

Heaven on Earth

by Zac Poonen

Christians must live a heavenly life on earth by trusting God and His promises, and demonstrating the life of heaven through their relationships and attitudes.

Duration: 1:06:57

Scripture: Deuteronomy 11:18, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:11, Luke 14:33, John 1:16, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Heaven"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of God's Word being a guide in every aspect of our lives. He encourages Christians to teach these principles to their children and to constantly meditate on them. The speaker also highlights the need for Christians to repent and live a life that reflects the love of Christ. He emphasizes that true discipleship is not just about loving others, but loving fellow believers as a testimony to the world. The speaker concludes by acknowledging that we cannot live this life on our own strength, but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Brothers and sisters, it's a real joy to be with you again. And one of the things that's burdened my own heart in these last years in India has been the poor testimony of Christians in my country. There is a verse in Romans, Chapter 2, which says, The name of God is blasphemed among the heathen because of you.

And I believe that India has not rejected Christ, but it has rejected the Christ it has seen in Christians in our land. I used to see the same thing twenty, thirty years ago when I saw a lot of young people from the United States come to India to seek for God in Hinduism. Many of them, not only from the United States, from Europe as well, from very wealthy families with unkempt hair and ragged clothes.

And I discovered that they had rejected the Christianity that they had seen in their parents, the hypocrisy, the unreality. And they had turned away not from Christ, but from the Christ they had seen in their parents. There was a... One of our presidents, one of the presidents of India, many, many years ago, I think maybe forty years ago or so, he made a statement once when some Christians, some Christian leaders met him.

He was a Hindu, but he had a great respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, and he said to these Christian leaders, he said, You Christians make such extraordinary claims, but live such ordinary lives. And I have... That has rung in my mind since I heard it. Here was a man who respected Christ.

He wasn't against Christianity, but he saw all the fantastic claims that Christians made in their sermons, in their messages. But when he quite honestly looked at their lives, they looked very ordinary, just like anybody else's. And that's what I feared myself, to make extraordinary claims and to live an ordinary life.

Jesus taught us to pray. The very first prayer was, Hallowed be thy name. And the name of God is dishonored when Christians do not live a heavenly life on earth.

In the Old Testament, there was a verse in Deuteronomy, Chapter 11, where the Lord said to the Israelites through Moses that if they submitted to God's Word, and God's Word was their life and their passion, in Deuteronomy, Chapter 11, Verse 18, he says, You must impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. In other words, God's Word was to be their guide in everything they did with their hands, and to be always in front of their eyes whenever they thought of doing anything.

The principles of God's Word were to guide them. And he said, You must teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you rise up. In other words, it's not just at certain fixed times of family prayer that we were to think of God's Word and the principles of God's Word in relation to our children, but it must be very natural for us to speak to them about God's Word throughout the day and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, that your days may be as the days of heaven upon earth.

Just think of that, brothers and sisters, that our days can be like the days of heaven upon earth. We know that we live in a world where most people's days are like days of hell upon earth. And the calling of a Christian is not just to preach the gospel, but to demonstrate that the gospel of God is the power of God unto salvation, and to demonstrate that we have tasted heaven already.

And this is the message that we preach in the gospel. It was not possible in the old covenant, but it is possible in the new. When Jesus said that the least person under the new covenant, under grace, could rise to a greater height than the greatest person under the Old Testament, that was John the Baptist, he was referring to this.

Now, we don't know of anyone in the Old Testament who lived like this. Maybe there were, I don't know, but certainly not to the extent is possible for us under the new covenant. Because in the new covenant alone we have this wonderful promise in Ephesians, in Chapter 1, where it says that He has blessed us, verse 3, Ephesians 1.3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Now, if those words are true, and I believe they're true, it means that there is no blessing in heavenly places which is not already ours. That's what it says. Every single spiritual blessing that there is in the heavenlies, in Christ, it doesn't say He's going to bless me.

It says He's already blessed me with it. Whether I appropriate that to my daily life on earth is another matter. But potentially it's already mine.

It's been given to me in Christ. Every blessing in the heavenlies, it's possible for me to live that heavenly life on earth if I trust God and His promises, if I open up my mind and every part of my being to the influences of His Holy Spirit. It's possible for me to live that heavenly life on earth.

It's possible for me to spend, to behave towards my wife 365 days of the year in a heavenly way. That's the type of life God wants us to live. In the Old Testament, that was not possible.

This is not an Old Testament promise. The Old Testament promise we could say, if there were an equivalent of this verse in the Old Testament, it would be, blessed be God of Moses, who has blessed us with every material blessing in the earthly places in Moses. That's how it was.

Their promises were all material. Their barns would overflow, their fields would produce in abundance, their cattle would multiply in abundance, and their earthly enemies would be crushed, the land would be theirs, and it was all earthly. And there wasn't a demonstration of the life of heaven.

It wasn't possible. This to me is the distinctive feature of the New Covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus said in Mark and Chapter 9, these words that many people have tried to interpret in various ways, Mark 9, 1, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God, after it has come with power.

In other words, there would be some who would die, but some who were listening to Him at that time would not die till they saw the kingdom of God come in power. What does that mean? Now, there are some who would refer it to the very next verse, which is the six days later Jesus took Peter and James and John to the mountain and gave them a demonstration of God's kingdom. But I don't know that many people died in those six days for that first verse to be fulfilled.

He said, There are some who are standing here who will not die till they see the kingdom of God, after it has come with power. It's certainly not referring to the second coming of Christ, because there's nobody who heard those words who is alive. I believe it's referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

And if that is correct, then the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the coming of the kingdom of God in power, not to the whole world. It hasn't come. One day the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

That hasn't come yet. But in that little group of people that met in the upper room that day, the kingdom of God came with power. And they were to go out into the world and demonstrate the principles of that kingdom by the way they lived and by the way they served.

That was the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit, that when Jesus said, When the Holy Spirit has come, you shall receive power, and you shall be my witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. What were they to be witnesses to? Witnesses unto Him. Witnesses to demonstrate through their life the life that Jesus lived when He was in Nazareth and Galilee.

That was the purpose with which the Holy Spirit came. And I am not surprised through the years how the devil has brought such confusion into the ministry of the Holy Spirit by placing the emphasis on what I would call peripheral aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and taking the mind of Christians away from the central thing, which is the kingdom of God had come with power. And God has called you and me, in whichever land we live, to demonstrate to others what the kingdom of God is like, what heaven is like.

Jesus said, If I be lifted up, He'll draw all men to me. God's purpose is that He demonstrates through our earthly life, through our relationships, not only at home but in the church, that this is what heaven is going to be like. How many of you want to be a part of it? And unfortunately, that's not how Christians have lived.

Certainly not in my country. Most Christian preachers, whether in the United States or India, are seen by the world as people who are interested in making money at the expense of poor people. And that's not heaven.

That's not the life of heaven. In heaven, we read the streets are of gold. They don't walk on gold.

Gold is going to be under our feet in heaven. Here on earth, they put it on top of people's heads. But in heaven, we walk on it.

And God wants a people on earth who can demonstrate that gold is under their feet already, right now. That is what I mean by days of heaven upon earth. And the challenge that comes to you and me is, am I demonstrating that by my life, by my attitude to gold and money, right now, to an unbelieving world? If not, I cannot blame them for their unbelief.

They don't believe because they don't see the life in me. They see me making extraordinary claims, but living very ordinary lives, just like anybody else. And they reject the Christ they see in me, not the real Christ.

I believe there's a great need, brothers and sisters, for Christians to fall on their faces and repent. Lord, forgive us because we have not manifested the life of heaven in the way we have lived on earth, in our attitude to money, in our attitude to material things, in our attitude to one another. Jesus said, all men will know you're my disciples when you love one another.

One would have thought, I mean, I would have thought the world should have, Jesus should have said something like this, that all men will know you're my disciples when you love them. That means when the world sees us loving them and being kind to them, they'll say, oh, we're disciples of Jesus. But that's not what he said.

That's a good thing to do, but that's not what he said. He said, all men will know you're my disciples when you love one another. In other words, it's the quality of our relationship where we are loyal and true to one another, where we don't backbite, we don't seek our own, but seek the good of the other in all our relationships, that's going to make the world sit back and say, boy, what sort of life is this? This is not what we have.

And then they will see we're disciples of Jesus. That's what God wants. And that's where the devil has attacked the church and hindered its testimony through the ages.

Today we have clever preachers, new illustrations, plenty of books, but the thing that the Bible speaks of is days of heaven upon earth, a life demonstrating what heaven is like. In fact, there are a number of expressions here describing how it is when a person is born again. It says here, the person who is born again is described like this, is one who has Hebrews 6 and verse 4, one who has been enlightened and has tasted of the heavenly gift, who has been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, who has tasted the good word of God and tasted the powers of the age to come.

I find that a good description of what it means to be born again. To be really born again means this is what a true child of God should have experienced. He should have first of all got light.

That's the first thing that always happens. Like in Genesis 1, light comes into our heart. And tasted of the heavenly gift, made partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God.

And this last expression that I want to draw your attention to, tasted the powers of the age to come. There are many things we can taste on earth, but when the Holy Spirit comes within us, He gives us a taste of those fantastic powers that are going to be there in the future. The joy that floods heaven, I'm going to have a taste of it right now.

I can't have it in its fullness till Jesus comes again, but I can have a taste of it every day in my life on earth. Jesus said once to His disciples, your joy no man takes away from you. See, that's the difference between heavenly joy and earthly joy.

Earthly joy is something which, it takes very little for it to be taken away from me. Something goes wrong, some loss, something I didn't expect, and it's gone. But not the joy of heaven.

The joy of heaven is full and permanent, unchanging. The type of joy that Jesus had when He was on earth, where the night before His crucifixion, He had so much of that joy that He could tell people, my joy I give unto you. It's something like a man who was going to go to the electric chair tomorrow morning, just going around visiting, encouraging people today, sharing His joy.

Just think of that. That's how Jesus was. He demonstrated that as long as He was in the center of His Father's will, it didn't matter if He was going to be crucified, killed tomorrow, it didn't matter.

And to think that the Holy Spirit can give to you and me this quality of life, your joy no man takes away from you. One of the things that we experience in India is pickpocketing. You travel in a bus and by the time you get down from the bus you may find your wallet is missing.

And I've experienced this once or twice, and the chap did such a neat job that I felt he deserved it, because I never felt a thing. And when I got down from the bus, my wallet was gone. Well, the first thing I did was pray for that man, because I suppose he was a man nobody ever prayed for, and I said, well, I can do one thing at least for him.

Forgive him and pray for him, but then the other thing the Lord said to me at that time was that if my joy was in my wallet, then my joy would also have gone along with my wallet. But if my joy was in the Lord, then even if my wallet went, my joy would not go. And that was some years ago, and it was quite a revelation to me.

And then I discovered how easy it is for a Christian to have his joy inside his wallet too, and not in his heart really, no matter how much he may say it's in his heart. It could be in some earthly thing, something of earth that means a lot to us. That's what prevents us from having the life of heaven on earth.

That's why Jesus said, you cannot be my disciple unless you forsake all your earthly possessions. You can have them, but if you possess them, and there's a difference between having and possessing. I can, most people in India live in houses that are rented, they belong to somebody else, and they pay monthly rent and live in them.

A very, very few, a very small percentage of people in India live in their own homes. And I remember when, some years ago, when I got a home of my own, I was scared. I was really scared.

I never expected that I'd ever have anything like that. And I said, Lord, if this thing, this earthly thing, is ever going to mean anything to me, I want you to take it away. I want you to burn it up, maybe an electrical fire or something that burns it, because I don't want this thing to take the place you have had in my heart

all these years.

And I literally expected, one day when I rounded the corner, to see it in flames. And it happened for a while like that, till I knew I was no longer attached to it. It had gone.

It's never gone up in flames. I've lived there all these years, but I've never possessed it. It's not mine.

I understood that day a little bit of what Abraham experienced when he laid Isaac on the altar. The Lord said, Lay him up, kill him. And when he was ready to do that, as he took up his knife, the Lord said, No, you can have him back.

And from that day, he no longer possessed Isaac. He only had him. Why is it that Christians are not able to demonstrate the life of Heaven on earth, in their family relationships, in business relationships, in business dealings, in their conversation, in their attitude to many things on this earth? I believe the reason is that there's something of earth that means a lot to them.

It could be a possession, it could be a relationship, it could be a job, could be their own reputation or their own opinion about themselves. Something is important. Something earthly is important, and that clouds out the vision of Heaven.

And then, yeah, we can still be good Christians, we can still go to the meetings and sing the songs, probably better than others, the way we sing, but our life will not be a demonstration of Heaven. And this is what each of us need to examine ourselves and see. It's not a question of whether other people in the Church think we're living that life or not.

I've thought of God when He pointed out Job to the devil. When Satan came before God and God said, Where are you coming from? And he said, I've been traveling around the earth. Satan's not in hell.

He moves around the earth. We read that in Job chapter 1. And God said, Okay, you've been moving around the earth, you've been watching people carefully, you've been watching people's private lives, you've been watching people the way they believe in their homes. We're still doing that today, by the way.

And then God said, Have you seen that man, Job? The man who lives out there in the land of Uz? It's not a man like him on the face of the earth. I know there are a lot of hypocrites who take my name, but not this man. He's different.

That verse has challenged me many times. As Satan goes around the earth today, is God able to say to him, Yeah, there are lots of hypocrites among my children on earth, but have you seen this man in that town? Have you seen this woman in that town? I know there are lots of Christian homes where they yell and scream and fight and quarrel with each other, but have you seen this home? I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, is God able to point out to you, point you out to Satan, point your home out? Point you out because your attitude to earthly things and to your own honor and dignity are different from the people of the world. You've forsaken your possessions.

You live on earth as one who doesn't belong here. Your citizenship is in heaven, and even the devil knows it. That's the type of Christian God is looking for.

I've often thought of the disappointment God has. The Bible speaks about grieving the Holy Spirit. You know, it's not the Holy Spirit being angry.

It's His being sad. It's not that God is angry with His children, but so often He's disappointed. He's sad when He sees those for whom He gave everything in heaven not living the way He's called them to live.

That's constantly being a challenge to my own heart. I say, Lord, can you point me out to the devil? Can you look at me and say that there is a person who is really sought to put gold under his feet, who is really dying to his own honor and reputation and dying to his own rights and yielding his will and his relationships. There is a person in whose mouth is the law of kindness, from whose mouth come words, only words, that minister grace.

Not just in the pulpit. It's easy to follow that rule in the pulpit, but twenty-four hours of the day, at home, in provocative situations, this is why the Holy Spirit has come. It's impossible to live this life without the Holy Spirit.

It's impossible. You can try and try. God gave Israel fifteen hundred years to try and live that life and they only failed.

I don't want to try. I know I failed. I'll be like those disciples going fishing, who tried to catch fish and all night they caught nothing.

But then Jesus came and flooded that boat with fish. And that's the message of the gospel, that I can't make it. I can't make it.

You know, every religion in the world says, do good and strive to be better. And that's what Hinduism teaches. That's what every religion teaches.

And I say Christianity doesn't teach that. Christianity says, you just can't make it. You might as well admit it.

The sooner you realize it, the better. And you can get started. But if you're going to take ten years to realize it, you've got to wait ten years.

It's when you recognize, I can't live this life. It's too high. It's beyond me.

It's impossible. If you think that the Christian life is something attainable by a little more gritting of your teeth and a little more determination, then you haven't seen the type of life described in the New Testament. Think of a life where it says, rejoice always.

Not most of the time. Always. In everything give thanks.

It's not just for most things. In every single thing. It even says in 1 Timothy 2, to give thanks for all people.

Not just in every circumstance. He says, I'm encouraging you to pray for those in authority and to give thanks for all people. And it says, be anxious for nothing.

Now, you really think you can live this life? It's impossible. And yet that's the type of life the Bible always points us to. Paul said, thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph.

It's impossible without the Holy Spirit's help. And this is the main purpose with which the Holy Spirit's been given. To lead us into this heavenly type of life.

God has blessed us with every single blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And if I want it, I can have it. I've often thought if my little boy comes to me with a glass, he's thirsty and wants water.

And that glass is filled with a lot of muck and rubbish and stones and mud. I can't give him the water. No matter how thirsty he is.

I'll have to keep telling him, son, you got a lot of rubbish in there. Empty that glass. I'll give you all the water you want.

But you gotta empty that out first. And he doesn't want to. He says, dad, I'm thirsty.

Give me something to drink. And I'm longing to give him water, but I can't give it to him. This is a picture of how God waits.

We think He's reluctant. He's not reluctant. There's no need to tarry for the Holy Spirit.

They had to tarry before the day of Pentecost because He hadn't come. But no longer. If there is tarrying, it's because there's a lot of muck inside the cup, which has got to be emptied out.

And the longer we wait with that, there's some little attachment here, some little thing that's precious to me here, some little matter that I haven't settled yet, some debt I haven't repaid, some restitution I haven't made. And I'm waiting. And God's waiting too.

And we'll have to keep waiting till I see that this thing is worthless. Let me throw it out. Lord, I want the life of heaven in me.

I follow this in relation also to our relationships. We heard earlier about watching over relationships. I see another picture of heaven just like in the book of Job.

I see a picture of what goes on in the heavenlies in Zechariah chapter 3. In Zechariah chapter 3, it says here that the Lord showed Zechariah a picture of what was going on in the heavenlies. If we would understand something of what's going on in the heavenlies, it would make our life so much easier on earth. If Job knew that what he was experiencing, the loss of his children and the loss of his property and his trials, was all related to a controversy that was going on between God and Satan in the heavenlies, it would have made his life easier.

He could have faced those things with a little more strength. Now, he didn't know that. He didn't have a Bible.

But today we know it, that when we are going through something, there's something going on in the heavenlies. God's saying to the devil, he's going to stand true to me. Just watch, wait and see.

No matter what he goes through. He's not going to grumble and complain in that situation. He's going to give thanks and come through triumphantly.

Once we see that, we say, Lord, give me grace. I've got to go through this for your sake. Your name's got to be glorified through me in this situation.

I can't afford to let you down. It's not a question of what other believers around me in the church think. God's not primarily showing me to other believers.

He's showing me to the devil, up there in the heavenlies, and say, see how he goes through it. In the same way here, in Zechariah, we read of something that was going on in the heavenlies. He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing in his right hand to accuse him.

Now Joshua was the greatest leader of Israel at that particular time. He was the high priest. This is not the other Joshua.

This is the high priest Joshua, when Zechariah was the prophet towards the end of Israel's history. Being the high priest, he was the man with the greatest position, the greatest leader of Israel. And Satan was there to accuse him.

Satan primarily is after leaders. He's there to accuse leaders. And there are reasons he finds to accuse.

You know, when Satan accuses us to God, he doesn't dare to tell a lie to God. He tells God something that I actually did. Something, some area where I actually failed.

You know, an accuser is not necessarily a person who tells lies. He may speak the truth. It's a spirit.

And Satan accuses Joshua because it says, verse 3, Joshua was clothed with filthy garments. There were some things wrong in Joshua. There was something filthy.

And Satan picked on that, and he pointed it out to God. And this is a picture of what's going on in the heavens even now, with Christian leaders. Maybe there's some defect, some fault in them.

And I'm not talking about those who are crooked, like the money changers in the temple whom Jesus drove out. I'm talking about sincere people like Joshua, who still have some defect in them, who are still unchristlike. Some area of unchristlikeness there is, like there is in all of us.

Now here we are standing before God, and Satan is there to accuse us. And the Bible says Jesus also is there, if he ever lives, to intercede for us. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

It's like a court scene, where there's the accuser, the prosecutor, and the advocate pleading our cause. And the Lord said to Satan, verse 2, The Lord rebuked you, Satan, because the Lord's chosen Jerusalem. This is like a brand plucked from the fire.

And the Lord said to those who were standing by, verse 4, Remove those filthy garments from Joshua, and clothe him with festal robes. I've taken away your iniquity. And this is a picture of what Jesus does to us when we stand there naked and stripped and exposed and Satan's accusing us, and the Lord clothes us with his righteousness, so that we are acceptable, accepted by the Father.

Now the thing I wanted to come to here, we know all that. The beautiful thing I see here is what Zachariah did after that. It's beautiful to see it.

See, Zachariah had this Spirit of Heaven. And when I see what's going on in the heavenly, somebody's accusing this brother, and Jesus is trying to cleanse away his sin and clothe him with righteousness, I'm going to take one of these two sides. I'm going to either accuse him, find fault with him, speak evil of him, criticize him, or I'm going to take sides with Jesus, then that's what Zachariah did.

And that's the sensible thing to do. When he saw Joshua's filthy garments being taken away and being clothed with festal robes, he got so excited, he said, Lord, not just robes, put a turban on his head as well, with his face. You see, he wanted to make his brother even more glorious.

Now there are very few people on earth like that, who want to make their brother even more glorious than he is. But those are the ones who've got a taste of heaven already. Their days are like days in heaven and earth.

Their speech is like the speech of heaven. It's very practical, this matter of our days being like the days of heaven on earth, of the kingdom of God coming with power on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit giving us a taste of that future age, of that day when we'll be in heaven, when we'll never accuse one another, but really seek to make each other glorious, that I can have a taste of that here on this earth, when I see a brother or a sister, when I see some defect in them, some un-Christ-likeness in them, and I see what's going on in the heavenlies at this moment, and particularly if that brother is a leader, boy, save me after such people, and there he is accusing them, and there Jesus is trying to take away their iniquity and clothe them with righteousness, and here I am, I have to decide which side I'm going to take. The sad thing is, most believers take the side of the devil.

They join him in accusation, in pointing fingers, in criticism. It's very rare to meet a brother or sister like Zachariah, who wants the iniquity to be taken away, and wants him to be clothed with festal robes, and says, Lord, put a turban on his head as well, who wants to make their brother or sister glorious. You know, these are the things that disturb God.

In our church, we use instruments when we sing, and I remember once, it doesn't mean much to me, but I remember once when two of the instruments were not playing together, and it sort of rankled in my ear, and I was disturbed by it. And the Lord said to me at that time, He said, don't disturb me, even if those two instruments are not playing in tune. What disturbs me more is that husband and wife here were not in tune with each other.

A couple of brothers here were not in tune with each other. Sisters here are not in tune with each other. And that was a revelation to me.

And I said, Lord, help me, from now on, that the things that don't bother you will never bother me. And the things that do bother you, bother me. Two instruments not playing in tune, it's an earthly thing.

It doesn't make a slightest difference to God. You know, God's not even bothered if somebody is singing out of tune. We have some brothers in our church who sing completely out of tune.

I never stop them. They're making a joyful noise unto the Lord, and I said, I mean, just because I happen to be gifted with the ability to sing in tune, doesn't mean my praise is any more acceptable to God. Perhaps that brother's praise is more acceptable to God even when he sings out of tune.

It's the heart that God sees. There are a lot of earthly things that disturb us, even in a church service. And I said, Lord, I never again want to be disturbed by things that don't disturb you one bit.

Because when I get disturbed by those things, I'm not disturbed by the things that really do disturb you, which is relationships, people accusing one another, pointing fingers. I said, Lord, give me grace that I would root out from my life everything that's earthly, everything that's human. I want to demonstrate more and more in increasing measure what the life of heaven is like.

And if each of us take that responsibility seriously, can you imagine what's going to happen? It's like the bush which Moses saw in the wilderness. He's seen many bushes in his life. But this bush was different, not because it was bigger, but because it was on fire.

And it wasn't an earthly fire. It was a heavenly fire that set every twig and branch in that bush aglow. That's how God meant the church to be.

The first dwelling place of God in the Bible, that mention of God in the Bible, is that bush. You know that? Even before the tabernacle. Years later, when, I think it's in Deuteronomy, where Moses was blessing the different tribes of Israel, he speaks about, in one particular verse down there, I think it's Deuteronomy 33, that God who dwelt in the bush, that was the first dwelling place of God.

God dwelt in the bush, then He dwelt in the tabernacle, and then in Jesus, and now in us. We're meant to be like that bush where, in the midst of all the other bushes, we stand out. Not because we're cleverer or smarter or richer or better preachers or anything, but that there's something of heaven.

We had a very saintly man in India in the early part of the century. His name was Saraswinder Singh. He came out from a Sikh family, and I heard someone tell me about someone who had, an elderly man who had met Saraswinder Singh when he was a small boy in the early part of the century.

He said there was something about his appearance and his face and his eyes that made me aware of eternity and heaven. And I believe that's how every Christian is to be, that when people encounter us, they may fight us, they may criticize us, they may stand against us, they may not accept what we say, but they'll never forget that sometime in their life they met a man or a woman who reminded them that eternity was more important than time, that heaven was more important than this earth, someone who could not be drawn by earthly things. Just think, even if you're not great preachers, we don't have to be great preachers.

If God, if preaching was the most important thing, God could have easily made all of us great preachers. That's not difficult for God at all. He's called some to be apostles, prophets, teachers.

But He's called all of us to demonstrate in our daily relationships at home, in our relationships with our neighbors, in the way we conduct our business, the life of heaven in an earthly body. That's our calling. And that is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that's why we need to seek God, to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to live this life otherwise. We can grit our teeth and come to a certain standard of life like they did under the law.

I'm sure people like Elijah and John the Baptist demonstrated a tremendously high standard of life, but Jesus still said that the least person in the New Covenant could rise higher than that. It's only possible through the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit of God continuously shows me the reality of heavenly things, and that affects my life on earth. I thought of Jesus' attitude to all the money that was given to Him by different people as voluntary gifts.

That was actually His money. And here was Judas performing it all the time, and it never disturbed Him. That's wonderful.

In heaven, money has no value. Gold was under Jesus' feet. It couldn't disturb Him.

He longed more for Judas' soul than for that money of His. I remember once a Christian confidence trickster came to my house. I didn't know he was a confidence trickster.

He claimed to be a full-time Christian worker, and he told me some... I'd never seen him before in my life. He just came to my house and told me some sad story, which I believed. And he said he needed his fare to go from my hometown to Delhi.

He said, Give me half of it. I'll get half somewhere else. So I went into the room to get some money, and I prayed.

And I thought I should give him the whole fare. So I gave him the whole thing. I said, You don't have to go and look for the rest of the fare.

Just take the whole thing and go home. And a week or two later, when I went up to New Delhi and I met someone, I discovered this fellow was a crook. He just goes around with his stories and fools people.

And the first thought that came to me was, Boy, the fellow cheated me. And the Lord said to me, You've lost some money. He's lost his soul.

Pray for him. So I said, Okay, I'll do that. And I prayed that God would bring that man back to my house, and that I'd be able to speak to him and lead him to repentance.

Now, interestingly and amazingly, a couple of months later, I saw him on the streets again. And he said, Can I come and see you? I said, Sure. And he thought he was going to get some more money out of me.

And he came and sat down and told me some more. And I listened to him for two or three minutes. And then I said, You know, I know everything about you.

But I said, You don't have to get scared. I've forgiven you. I prayed that God would bring you back here.

I said, Why have you done this? And he broke down. And he said how the devil had got a hold of him. And I said, Now, I would suggest that if you're really repentant, you make a list of all the people you cheated.

Go back to your hometown and take a job. And little by little, repay all those people you cheated. And that will prove that you're really repentant.

Has somebody cheated you? In your business perhaps or some other way? Are you more worried about the money you lost or his soul? See, that's very often. It's in money that we really discover whether we are heavenly minded or not. The Bible says Jesus was tempted in all points as we are.

So he must have been tempted in this area of money and this temptation came through Judas who was cheating him all the time. There's many, many areas like this where situations reveal that we have not forsaken all our possessions. There's still some muck inside this cup.

And we are praying that God will fill it with water. And He doesn't. And we wonder why.

The answer is this. No one can be my disciple unless he forsakes all of his possessions. When we come to the end of the Bible in Revelation, it speaks there about the lost days.

And it says in Revelation in chapter 12, there's a little expression here. I don't know whether you've noticed it. It says in Revelation 12 about, verse 12, Revelation 12, 12.

This is talking about the time when Satan is cast down to earth and they overcame him, verse 11, by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives to death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens, on you who dwell in them. It's saying, rejoice, you heaven-dwellers.

And it's possible to be a heaven-dweller even while I'm on earth. And in contrast to this, it speaks in chapter 13 and verse 12 about earth-dwellers. It says about the Antichrist and he makes the earth and the false prophet exercising all the authority of the first beast in his presence.

He makes the earth and all those who dwell in it to worship the Antichrist. Earth-dwellers. And I saw this once.

There's a contrast here between the heaven-dwellers and the earth-dwellers. There are two categories of people among Christians. There are Christians who, when they live on earth, are heaven-dwellers, and there are Christians who, when they live on earth, are earth-dwellers.

It's been true throughout the centuries. It doesn't happen automatically that when we're born again, we automatically choose to live a heavenly life on earth. We have to make that choice.

And that's possible only if I have deliberately forsaken everything precious. I've often told people in our church, I say, make a list of all the things on earth that are precious to you. Maybe your children.

I'm not talking about illegitimate things. We've forsaken illegitimate things, unlawful things. I'm talking about lawful things.

Maybe sport. Maybe music. I'm talking about Christian music.

Maybe that's very precious. But it's an earthly thing. There are so many things, lawful things, money that you've honestly earned.

Make a list of all the things that are precious to you and say, Lord, I forsake them. There's nothing on earth I desire beside Thee. Nothing.

And no one. Make sure your husband or wife or children are not more precious to you. But you can really say to Jesus, Lord, I desire nothing on earth but You.

If You give me this other person, well and good. If You don't, that's fine. You're enough for me.

That's the person who's forsaken all. I remember the time when, 23 years ago, when my wife and I were engaged and I really loved her and she loved me and we wanted to marry each other and circumstances were such that at that time, well, it looked as if it may not be possible. And it was a very precious experience for me to find out whether Jesus was more precious to me at such a time.

He was precious to me before I met her. But is He still precious to me after I met her? And that's why God arranged that circumstance at that time for me, where it looked as if I may not be able to marry her. Her parents were against it.

And that's a very important thing in India. And I said, Lord, it's still true. I desire nothing but You.

If You want to take her away, You can take her away. That's fine. I want to live for You.

And then God gave her back. And I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, is there any, anything, any person that's precious to you? You'll never be able to live this heavenly life unless you lay that person on the altar and say, Lord, it's Yours. Maybe your job, maybe something, may not be a person, may be a thing.

This is what hinders this heavenly life from being manifested in Christians on earth. They're earth dwellers. They're not heaven dwellers.

Paul had to exhort the Colossians. In Colossians chapter 3, in verse 1 and 2, he says, if you've really been raised up with Christ. Now this was not possible in the Old Testament.

There was no resurrection in the Old Testament. Those people who were raised up like the widow's son and all were raised up, they died again. But the distinctive feature about Jesus' resurrection is different from the resurrection of Lazarus, is different from the resurrection of anyone, even the ones whom Jesus raised from the dead, in this sense, that Jesus never died again.

And here it says that, the Bible says that we have been, we have died with Christ and been raised up with Him, and he says if you've really been raised up with Christ. The gospel is not just that Christ died for our sins on the cross. It's more than that.

It's that I died with Him to this world, and I've been buried with Him, and I've been raised with Him, and I have ascended with Him to the heavenly places. And he says if this is really true, verse 2, set your mind on the things above, and not on the things that are on earth. In other words, even though we live in this earthly body, let your mind be set on the things that are eternal, heavenly.

We have to make a choice in that, because God doesn't take away our free will. It's not automatic. There is no one experience that will guarantee that I'll be like this forever.

It's a daily choice. Jesus said, if you want to follow me, take up your cross once for all. No.

Every day. And the fact that I took up the cross and died with Christ to all my earthly attachments yesterday, it does not necessarily mean that I will die to all those attachments today. I have to take it up today.

There is no once for all experience in the Christian life that deals with this problem permanently. I have to make a choice every day. Jesus said that if you want to follow me, you've got to take up your cross, deny yourself daily, and take a choice of my will, set my mind on the things that are above.

Lord, this is worthless. I will not be disturbed by this. I will not allow this thing that doesn't bother you to bother me.

And I want to be bothered by the things that bother you. Set my mind on the things that are above. That's the call that Paul gave to the Colossian Christians.

And that's the call the Holy Spirit gives us today. And I believe this, that if we really respond to this, we may live extraordinary lives, and not just make extraordinary claims. I mean, even a very simple thing like a husband and wife living at peace with each other, never raising their voice at each other at any time.

That's an extraordinary thing. It's not ordinary. It's not ordinary in any country in the world.

But imagine if we can demonstrate to others such a life. If we can demonstrate to others children who long to follow in the footsteps of their parents in living for God. That's so rare.

It's so rare to find even among believers. And we can always blame it on the children and say, well, what to do? But the word of God is true. Train up a child in the way he should go.

And when he's old, he will not depart from it. We have to take the blame as parents. Not say children are different.

Noah, one of the great things about Noah was that he practiced what he preached. His three sons saw him working hard, using his own money to build the ark. And they recognized that their dad really believed what he preached.

And they all followed him. He got his whole family into the ark. And where children can see that their dad and mom really believed what they preached, their heart and soul is for heaven, for eternity.

They may have their ups and downs sometimes in their teenage years, but they will come back and follow the faith of their parents. This is the way we are called to live. But if I don't take the blame and say, Lord, it's my fault.

I always put the blame on something else like Adam did. I'll never come to this life. I have to say, Lord, forgive me.

I have failed you. I want to live this life. Help me.

Shall we pray? Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there's anything in my life that's making you sad, anything that's making you sad.

Show to me, Lord, that I can get rid of it and live that heavenly life on earth. I want a deep repentance. I want a surgery that goes to the depth of my soul, a repentance for attachment to the things of earth, for being disturbed by things that don't disturb you at all.

Lord, I want to repent. I want to repent at a deeper level than I've ever repented in all of my life. Give me grace to honor your name, to hallow your name, that your name can be hallowed on earth in my life as it is in heaven.

Help us, Lord, each one of us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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