have you done this? Or how long is this going to last? But in the midst of it all, as children of this loving father in heaven, we can be at rest. If you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

When faith comes in, fear goes out. So let us be established in faith in these days. Drive away anxiety.

After Jesus said this three times, he said in Matthew 6, he said, our father who art in heaven, that's how we must pray. Seek his kingdom first and God will provide. Give us this day our daily bread, Matthew 6, 11.

You think God is not interested in that? You can pray. Give us Lord our daily bread. Give us the opportunity to earn our living so that we can buy daily bread.

Give us the ability to educate our children so that when they grow up, they can work and earn their living and get their daily bread. To pray for daily bread is a good prayer to pray to our father who is in heaven. Our father who art in heaven, we want your name to be glorified.

We want your kingdom to come. Come soon, Lord Jesus. Give us our daily bread so that we can live on this earth and glorify you.

And please forgive us, verse 12, exactly as we have forgiven everybody else. Important. And Lord, please deliver us from all sin, verse 13.

We want to glorify you forever. Having prayed that prayer, he says, verse 25, Matthew 6, 25. Don't be worried about your life in these days.

Where will you get food from? Where will I get clothes from? Isn't your life more than all this? Look at the birds of the air. Okay, let's look at the birds of the air in this time of pandemic. They don't even know.

They don't read the newspapers. They don't go to the internet. So they're not worried about all this.

You know, they have a father in heaven who cares for them. Jesus told us specifically, look at the birds of the air. I want you to obey that command.

Look at the birds of the air. They don't sow. They don't reap.

They don't read the newspapers. They don't hear the news. They don't know what's happening.

They don't hear any predictions. They don't get any medicines. They don't get any treatment.

They have no hospitals. But your heavenly father cares for them. Don't you think you're much more than that? Of course, I'm not saying that we should not go to hospital or should not get treatment or that you should not read the newspapers.

That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying, don't you believe that you are worth much more than them? And then by being worried, are you going to live one, not one day, but do you think you can add one hour to your life by being worried? You know, what will happen? What will happen? What will happen? Is that going to add even one hour to your life? Jesus says. See, he's using an argument of reason.

You can't. Why are you worried about clothing? Look at the birds, the flowers, how beautifully God clothes the flowers. Even Solomon was not clothed in all his glory like these flowers.

See how beautiful clothes, colors God has given to these flowers. Some Christians say that must really wear white clothes, but God didn't make all the flowers white. Look at the beautiful colors he gave to the flowers.

God's not stuck with white. He made the flowers with so many colors. That's the address.

He clothes you. Why do you worry about what we shall eat? Verse 31, what we shall drink. These are the things a lot of people are worried about today.

That non-Christians, they are worried about these things. Sure, you got a father in heaven who loves you, who runs this universe. And he knows at this time that you need these things.

So what should you do? Seek his kingdom first. Verse 33, what is his kingdom? Romans 14, 17. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Seek to live a holy life. Seek to be at peace in your heart. Keep your conscience clear always.

Seek to be at peace with all men as far as you're concerned. And live in the joy of the fact your sins are forgiven. God is your father.

Joy in the Holy Spirit. And all these things that you need, according to your need, will be added to you. So here's a concluding word.

Verse 34, don't worry about tomorrow. Three times he says, yeah, don't worry. He teaches us to call our father, our father in heaven.

And don't worry. Verse 25, don't worry. Verse 31, don't worry.

Verse 34, three times, don't worry, don't worry, don't worry. It's a message of the Lord for us at this time. About tomorrow.

Tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble for itself. Live one day at a time.

God bless you all. We thank God for scriptures in this time. I thank God that we have a Bible which tells us these wonderful things that Jesus taught.

Be thankful for the Bible. So many people in the world don't have a Bible. You have one and you can read it.

Do you read it? I hope you do. It's changed my life. I've studied this book for 61 years from the time I was converted.

It's changed my life. It brought rest into my life. It's helped me to bring up my family properly.

And it can do the same for you. God bless you all. Shall we just bow in prayer for a moment? As our heads are bowed in prayer, will you ask the Lord to remind you of the things that you heard, all that you heard, and that at the proper time, he will remind you of that particular word that you need at that time.

The Holy Spirit's got an amazing way of doing that. Heavenly Father, I pray for all these dear brothers and sisters and friends who will listen to me today and will be listening to this message later on. I pray that they will really be established in the faith.

They learn to reverence you and learn the ABC of the Christian life and go on from the ABC to the higher levels of wisdom that you want us all to have. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, Benoit, thank you. Thank you, Brother Zach. Before we go into the question and answer session, I just wanted to remind everyone, if you are in U.S. or Canada or Mexico, and if you need some fellowship where you don't have any local fellowship, you can write to us at austincfc@gmail.com. If you're outside of those countries, if you are looking for fellowship, please write to cfc@cfcindia.com. And also, if you have any books, if you need any books by Brother Zach in the U.S. or Canada, you can write to ravensministry@gmail.com. And I just wanted to remind everyone about the CFC Bible Study app.

If you don't have it, please install that in your smartphone so that you can get a lot of teachings through that. There's so many messages that are there. And then if you have not, if you're not getting the Word for the Week every week from cfcindia.com, please go to cfcindia.com and subscribe.

On the bottom right, there is a place where you can put your email and you can subscribe so that you can get an email every week with some encouraging words and also communication about the information about the meetings like this in the future. Okay, so Brother Zach, I have a few questions that I prepared here related to this session. If you don't mind, if you can take some time to answer those, that would be great.

Okay, like I said earlier, we would, since we have so many people in the session, it's gonna be very difficult to coordinate a live, I mean, feedback from you guys, the questions from you. So I have prepared a few questions and so I will be asking that. Okay, Brother Zach, we have, I think, do we have like 20, 25 minutes, half an hour, up to half an hour.

So if you're okay with it, I mean, you can take as much time to maybe up to five minutes. I have like five or six questions. So you mentioned about, you started with the repentance, the importance of repentance, right? So here's someone says like, I wanna repent, but I have made such a mess of my life and there are

too many things to account for.

What do I do? Okay. You know, some people think they are the only ones who have made a mess of their life. I wanna tell you the good news or the bad news.

That everybody's like that. And a lot of people are much worse than you. But Jesus said, he did not come for the righteous.

He came to save sinners. So if you're a sinner, you qualify. You know, it's like when people apply for a job, there's a list of qualifications.

If you have these qualifications, come. So the qualification to come to God is, you're a sinner, you're a terrible sinner, then you'll be in the front of the line for this job. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, not to leave them as sinners.

You see, a hospital is not set up for healthy people. Hospital says, sick people come here. We are a good hospital.

And the better the hospital, they can treat the worst cases. And if you think you're the worst case, come to Christ. There's no one he cannot handle.

The only thing you need to do is, what does repentance mean? Repentance basically means turning around. It's in the military term, about turn. In the parade, in the military, sometimes they give a command about turn, then you turn right around 180 degrees.

That is what repentance means. Turn around in your mind. In the Tamil language in India, the word for repentance is Mananthirambal.

Mananthirambal means your mind being turning around. It's the most accurate translation of repentance that I've heard of in any language. You see, the word repent is a word we don't understand, but in Tamil, it means turn your mind around.

That's what it means. Have you changed your mind, turn it around and seen that your way of life was against God? See, God was on one side and the world and sin is the other side. We grew up facing the world and sin and God was behind us.

Turning around, repentant means I turn around and put my back to the world and sin. Now I face God. It's simple.

It's not saying I've reached him. No, it's not saying I finished the Christian race. It's not saying I've overcome all my sins in my life.

No, I may not have overcome any sin so far, but I want to overcome. I've turned around from it. That's all it means.

So repentance is not saying from now on, I'm not gonna sin. You can't say that. Nobody on earth can say that, but you can say, I don't want to sin from now on.

I've turned around from my old way of life, meaning not that I've reached the finishing line, but I've come to the starting line of the Christian race. I've still got a whole life to run, but I turned around. My attitude to sin

has changed.

That is repentance. And if you have turned around like that, let me give you a lovely verse in Acts chapter 17 and verse 30. This is the favorite verse that I give to people who feel they have made a mess of their life.

And in one way or the other, all of us have made a mess of our life in our unconverted days. I know I did. You don't have to commit adultery to make a mess of your life.

You don't have to murder people to make a mess of your life. Jesus said, if you do these things in your thoughts, it's just as bad. If you get angry with somebody, Jesus said in Matthew 5, it's like killing him.

If you lust after a woman, it's like actually committing adultery. In God's eyes, you're committing sin in the mind is a sin. You have murdered people in your mind and you've committed adultery in your mind.

And all those evil things other people done on the outside, you've done it in your mind. Your mind is just as filthy as those guys. Okay, now you come to the Lord.

Acts 17, 30, it says God overlooks. That means he doesn't look at it. Your times of ignorance, you did not know how serious sin was.

Maybe you knew to sin, but you did not know how serious it was. So you indulged in it. Now God is saying, now that he's overlooked your past, turn around and turn towards him.

Because one day, verse 31, he's gonna judge the whole world in righteousness. So you don't have to be bothered by the fact that you sin so much in your life. Christ shed his blood to cleanse us from every sin.

And 1 John 1, verse 7 says, if we walk in the light. What does it mean to walk in the light? You know what walking in the light means? It means being honest. It means shining a flashlight on that, turning on the light in a room, you see everything.

That means walking in the light means you don't hide anything in your life. It means being honest. It doesn't mean being perfect, no.

It does not mean being perfect, 1 John 1, 7, because if you're perfect, then there's no need for the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from anything. But it says here, if you walk in the light, the blood of Jesus will cleanse you. So when you walk in the light, you've got sin which has to be cleansed.

So walking in the light is not perfection. Walking in the light means walking in 100% honesty as much as you have light on your inner life. The blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all sin, A-L-L, all, believe the word of God.

And when you commit a particular sin, verse 9, confess that sin, God is faithful and righteous to forgive you all your sin because he has paid the price for it on the cross. Sin is like a debt we owe to God. And that debt was paid by Jesus on the cross.

It doesn't matter whether your debt was 10 cents, or billions of dollars in terms of money. However great Christ's blood has paid for it all. And when you magnify your sin as greater than the blood of Christ, then you're insulting God.

When you say, oh, I'm such a terrible sinner. How can God forgive me? Then you're saying the blood of Christ is not worth so much. My sin is greater.

That is an insult to the blood of Christ. Don't insult him anymore. Your sin can never be greater than the power of the blood of Christ.

Remember that. Confess your sin. He'll forgive you.

God bless you. Thank you, Brother Zach. You mentioned about loving Jesus more than everyone, everything on this earth, right? I mean, Bible calls out to you, you must hate your father, mother, things like that.

So one of the illustrations that you used was about the sun and the stars. Remember that? That helped me a lot. Would you mind sharing that illustration in that context? Yes.

In Luke 14, Jesus said, if you want to be my disciple, you must hate, if anyone comes to me, Luke 14, 26, must hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and his own life. Otherwise you cannot be my disciple. Now, how does this fit in with other places where it says you must honor your father and mother? You must love your wife as Christ loved the church.

And here it says, you gotta hate. Compare scripture with scripture. So there are another passage in the gospel, another gospel where a similar statement is made is Matthew 10, verse 37.

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. So when we compare these two verses, we understand that the Lord uses the word hate as a strong word to show how great our love for him must be.

So if you think of love as light, perfect light, and hatred, we think of as darkness. Okay, just picture that in your mind. Love equals perfect light.

Hatred equals darkness. Your love for your father and mother, think of a pitch dark night. Your love for your father and mother must be like the light of the stars.

You see the stars, you see the planets, your love for your wife, your husband, your father, mother, children must be there. That light of the stars must be there. But as soon as the sun rises in the daytime, you don't see those stars anymore.

It's not that they've disappeared. It's not that they've been blotted out. It's not that they've vanished.

They are still there, but the light is so bright. The light of the sun is so bright, you can't see those stars. Now apply that to this verse.

You love your father and mother. You love your wife and children. You love your wife more than your own life.

You'd do anything for her. You love her like Christ loved the church. But when you come into the light of Christ, how much you love him, it's almost as though it's become like a star that's disappeared.

It's so infinitely small. What the Lord is trying to show here is your love for Christ must be supreme. Your wife must never take the place of Christ in your life.

No one must take the place of Christ in your heart. Christ must be Lord of your life, Lord of your heart, sitting on the throne. Nobody else has place there.

And your love for your wife must come through Christ. Then you will never get angry and get upset with her. It's when you don't love your wife through Christ that you get angry and upset and fight and quarrel.

It's when you don't love your husband through Christ that you love directly without Christ. Then you fight and quarrel and even hate and divorce and all that happens. But if Christ is Lord in your heart and you love your wife and your father and mother, you'll keep them all in their proper place like the stars.

But Christ is supreme. That is the meaning of this verse. Okay, thank you.

So many people, I'm sure many in this group are like listening to, have been listening to you for a long time. They're very keen on listening to more messages, more messages. But very few really experience what the truth that you're saying, the abundant life is like that.

What is the secret of that transformation? Not just listening, listening is important, but to experience that truth that you were mentioning. Okay, see very often when we are listening to a message, we are thinking of understanding. And we think if I've understood it, I've got it.

No, you haven't got it. If it's a mathematics problem or a chemistry or a physics equation or something like that in the world of academics, if you understand in your mind, you got it. History, geography, all understanding is enough.

But when it comes to righteousness, the way of righteousness, you can understand it so well that you can explain it to others and still not be righteous in your life because understanding is not enough. In Matthew five and verse six, Jesus said, those people are blessed not to understand about righteousness, but to hunger and thirst for righteousness. You see the difference between understanding the way of righteousness and hungering and thirsting for it.

There are a lot of people who cannot explain the way of victory over sin, perhaps as clearly as I can. But that's because God's, not because I'm better than them. I don't believe I'm better than any other human being, but God's saved me and God has gifted me to be a teacher.

That's why I can teach. If God takes away that gift from this moment onwards, I will not be able to teach. It's entirely a gift of God, which he has given me.

But you don't need to be a teacher, but you need to hunger and thirst for righteousness. You will be satisfied. You will be filled.

If you don't hunger and thirst, you'll only understand it. And you'll explain it to others and be defeated in your life. Look at the number of pastors and preachers.

I've heard some of them myself who preach so strongly against adultery and fall into adultery themselves, who preach against the love of money and are the biggest lovers of money themselves. That doctrine is right. Their life is all wrong.

Their life speaks louder than the words of their mouth. The life speaks about sin and the words of their mouth speak about holiness. That's what's called hypocrisy.

The Pharisees spoke so many right words, but their lives are complete contradiction. They knew the doctrine, but they did not hunger and thirst after righteousness. So when you read the scriptures, if you only use your mind, you'll be able to understand everything and you can become a preacher.

It'll do you no good. A lot of preachers are in hell without a doubt. There'll be more punishment for them because they preached and did not love it, did not live it.

Those who did not preach would have a lesser punishment if they commit the same sin. But if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you want to really be free from sin, God will do it in your life. Because there's a verse in Jeremiah, chapter 29, which reads like this.

Jeremiah 29 says, it's a very important verse. Jeremiah 29, it's a principle that is true right through the Old Testament and into the New Testament. Jeremiah 29 and verse 13.

Let's begin at verse 12. The Lord says, you'll call upon me. You will pray to me and I will listen to you.

And you will seek me. But you will find me only when you search for me with all your heart. Look what it says.

You will call upon me. You will come to me. You will pray to me.

And you will seek me, but you will not find me until you search for me with all your heart. You can do all those other things. You can pray and read the Bible and everything else.

But you will never experience the reality of an overcoming life where you overcome those dirty thoughts, habits, where you overcome anger, where you overcome bitterness, where you overcome murmuring and grumbling and gossiping and complaining and learn to give thanks and everything. You'll never come to that life if you don't hunger and thirst for it. You'll never overcome anxiety and fear if you don't hunger and thirst for a life of overcoming sin.

So that is the secret. Thank you. You mentioned about the trials are the machines in the gym, right? That's how we subject our methods to those machines.

I read that in 1 Corinthians 9, 27, Paul says I have disciplined my body, right? So what are some of the practical things as believers that we face? When we face circumstances, like God arranged circumstances in a way that let's say, you know, a young man who works in the corporate world is sexually tempted or somebody who loves the Lord so much, but their loved ones are taken away from them or something like that. What are the practical ways of that disciplining my body or that muscle subjection? Yeah. See, sin is primarily in the mind and it's manifested through the body.

It's sin in your heart, you know, Jesus said from your heart, the evil words come out. So everything begins inside. So you don't clean up the inside, just clean up on the outside, doesn't solve the problem.

You can overcome anger in your mouth, but if anger is in your heart, you're still living in sin. But trials have a way of God putting, it's like putting gold into the fire. You know, when people pull out gold from the depths of the earth, it's mixed with so many alloys.

And you can't clean it with soap and water. You have to put it in the fire. What is the fire? The fire just burns up all that dross and the metals with which the gold is mixed and it becomes pure.

That's how gold is purified. So trials do something like that for us. Let me read to you from James, the letter of James chapter one and verse two.

My brethren consider it only joy when you encounter various trials. Have you ever heard a more challenging word than that? That when you face a trial, not one trial, but various types of trials, I'm just reading one word, James one verse two. When you encounter various types of trials in your life, count it as only joy.

That's the meaning of that, literal meaning of that word. Consider it as only joy. Praise the Lord.

Another trial, like the man who goes into the gym. Oh, and the trainer says, you got to do this machine today that'll develop this muscle. He says, wow, that's great.

I'm looking forward to that. Okay, that muscle is developed. Then the trainer says, now I'm gonna take you to this muscle where your leg muscles are gonna be developed.

He's so happy. Wow, another part of my body going to be strengthened. And then he says, this is for your shoulder muscles.

And like that one after the other, he's just delighted as he goes through machine after machine in the gym because every part of his body becomes muscular. So he says, consider it only joy because the testing of your faith, trial verse James one three, is a test of your faith. When a student studies in a class, he can imagine that he's understood it all.

The teacher says, have you understood what I taught today? And the student says, yes. Yes, sir, or yes, ma'am, I understood it. But when the examination comes, he gets zero.

That proves they understood nothing. Trials are like a test of our faith. Right now, when you're listening to my message, you understood everything.

You say, boy, I've got great faith. Hang on, just wait a minute. Wait till the trial comes, then you'll know.

But God will help you. So consider it all joy when you encounter trials. Because if you fail in that trial, it's good to discover that something is lacking in your life.

And you can fill that lack by going to God and say, Lord, I slipped up here. Why was that? And God will give you that faith so that you've got an overcoming next time. So consider it because the testing of your faith produces endurance.

And verse four, James one four, endurance, let endurance have its perfect result. It takes time. You've got to go to the gym many, many, many days and probably years.

But finally, at the end of it, you'll be perfect. James one four, and complete lacking in nothing means every muscle developed. But that includes disciplining your mind, disciplining your body.

In the verse that Benoit just quoted in 1 Corinthians 9 refers to Paul, even though he was a great apostle. He said, I discipline my body. 1 Corinthians 9, 27, and make my body my slave.

See the living Bible paraphrases it beautifully saying, I make my body do what it should do and not what it wants to do. I like that. I want to make my body do what it should do according to the will of God and not

what it wants to do.

My eyes want to look at many things. I'm going to tell my eyes, you're not going to look there. My eyes want to read many things.

And I tell my eyes, no, you're not going to read that. That's impure. I don't want to pollute my mind.

My hands want to do so many things or write so many things. And I tell my hand, you're not going to write that. You're not going to do that.

I'm determining, I make my body do what it should do, not what it wants to do. I want to listen to a lot of gossip. My ears say, no, you're not going to listen.

I'm not going to allow my body to do what it wants to do. For example, everybody likes to eat and eat and eat and eat. Most human beings are gluttons.

They eat far more than they should. They have no discipline in eating. And that's very often the reason why they are sick.

They'll eat a lot of things which are not good for their body. And they get high blood pressure and high blood sugar and so many other things. And they die quickly.

They're not healthy. They get heart attacks and they don't keep themselves fit because they listen to their body. The body's craving, eat this, eat this, drink this, drink this, drink this.

I'm going to make my body do what it should do, what is good for it and not what it wants to do. And it's so many areas. Your body doesn't want to do any exercise to keep fit, even not even go for a walk to keep fit.

No, I'm going to make my body do it. Keep fit physically. And so that my body doesn't sin.

That's what Paul is saying. And he says, if I don't make my body my slave, 1 Corinthians 9, 27, I'll be the greatest preacher in the world. But one day I stand before the Lord, the Lord will say, you're disqualified.

Imagine being the greatest preacher in the world and don't qualify to enter heaven. So discipline is very important. And trials are the way by which God makes us strong.

Thank you, Brother Zachar. One more question related to that. I believe it's 1 Corinthians 1, 18 is when Paul says that a message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

And for us who are being saved, it is a power of God, right? So is that related? So as a believer, we're not keen on this, what you're saying, that exercising the will, that discipline my body, right? So there is a danger out there, right? Is that what Paul is saying? That those who are perishing... There is a danger of what? What were you saying? I'm saying the message of the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing. My question is, so us who are believers, if we don't take this word, what you just said, the message of the cross or that dying to self, that exercising a will, right? If we don't take it seriously, there is a danger, right? Yes. I want to read another verse before I come to 1 Corinthians 1, 18.

And that is in Hebrews chapter two and verse three. This is written to believers. The book of Hebrews is written to believers because he talks about chapter three, verse one, consider our heavenly calling, Jesus, our high priest.

It's written to believers. And one of the things he tells believers in Hebrews two, verse three is, how shall we escape? Is he talking about believers? How shall we believers escape the judgment of God if we neglect such a great salvation, not reject? You know the difference between rejecting a salvation and neglecting a salvation that God has purchased. Rejecting is, I don't want Christ in my life.

I don't believe that he died for my sins. I'm not going to accept him. No, you don't do that.

You accepted him and you want him left. But this wonderful salvation, which is more than forgiveness of sins, which is overcoming sin and partaking of God's own nature in our life. That is a full salvation.

We can neglect it. It's like a child who says, I've learned ABC. That's enough.

Would you be happy if your child just goes to kindergarten and learns the alphabet? Can't even read words properly, but can read A, B all the way to Z. Can read that properly. Would you be happy? No, you'd say, hey, my child, you've got to learn more than that. You've got to study a whole range in education.

A lot of that's neglecting education. A lot of Christians, they've accepted Christ. They've learned ABC.

And then they stop. They say, now I'm going to heaven. They have not rejected Christ.

They've neglected this salvation. And it says here, how will you escape if you neglect this salvation? Now coming back to 1 Corinthians 1.18. The word of the cross. There are two parts to the cross.

One is Christ died for our sins. 1 Corinthians 15 verse four. The other is I am crucified with Christ.

Galatians 2.20. Our old man is crucified with Christ. Romans chapter six, verse four. On the cross, Jesus died and our old man was also crucified.

Christ died for our sins, to forgive our sins. But in some mysterious, wonderful way, he took my old man and crucified it with him on the cross before even I was born. Because God lives in eternity.

Everything is present for him. There's no past, present, future for God. I was there on the cross, crucified with Christ so that I could be freed from sin.

That's what it says in Romans 6.4. That I might not be a slave to sin anymore. So that is, the message of the cross is twofold. And the message that Christ died for your sins, you don't have to work.

You don't have to light candles. You don't have to go on a pilgrimage. You don't have to do anything.

Just repent and receive Christ. That is foolishness to a lot of people. Say, how can that be? You mean God will just accept you because you have to do nothing? Yes, you got to do nothing.

You got to humble yourself and receive Christ. That's foolishness to a lot of people. And the same way when we tell Christians, you were crucified with Christ and reckon yourself dead to sin, but alive unto God.

That's also foolishness to a lot of people, to Christians. And therefore they never experience the power of God in their life. But to us, 1 Corinthians 1.18, who are being saved, look at that expression.

Not we say we are saved. But here it says, us who are being saved. You know that salvation has got three tenses like in grammar, past, present, future.

There's a past tense, present tense and future tense to salvation. Past tense is salvation from the penalty of sin, which is the judgment of God. Present tense is salvation from the power of sin, which we have to get day by day.

And third, future is salvation from the presence of sin, which will happen only when Christ comes. So salvation is from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin and the presence of sin. Past, present, future.

Many people are only taken up with the past. I've been saved from the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death and I've asked God to forgive me.

But today, I have to be saved from the power of sin. Day by day. That's why he gives me the Holy Spirit.

The blood of Christ deals with my past. The Holy Spirit has come to deal with my present that I can overcome sin. I don't overcome sin by the blood of Christ.

The blood of Christ cleanses my past. I overcome sin by the grace that the Holy Spirit gives me. That is what we can neglect.

So many believers are neglecting it. Thank you, Brother Zach. That was excellent.

And one more last question. I think this is kind of related to that. You mentioned about forgiving others, right? And you mentioned about repentance.

Several things that all these things happen appears to be very difficult for me to do. Why can't just God come and do that for me? Like several people asked that. This is so difficult.

I can't do it. Why can't God come and act on my behalf? Okay, let me use an illustration. Here is a child who's gone to school.

And let's start from the earliest class in the kindergarten class. They're taught to write ABC in small letters. And they're given a homework.

Write out this page of these words. And the child goes home and his father writes out the whole page for him. And it's beautiful handwriting.

The child is only five years old. And the teacher says, how did you do this? Such beautiful handwriting. You're so young.

And he keeps quiet. He's a liar. His father did the whole thing for him.

Or in a higher class, a mathematics problem, he's got to do homework. And the father does the whole homework for him. And the next day he comes to school with the homework done.

You think that child has learned anything? That child has learned nothing. All his homework is done by his father. And he goes through school learning nothing.

None of you wise parents would ever do that. You say, you got to learn that, my son. You don't ask me to do it all for you.

So if you say, God, you do it all for me, you'll never be strong. You'll be the same foolish, ignorant sinner you were when you first came to the Lord. He wants us to do it with him.

That's why Jesus said in Matthew 11, and verse 28, I'm sorry, verse 29, Matthew 11, verse 29, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. See, in industrialized nations, we don't see this so much because you've got tractors to plow the field. But if you go to the villages of India, and like it was in the days when Jesus spoke in Israel, everybody saw oxen plowing the field.

And they always saw, everybody knew this illustration, the yoke resting upon two oxen and both the oxen plowing the field together and are perfect. And if you're grown up in a village where oxen plow the field, you've seen that yourself as well. There are two oxen with a yoke upon them.

And supposing one ox dies and they get a new ox who does not know how to plow. And they team it up with a senior experienced ox. And if that senior experienced ox could speak to the junior one, this is what he would say, learn from me, walk with me, and don't go faster than me, don't go slower than me, don't go in some other direction, go in the same direction I'm going, at the same speed I'm going, learn from me and you will plow an absolutely straight furrow.

But if you don't learn from me, you'll always plow a crooked furrow all your life. So this is what Jesus is saying. It's a tremendous humility where Jesus says, one end of the yoke is on my neck, you take the other end on your neck and let's walk together.

Don't rush ahead of me, don't lag behind, don't turn left or right, listen to me as I go. There's a verse that in the Old Testament, which explains this in Isaiah, which says, your ears will hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it when you turn to the right, Isaiah 30 and verse 21. Your ears will hear a word behind you, this is the senior bullet telling the junior one, this is the way, don't turn to the right or left when you're going astray and say, no, no, not that way, this way.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. So that is how the Lord wants to work together with us, after some time that junior bullet becomes a perfect flower of the field, it can teach others. So this is the way we are to walk, learn from me, Jesus said, take my yoke and learn from me, listen to me every day, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The most important thing we have to listen to every day is the word of God that Jesus speaks to us. I don't mean just reading the Bible, but listening to the Lord in our conscience, the whole day, we will plow a straight furrow, we will live an overcoming life and partake of God's nature more and more.

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