

How God Enables a Believer to Prophecy

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing love before seeking spiritual gifts like prophecy, highlighting the need to remove pride, cultivate kindness, and avoid pointing fingers at others. It stresses the significance of humility, love, and building up the body of Christ through genuine care and compassion for others.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4, 1 Corinthians 14:1, Isaiah 58:9, Isaiah 58:11, Isaiah 58:12

Topics: "Pursuing Love", "Humility in Service"

Description

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Transcript

Through the years, I've discovered in my own life and as I've observed other Christians, that one of the greatest dangers of those pursuing perfection in the Christian life is the danger of imbalance. That means we get taken up with one thing and which we lack in our life and pursue that so much that we can neglect the other. Prophetic message which, you know, we just heard that we must all seek to prophesy and everyone, God balances like we heard earlier.

God prepares a person through his experiences to have a word which meets somebody's need. It may not be your need but it must be somebody else's need in the church and God prepares somebody else through his experience to meet somebody else's need. That's why it's wonderful to work as a body and to hear one another.

Paul says in 2nd Corinthians in chapter 1 and verse 4, God comforts and when I read the word comfort, I think of the last four letters there, f-o-r-t, fort. I think of it as God strengthens us. A fort is a strong citadel.

God strengthens us in our trials. Why does God strength us in our trials? Why does God take us through certain trials? To comfort us and strengthen us there so that one day, maybe five years later or one week later, we'll be able to comfort someone else in the affliction he's going through. I don't even know the affliction he's going through.

I'm just giving a testimony to what God did for me but what God did for me becomes and how I came through it and what I learned through it becomes a prophetic message to somebody sitting there whom I don't even know. It's a good thing I don't know about it because it may puff me up to think that I became a blessing to somebody. It's good that we're ignorant of the people we bless, I'll tell you, and it becomes a comfort but you must believe this, that God takes us through trial with a purpose and it's not just to make us strong, which is also an important part of that trial, but also it says here to comfort others in their affliction with the same comfort with which we are comforted by God and then you realize a man like Paul, he had to strengthen so many people around the world and that's why he had a lot more trials than you and I have.

You and I may be called to just bless a few people but he was called to bless people in this country, that country, the other country, all over the place and God had taken through so many trials. So more trials we go through if we have faith and respond to God in the way he wants to say, Lord I believe there's a wonderful purpose. First of all I'm convinced that you will never never allow me to face a trial which is too strong for me.

That is a foundational truth. Many Christians forget that. I want all of you to be established in one truth, just like you know that God is love.

He'll never allow anything to come your way that will harm you. You must be established in this other truth. If you don't know where that is, 1 Corinthians 10:13, God will not, in the middle of that verse, allow you to be tested or tempted beyond your ability and the illustration I've always used is, I don't know how your educational system works in the works in the United States but in India examinations are a very important part of every standard.

What you call grades here, we call standard. Standard 1, standard 2, all the way up to standard 12 and examinations are a very important part of every standard. They have midterm examinations and monthly examinations and at the end of the year you have a final examination and a teacher, they have question papers that are given out and you have that paper in front of you and you write the answer and I say no teacher will ever give you a question paper of a higher grade or a higher standard.

It'll be the question paper for your standard, the thing you studied maybe on the sixth grade. You got a sixth grade question paper. Now I say I've never heard of a school or a student who accidentally got a question paper of a higher standard and I say school teachers are so careful to check the question paper.

Is this the question paper for this class? Yes. How can we doubt that a God who has promised I will never allow you to be tested with a higher question paper than what you've gone through. How can you ever question and say Lord this is too much for me.

Have you ever said that? Lord this trial is too much for me. In other words, to paraphrase it from this word, God is unfaithful. Here it says God is faithful.

God is unfaithful in allowing me, I'm reading the opposite of this verse, God is unfaithful in that he allows me to be tested beyond what I'm able and in the test comes he doesn't even provide me grace to endure it. Is that your testimony? Never. I've been a Christian for 60 years and you can believe that God's taken me through many many trials.

First of all for my own sanctification and secondly so that I can help other people but I can tell you one thing this is the honest testimony. I'm not trying to sell Christianity. I'm saying this is the truth.

Never once have I faced a trial. It's too much for me. I've slipped up and failed many times.

That's not because God sent me a trial which is too much for me. It's because I was not humble enough to get grace to overcome that trial. God has promised grace to every person who humbles himself without a doubt.

God gives grace to the humble. He doesn't give grace to the proud. He resists the proud.

So when a person faces a trial, if he's proud, he doesn't get grace, he'll fail in that trial. Sure. And he blamed God for it being too much.

No, he's got to blame himself for being proud. He did not seek the way of escape. It says your God has provided a way of escape in that trial.

That you can, not you can escape it. Notice it. You would think that it should read like this.

In the trial is provided a way of escape so that you may be able to escape it. No. It's so that you can endure it and overcome.

That looks like a contradiction. He's provided a way of escape that you can endure it. So the way of escape is not that you the trial goes away, but that you overcome in that trial.

And the way of escape is humbling yourself. And every time I have humbled myself, I've got grace. Without exception.

If you humble yourself in a situation and God doesn't give you grace, you have to say God's a liar. And you'd be the first person in the history of the universe that God didn't give grace to. You'd be the very first person.

Because every person in the history of this world, Christian who humbled himself got grace. And I can testify to that without any doubt through 60 years. There's never been a trial that I have faced in my life.

Which is, it's too much for me. But with God's grace it's not. I can overcome it.

He does not expect us to overcome this on our own. Many times I've used this example. Some of you have heard it.

I'll boy, go to the store and buy a loaf of bread. Obedient child, he ran. And in a few minutes he ran back.

He said, dad give me the money. And I thought, did you expect, did I expect you my son to go and work somewhere and earn that money as a laborer somewhere and then go and buy the loaf of bread? No. When I asked you to go and buy something, I expect you to take the money and then go.

So when I face a particular situation, God expects me to come to him and say, Lord give me the money. That means give me the grace. Grace in the Christian life is the exact equivalent of money in this world.

Exact equivalent. The man who has plenty of money has no problems when he faces earthly needs. It could be a huge hospital bill.

It could be some other thing that he needs to buy, a house or a car or a vacation or anything. He's got plenty of money. He can handle it.

The person who doesn't have money is struggling, struggling, struggling. It's exactly the same in the Christian life. These poor people envy these rich people.

Wow, I wish I could be like that. In the Christian life it's like that when a person is constantly receiving grace from God. You see him triumphant in every situation, never complaining, never grumbling, able to obey the commands of Scripture without a problem, never getting angry.

Have you ever met a person who never gets angry? Wouldn't it be wonderful to be married to such a person who never gets angry? Is it possible or not? The Bible says Ephesians 4, 32, 31, put away all anger. And there are people who face provocative situations and have found a way of escape. Lord, this provocative situation which should make me furious with this person, I find a way of escape.

I humble myself and God gives me grace and I'm triumphant there. And maybe another one, maybe another one, maybe another problem comes up half an hour later. I overcome again.

I go through the whole day without ever getting angry. It's not that I'm not tempted, not that we're not tested. Overcome, overcome.

God will never allow. So when you fall in some sin, don't say that was too much for you. That's putting the blame on God.

That's reading the verse like this. God allowed me to be tested beyond my ability and he was thoroughly unfaithful in not giving me grace to overcome it. No.

Be honest and say God allowed me to be tested within my ability. Maybe it was just a little higher because he wanted to lead me to the higher class. And he was ready to give me grace but I was not humble enough to get that grace.

And so I fell. You know, man has a tremendous tendency to blame somebody else for my for our own fault. You know where that began? Adam.

God asked Adam, did you sin? He said, Lord, this woman, he not only blames her, whom you gave me. Don't forget, this is the wife you gave me. She's the one who gave me the fruit.

Was that correct statement or not? Absolutely correct statement. God gave her to Adam and she gave the fruit. But he was putting the blame on that girl and on God.

Such people deserve to be kicked out of Eden. And that's what Adam got. Such persons cannot dwell in God's presence because the spirit of accusing others is part of the spirit of Satan who's called the accuser of the brothers.

The one who's always pointing at a finger at somebody else. Husband's pointing a finger at the wife and the wife pointing. It's because of you all these things are happening.

The home is in a mess because of you. The finances are in a mess because you overspend or you do this or you do that. The world is full of such people.

But in the midst of such a corrupt world, God has his people, a few, very few, who live by the law of love and who believe that every situation can be overcome. You know it's a beautiful verse and I'll never forget this verse in Proverbs. It's referring to a good wife but it refers to all Christians.

It should refer to all Christians. A little expression of a good wife in Proverbs 31. Think of this and don't think of it as only a quality that a wife should have.

Every believer should have this quality. If you're a father, a mother, a brother or sister, Proverbs 31 and verse 26. She opens her mouth in wisdom and what is the one of the marks of wisdom? Here it is.

The law of kindness is on her tongue. I love that expression. Apply it to yourself.

Lord, I want the law of kindness to be on my tongue. A law by which I live. Don't you obey the traffic laws? You drive on the right side of the road.

You stop at traffic lights. You don't go into no entry roads. These are laws and we keep them.

You pay your taxes. The laws. Here's another law that we should have.

The law of kindness always on our tongue. Do you drive on the right side of the road only sometimes or all the time? You stop at traffic lights sometimes or all the time? The law of kindness must be on our tongue all the time. We're not like that because the corrupt heart we've got from Adam always makes us want to say something that will hurt others, especially if they have provoked us.

That's the time I need to humble yourself and God will make a way of escape that you get grace there. And over a period of time, as you keep on conquering, that which looks so difficult becomes so easy. For example, there was a time when you found difficult to lift a particular weight, but you went to the gym and exercised and exercised and exercised and exercised.

One day you just lift it so easily. What happened? You built up muscle through months and months of exercise of resisting, allowing your muscle to face resistance. All muscle building is based on resistance.

Whether it's barbells or dumbbells or springs or anything, it's always subject that muscle to resistance, it'll become strong. And when our heart spirits are subject to resistance from the flesh and the devil and we resist it, don't yield to it, we become strong. And that trial, you found it so difficult to keep quiet in some situation, you find yourself not only keeping quiet, but you can speak a gentle word to the one who's angry with you.

It's amazing what God can do. You'll be surprised at what can do if you always say, Lord, I believe there's a way of escape here. There's a tough situation, but you said there's a way of escape.

You will give me grace in this situation. There is not a single situation that we can face in life where we will not give grace. We will not give grace.

For example, we spoke about prophecy, such an important gift. I'll tell you in my own life, soon after I was born again, about two years after I was baptized in water. I was baptized in water in 1961.

Two years later in 1963, I found a great lack of power in my life. I found it scared to share the word of God. I didn't have words.

I would stumble when I tried to say something. And I knew that Jesus said that you will receive power to be my witness when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. So I began to seek earnestly for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not knowing what it meant or what it was.

I knew one thing. The first promise in the Bible is in the New Testament. You know what it is? The first promise in the New Testament? Jesus will save his people from their sins.

Matthew 12:1. We've heard that many times in NCCF and in all our CFC churches. The first promise in the New Testament is he will save his people from their sins.

Matthew 12:1. You know what the second promise in the New Testament is? Matthew 3:11. The same Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

The one who saves me from my sin, baptizes me, baptizing means immerses me in the Holy Spirit and fire. And I must be just as eager to be saved from sin, just as eager I must be to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire. I want God to make me a flaming fire for him.

A fire doesn't have to make a lot of noise like a light. It doesn't have to make a lot of noise. It just makes its presence felt.

And so I began to seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And then I also saw this wonderful verse in 1 Corinthians 14, along with that, that I must earnestly desire to prophesy. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1. I saw that God wanted all his children to prophesy.

It's one of the gifts, but it's one of those gifts which everyone, not everyone is called to be a prophet. Prophet is different. A prophet is one appointed by God with a special ministry to a church.

There's a sort of a leadership position and very few, I'll tell you, very, very few of God's servants are prophets who speak prophetically. I'm not talking about talking about the future, but who speak exactly to the need of a congregation. But prophesying is something all of us should have.

I'll tell you what prophesying is. Turn to 1 Corinthians 14 verse 3. One who prophesies speaks to people to build them up. Edification means to build them up.

Exhortation means to challenge them. Consolation means to comfort them. I want to say to you in Jesus name, this verse is in your Bible.

And if you believe that Bible you read is the word of God, you know what that word of God is telling you if you're born again. If you're not born again, this is not for you. But if you're born again, the first thing you should be seeking for is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And if you're seeking for that, you must also seek for the gift of prophecy. Everyone here, not to be a prophet. 99% of you will never be a prophet, but you can prophesy 100% of you.

Earnestly desire it, otherwise you won't get it. Earnestly desire to be able to speak whether a few words or many words, broken words or whole words, it doesn't matter, but words that will encourage others, challenge others, build up others. Maybe two minutes, it may be two hours.

That's according to the gift God gives. But you must desire it. And it does not mean only in the meeting.

Don't think prophecy is only to be exercised in the meeting. You can exercise the gift of prophecy, which is encouraging someone, challenging someone, building him up. When you speak on the cell phone, when you speak on your phone to somebody, instead of passing along the latest gossip, why not speak some words of encouragement? Maybe one sentence from scripture.

When you write an email to a friend, it's not difficult to add one word of encouragement there. The world is full of people who write emails to criticize and find fault with people. Why not you add one word of encouragement? We have the world today full of Twitter feeds that are insulting and hurting others in the millions.

Why not have a Twitter that encourages somebody? Isn't it wonderful? I'm not saying you should join Twitter and do that, but I'm just saying that we got plenty of other things to do. But what I mean is, whenever you communicate with people, for example, somebody visits your home or you visit somebody's home, you need only one sentence to encourage people. Seek for that gift.

Lord, give me a gift of encouraging others. Give me a gift of challenging others to overcome and never give in and defeat to whatever situation it is. People have asked me, what would you do for a child who's chronically sick? And the Bible says, call for the elders of the church and pray over that sick person.

I said, I'll pray for that child. Even if it's chronically sick, I'll pray to be healed. And they asked me, how long will you pray as an elder for that child to be healed? I said, I'll pray until it dies.

Okay, if it dies, that is God's will to take it. I have nothing more to do, but I will not give up in unbelief and say, oh, well, I can't do anything. It's a hopeless case.

What is a hopeless case for God? I don't know God's will. That's another thing. I'm not saying that every sick child in the world has got to be healed or every sick person has got to be healed.

I'm not saying that. There are many of God's saints through the years who got sick and died. In fact, do you know that the greatest, one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament was Elisha, who got a double portion of Elijah's gift? Do you know how he died? You read that in 2nd Kings.

It says, Elisha became sick and he died. It's an amazing thing. This guy who had raised the dead, he became sick and he died.

But after he died, somebody threw a dead body into his bones and the man got alive through touching Elisha's bones. Can you imagine that? There was more anointing in his bones when he was dead than in a lot of people in their life. It's amazing.

So, I'm not saying that people won't get sick. A man who's got so much anointing in his dead bones died of sickness. So, I'm not saying everybody will get healed, but I believe that until God shows us his will, we pray in faith for anything.

We keep praying in faith. We don't pray in unbelief. We don't say, oh, well, it's a hopeless case.

I don't care. The doctors say it's a hopeless case. That's not what I should pray for.

I pray for in faith and encouragement. Also, I don't know the answer. If God says it's a hopeless case, I'll accept it.

Not because the doctors say it. Let God tell me that's a hopeless case. Forget it.

Okay. So, I'm just saying that we almost must speak words of encouragement and challenge and building up. And if things don't work out the way we anticipated or the way they anticipated, people come and say, hey, you prayed, nothing happened.

Okay. I didn't guarantee that God will answer or heal that prayer. I said, I don't know God's will, but until we know God's will, we keep praying something good.

Like every time we are sick, we must pray to be healed. I've done that every single time I'm sick, whether I've got a cold or a fever or a little headache or any little thing, I believe God's perfect will is healing. But sometimes he does not heal.

Even the great apostle Paul, he did not heal him. When he prayed three times, Lord, heal me, heal me, heal me. Because this sickness I have is hindering my ministry.

And the Lord said to him, no. Second time, no. Third time, no.

But Paul, I'll give you my grace. This sickness is meant to keep you humble, but I'll give you grace. And he said, I'm happy.

So, that has been my answer in many situations. I say, Lord, if you're going to heal me, heal me. Otherwise, give me grace.

You've got to give me one of the two. Definitely, I will not leave you without either. Either heal me or give me grace to overcome.

I'm quite happy to accept your will in this. I'm not a stubborn child saying, I've got to get healing. I want your will.

And if your will is not healing but grace, fine. I know that'll be better for me. I'll rejoice like Paul said.

But my point is, I believe that every Christian must have a spirit of triumph in him. Because our greatest enemy, Satan, has been defeated on the cross. Never, never forget that.

Then we must never have a gloomy outlook on life. I don't care what the situation is. For example, you didn't get your visa.

But praise the Lord. The world hasn't collapsed because you didn't get your visa. Or you lost that job.

The world's not collapsed because of that. God will have something better for you. Always.

God has something better for you. I'll never forget when I was a young Christian. There's a word in the Old Testament that God spoke to my heart in a time of trial.

I was still in the Navy those days. And it was this verse in Second Chronicles and Chapter 25. It's a verse I often quote to encourage people.

There was a king called Amaziah. You know, some of these Old Testament stories are hidden in it. Sometimes one verse.

That's a real blessing. It's one of those verses like that. Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king.

Second Chronicles 25 verse 1. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, verse 2. But his motive was not always right. He didn't do it with the whole heart. But anyway, he did a lot of good things.

But when they were going to fight the enemy, without consulting God, he, you know, those days Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The northern 10 tribes were called Israel. The southern two tribes were called Judah, Judah and Benjamin.

It became two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. And Amaziah was king of Judah, the southern kingdom. And when he wanted to go to battle, he felt his army was not strong enough.

So he hired, verse 6, a hundred thousand soldiers from the northern kingdom. You know, people who were willing to fight for you for money. They were not part of your country.

They were soldiers, mercenaries who came to fight for your country, but we paid them a salary. And he paid them a hundred talents of silver, which is millions of dollars. And a man of God came to him.

You know, the northern kingdom was full of idol worshippers, unlike the southern one. And a man of God came to Amaziah and said, don't mix up idol worshippers with your army. You can't do that because the Lord is not with that northern kingdom Israel.

The Lord is not with these hundred thousand people you hired. They are idol worshippers. It's better to have a few soldiers who are not idol worshippers than a mixture of your soldiers plus idol worshippers.

Don't send them away. But if you don't send them away, okay, go ahead and fight the battle. God will bring you down before your enemy, verse 8. Because God is the one who decides who's going to win and who's going to lose in this battle.

That's in verse 8. Then Amaziah thought about money. But we've spent all these millions of dollars I paid and they're not going to pay me back. When I say you go home, what will I do with all that money that I lost? And this is the word the Lord gave me at that time.

I've never forgotten it in all my life. The Lord can give you much more than this. My dear brother, sister, take that as a word for your need.

You don't need it today. One day you will need it. When you think of a particular situation and you decide if you compromise, you can get some earthly benefit.

If you don't compromise and you stand for the truth, you're going to lose something earthly. Maybe some money, some position, some job, something. You children, you don't cheat and therefore you fail an exam.

Good. Better to fail than to pass by cheating. Because the Lord is able to give you something much more than this.

Remember that expression all your life. It's helped me tremendously in my life. When I face this particular situation, tempted to compromise and I say I will not, the Lord is able to give me much more than this.

I faced many compromising situations, difficult situations in the military where senior officers would ask me to do something which is against my conscience. And I would say I'm sorry sir, I'm a Christian. I can't do

that.

It's against my conscience. And they would tell me all types of things and threaten to take me to court and all that. And the Lord would say to me, don't worry.

The Lord is able to give you much more than what you lose here. And I'll tell you after 60 years, the Lord has always given me much more than anything I've lost of this earth. Don't ever doubt that.

And that will one day, that comfort and strength you get in that trial will be your prophetic ministry to somebody else. But if you don't go through that trial, you won't have a prophetic ministry because you're a compromiser yourself. What did Paul say the strength God gave me in the trials I went through became my message to other people.

Why is it so many believers, their mouths are shut? Why is it so many believers, they never have a word of strength or encouragement to give to other people? I'll tell you why. They're downright compromisers in the trials they go through in their own life. They got a lot of Bible knowledge.

They go to the Bible studies and they go to the weekly Bible studies and accumulate a whole lot of knowledge, but they're not faithful in trial. And so God does not give them a word in season according to the people whom he wants to bless through them. Well, what should we do about all our past failures? Acts 17 verse 30 is my favorite verse.

God overlooks all those years of ignorance. That's another favorite verse of mine. Acts 17 verse 30.

God overlooks all your times of ignorance. But now he tells you to repent. That means turn around and don't be like that in future.

And say, Lord, I want to be different from now on. So I want to say something more about this prophecy. And that is, you know, he had spoken earlier about prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12.

In 1 Corinthians 12, he speaks about God has given to some different gifts like healing and prophecy and tongues and all that. And the great danger with gifts is that we can be taken up with gifts are spectacular. You know, you see a person heal the sick or preach a powerful message.

That's spectacular. But you do a simple act of love or washing somebody's feet or cleaning up his house for him. That's not so spectacular.

And we'd like to have the gifts which are spectacular. For example, let me show you a list of gifts and see which one you'd like to have. There's a list of gifts here in verse 28.

And supposing the Lord said to you, look through 1 Corinthians 12 28 and tell me which one you want. Which one will you choose? Look through the list. Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helps, administrators of churches, speaking in various unknown languages.

Okay. What a number of wonderful gifts there are. Eight different gifts.

Which one do you want? Anybody chose helps. Anybody chose helps? We don't go for that. It's there.

It's in the midst of apostles and healers and miracles. Helps. Why is it people don't say, Lord, give me the gift of helps.

They're always praying for tongues and healings and no wonder you get nothing. You know, I'll tell you why. Because we're not, I gave you that little test just to show you how in our immature state, which most of us are in, we think it's a spectacular gifts that will make us useful to God.

It's not true. Start with the small things. Start with the small things.

Don't seek for the great things. Seek for the small things. I've seen so many young people in my life, wonderfully gifted, clever people, but they never come into a ministry because they're always seeking something great for themselves.

I tell young boys and girls, mix with people your age. Don't always want to speak to the elders. I've seen young people always want to speak to the elders.

They think they're so important. They're the most useless young people I've seen in churches. Whether girl or boy, humble yourself, mingle with the lowly.

I can spot pride in a person easily now. And I see that pride comes through the type of people they mingle with. She says in Romans chapter 12, a good exhortation for all of us.

Romans chapter 12, verse 16. It's a very important word. And I would say that to particularly all of the younger people here, middle of that verse.

Don't be proud in your mind. Associate, spend your time with the ordinary lowly people. Spend your time with the lowly people.

Don't always associate with the big shots and the most important people in any church. No, no, no. Associate with the lowly.

And don't be wise in your own estimation. Mingle with ordinary people. And don't be wise that you're such an important person.

You're not such an important person. And the more important you think you are, that's why you remain proud and useless to God. And you will destroy yourself.

I've seen so many young people in my life, men and women. They haven't fallen into any great sin. They've been brought up well by their parents.

But they are absolutely useless to God because God is not able to give them grace because he sees a certain pride in their heart. They've got some ability and it goes to their head. And they always want to mingle with all the important people in a church and the important people here and there.

God just refuses to be with them. You know, the Lord's ways are so different. He doesn't choose those who we think he should.

I've said this before, how if the Lord were to ask me, okay, on the day of my resurrection, it'll be a tremendous honor for any human being to be the first human being to see me because Jesus says the day of my resurrection is the beginning of a new creation. The old creation was when he made Adam. The new creation is when he rose from the dead.

And the first human being to see him risen from the dead is one of the greatest honors of that time. And if the Lord were to ask me, who do you think should be the first human being to see me risen from the dead? You know how our mind works. Just like when I sent you to the list of gifts, you wouldn't choose helps, but you choose one of the other gifts.

Our mind works with must be Lord Peter or John, or perhaps Mary, your mother, who suffered such a lot as your mother seeing you killed on the cross or some other holy person. And do you know who he chose? I hope you know the story. Who was it? Mary Magdalene, who was a demon possessed with seven demons.

You read about that in Luke chapter 8. And it's quite possible that she's the sinful prostitute mentioned a few verses earlier in chapter 7. If so, I don't know. It was a sinful prostitute who was demon possessed, who was converted and forgiven so much that she loved the Lord so much that when everybody else came to the tomb and went away, oh, we didn't see Jesus. Okay, I don't know where he is.

Let me go back to sleep. It's four o'clock in the morning. I can't lose my sleep.

Peter, John went back to sleep, but not Mary. Mary said, I can't go. I'm going to find where my Lord is.

And when Jesus comes before her, this is the part that really touches my heart. Jesus comes before her and she thinks he's the gardener. She doesn't know and says, Sir, I'm really moved when I think of that.

If you have taken away that body, give it to me. I'll carry that body and take away. A weak woman saying she will carry the hefty body of Jesus and carry it away some way.

I tell you there, you see the love. Why did she love much? Remember that verse in the end of Luke 7? One who is forgiven much, loves much. Is there anybody here who has been forgiven little? Jesus says one who's forgiven little, loves little.

When you love much, you'll sacrifice everything for the Lord. When you're unwilling to sacrifice, when you're calculating, or should I do that? Should I sacrifice so much? You know that you believe you're being forgiven little. I don't believe there's a single human being who's been forgiven little.

So, the way I paraphrase Jesus' words are like this. He who thinks he's forgiven little, loves little. Because everybody's been forgiven much.

I know I've been forgiven much, but it's easy for me to think I've been forgiven little. I think it's those terrorists and murderers who've been forgiven much and not me. How did Paul call himself the chief of sinners? He wasn't a criminal.

It's because he came so close to God that he saw the seriousness of sin, how he had dishonored God in so many ways in his life. He saw the seriousness of sin, and that's what made him feel he's the chief of sinners. And I'll tell you something from my own experience.

God doesn't allow us to feel like that all the time, but I know there are certain times in my life when I've really felt like that. Lord, I am the chief of sinners. Not by my trying to quote that verse which Paul said, no, that would be artificial, but really feeling.

It's usually when I'm alone in God's presence. And I want to ask you, have you had times like that in your life? Not where you quote a verse, I'm the chief of sinners. A lot of people in false humility try to quote it.

But where you're really convinced in the presence of the Lord, that perhaps you're the worst of the lot. That there's nobody in NCCF who was a greater sinner than you. Or do you pat yourself on the back and say, well, I'm not one of those really bad ones like some of the others in NCCF.

Somehow God kept me from cross sins. Well, I'll tell you, you'll never make much progress in your Christian life. You're at a certain level, you're in the second grade, and you'll be in second standard all your life.

Because you never feel you're a great sinner. He was forgiven much, loves much. Mary Magdalene felt like that.

She felt so strongly like that, that she felt she would have the power to carry that strong muscular body of Jesus herself away. She loved the Lord so much. And I've never forgotten that instance.

And I said, Lord, I want to love like that. I want to love like that. If I were on earth in Israel, on the day of your resurrection, Lord Jesus, would you have chosen me to see you to be the first? Why not? Why not ask yourself that question? I ask young girls to ask themselves this question.

If you were a young girl in Israel, 2000 years ago, would Jesus have chosen you to be the mother of Jesus? Would God have chosen you to be the mother of Jesus? Mary was a young 18, 19 year old girl. Some of you are 18, 19 years old. Would God have chosen you? A girl who humbled herself was willing to suffer the shame of being misunderstood as though she had a pregnancy from some Roman soldier when she said the Holy Spirit came upon her.

Having to deliver in a cow shed and not complaining against her husband. Would God have chosen you? Because he sees that you're the type of person who will not complain, who will humble yourself. Why can't a young girl be like Mary? Why can't I love Jesus like Mary Magdalene loved? Why do I say that? Because after speaking about prophecy and all these gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, he concludes it by saying, hang on, before you seek for the gift of prophecy, he says in chapter 12, the last verse, I want to show you the way you must exercise these gifts.

That's the way I paraphrase that last sentence. I've told you about these wonderful gifts, and I don't know which one you're seeking for, but I'll tell you how you must exercise these gifts. You can have all these gifts.

Chapter 13, verse 1 to 3, if you don't have love, you are useless. You're just making a lot of noise. You speak in tongues, but you don't love.

You're just making a lot of noise. And I tell you, I've heard a lot of noisy gongs, verse 1 and clanging cymbals in many churches. Noisy gongs and clanging cymbals, all people yelling and screaming in tongues.

Prophecy, people boasting about it, faith to move mountains, but they are zeros. How many of you believe that if you see a man prophesying mightily and exercising faith to move a mountain, some spectacular problem removed, would you consider that he could be a zero? It says here, he could be a zero if he doesn't have love. Or here's another person who gives all his money to help the poor, and he does it to get a name for himself.

Zero, verse 3. It's amazing how you can exercise so many gifts, even in NCCF, and end up as a zero. And that's why it says in chapter 14, verse 1, pursue after love. And if you want to serve others, it's because you love them that you want to help them.

Pursue, pursue after love. You know, I look at it like running after a bus or a train that's about to leave this platform, or a bus that's about to leave the bus stop. Run after it quick.

It's about to go. Run and catch it before you miss it. That's how I understand that word in chapter 14, verse 1. Pursue love, and then desire these gifts.

And the tragedy in Christendom has been that people have tried to exercise the gift of prophecy without pursuing after love, and it produces confusion and chaos. Now I want to tell you something else about love very quickly. Today we define love by the things we do.

I do this, and I do this, and I do this other thing, and I show my love to that person. Have you noticed in the Holy Spirit's definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13, 4 to 7, read it carefully, there's not one single mention of anything that love does. Not one thing that it does for another.

It's always referring to passive attitude. Love is patient, kind, not jealous, does not boast, is not proud, does not act in a bad way unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. What is the good that this love did for other people? According to this, almost nothing in these four verses.

Love is your attitude towards other people. It's not so much in what you do. Here is where somebody did something for others, verse 3. He gave all his possessions to the poor.

Oh, no, he doesn't have love. And here's another list of love. It's so, you know, understanding of love is so different from what the Holy Spirit says.

The law of kindness is on his tongue, even though he doesn't give all his possessions for to feed the poor. It's in the way you behave at home, towards your husband, towards your wife, is the way you speak to other people in your office, other places. If the law of kindness is on your tongue, then you have love.

If you can bear with people, if you stop accusing people, and don't point the finger, I believe this is the reason why we miss out on so much in the Christian life. So it says in chapter 14, verse 1, pursue after love, then earnestly desire the gifts, and then you'll be able to build the body of Christ. God wants every one of you, my brothers and sisters, to build the body of Jesus Christ in this place.

But if you want to do that, you must seek for the gift of prophecy, to overcome your shyness, and you're seeking your own honor, and pursue after love first. I'll give you one last verse we've chosen, that's in Isaiah chapter 58. Isaiah chapter 58 is, it says here, talking about a simple thing, I told you how Adam pointed his finger at Eve, a habit that so many human beings have.

How many husbands and wives, even sitting here, tell me, haven't you pointed your finger at each other? I don't mean physically, but blaming, because you did this, this happened. Can we finish with it? It says here in the middle of verse 9, the last part, if you stop, if you remove this pointing of the finger, the Lord is specific, get rid of the habit of pointing the finger which Adam did towards Eve. Then verse 9, if you call, the Lord will answer.

You will cry and He'll say, here I am. Where were you all this time, Lord? Well, you were always pointing the finger at others, that's why I couldn't come near you. If you remove the pointing of the finger, when you cry, you'll suddenly hear the Lord say, here I am.

You'll call, the Lord will answer, not only that, verse 11, the Lord will guide you continually. You'll never have a problem with knowing what the Lord wants you to do. And you will be, verse 11, the last part, like a water garden, and like a spring of water, people come to you and there's always water to drink.

You're never dry, and you will rebuild, verse 12, ancient ruins. May God help us all. Let's pray.

Our Father, we can be so stirred in a moment, our flesh is so deceitful. We think we have understood something when we have understood nothing. We think we are gripped by something and we've forgotten it by tomorrow.

Our only hope is if your Holy Spirit will keep reminding us, help us to walk that narrow way where we hear your word every day, speaking to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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