

How to Avoid Being Deceived

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being delivered from self-deception regarding our spiritual condition. It highlights the need to love the truth revealed in God's Word, to be saved from sin, and to pursue perfection in holiness. The speaker urges humility, self-examination, and a deep desire to be transformed into the likeness of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The key focus is on living with a clear conscience, being ruthlessly honest with oneself, and seeking to judge and cleanse oneself daily to avoid deception and walk in the fear of God.

Scripture: Matthew 24:4, Isaiah 55:8, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 17:17, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, James 1:26, Ephesians 4:21, 1 Corinthians 11:31

Topics: "Self-Examination", "Pursuit of Holiness"

Description

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Transcript

As I have observed Christendom in general and believers in many countries and even many in our CFC churches, I have felt more and more that the great need, one of the great needs anyway, is to be delivered from deceiving ourselves about our spiritual condition. See when the disciples asked Jesus in Matthew 24, we will begin there, in Matthew 24 and verse 3, the last part he said, when will all these things happen, that is when will the temple be pulled down, that was about 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion. And then he asked, they asked him, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? And when they asked for one sign, the first thing Jesus mentioned was, first of all, see to it that no one deceives you.

Do you take that exhortation seriously? See to it that you are not deceived and went on to say further again, verse 11, many false prophets will arise and people will be deceived. And verse 24, false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to mislead people. Do you know the number of false prophets today who are showing signs and wonders in the name of Jesus and deceiving, if possible, even the elect? So it's one of those things which we wonder, God is a loving father, why does he allow deceiving spirits to come into the midst of the church? I mean, if I, as an earthly father, if I knew that somebody is a deceiver, I would not allow him to come and talk to my children in my home.

I'd keep him away, but I'm not God. God's wisdom is as much above mine as the heaven is above the earth. That's what he said in Isaiah 55.

My ways are not your ways. Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9, very important for all of us to humble ourselves and understand God's ways are not our ways. And if you want to know how much different they are, he says, as different as the heaven is above the earth.

So as I said, my way is, I would never allow a deceiver into my house. If I knew he was a deceiver, I'd keep him far away. But God, I mean, the very first chapters of the Bible tell us that God allowed a deceiver to come into the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve as a loving father.

If you have two innocent children, would you allow a deceiver to go and try and deceive them and lead them astray into eternal damnation? Because that's what happened. Very often we try to project our way of thinking into God's and he's not. It says, please remember this verse always, God's ways are as much different from ours as the heaven is above the earth.

And that's a very humbling thought that the cleverest among us doesn't have a clue of God's ways. But if you study the scripture carefully and see how God dealt with different people in the scripture, that's why it's important to study the Bible. It's the only book in the whole world that shows us God's ways.

And if I don't spend time studying it, however clever we may be, we will be deceived in these days. Jesus said, the disciples asked him, what is going to be the sign of your coming? And Jesus said, be careful no one deceives you. So we can ask ourselves, why does God allow deception? Why did he allow Satan to come there into the garden? He could have kept Satan away.

Well, there are many reasons. First of all, we can never become holy if our will is not personally exercised on God's side against everything else. That's the first thing we see in the garden of Eden.

That when even Adam and Eve saw that tree of knowledge of good and evil, so beautiful, attractive, it made Eve's mouth water. It was perhaps one of the most attractive trees in the garden, and yet it was forbidden. There are many attractive things in the world that God forbids.

You say, why does he make it attractive then? I mean, if God had made that tree ugly, repulsive, smelly, full of thorns, and told Adam and Eve, don't go near it, we don't want to go anywhere near it, we'd like to stay a mile away from it, it stinks. But he made it attractive, and the scent of it was so good, and the appearance was so good, and everything was attractive, and then God said, don't eat from it. The test there is, God is asking Adam and Eve, and he's asking us today, do you consider me more attractive than what I've created? Do you believe that I am more attractive than everything I've created, or do you find something I've created to be more attractive than me? I find numerous Christians, for example, you know Jesus spoke about God and money being opposites, and the reason I mention that is because money is one of the most attractive things in the world today.

If you want to know why did Adam and Eve go for the tree of knowledge of good and evil and not go for the tree of life, you ask yourself, why do so many so-called born-again Christians go so much after money, even though it brings loss to their spiritual life? Well, the answer is there. In Luke 16, Jesus said that money and God, wealth and God were two opposite masters seeking to draw us, and he says in Luke 16, 13, no servant can serve two masters, and either he will be devoted to the one and despise the other, or you hate the one and love the other. You cannot serve God and wealth or money or mammon, and that's

very clear, you cannot serve both.

How do I know whether I'm serving God or money? I don't want to deceive myself, you know, Jesus' warning, be careful that you're not deceived, and I don't want to deceive myself. The way I've looked at it is like this, to use an illustration, if there are two people sitting in front of me, and both say Zach is my servant, it's very easy for you to find out whose servant I really am. You tell both of them, you call Zach, let's see who he goes to, A or B, and if both of them call me and I go to A and not to B, then I'm A's servant.

If I go to B, then I'm B's servant. So, that's the way we can test ourselves, when God and money pull me and say, come towards me, whoever I respond to, I'm that person's servant. If the call of money in a particular situation attracts me more than the call of God, I am money's servant.

Whatever you may say, however much you may know the Bible, whether you go to RLCF or any other church in the world, in the testing times of life, that's what attracts you. Particularly, for example, in the matter of being righteous, righteous in paying our taxes and being righteous in all money matters, and there may be situations where you can be a little unrighteous and get away with it, and there, you're tested. That little benefit, that little profit that you get by doing something slightly wrong, attracts you, and there, you prove thereby that money is more valuable to you than God.

That righteousness is not as important as that little financial profit you can get by being slightly unrighteous, which the world may accept, ah, that's not serious. And even some other believers may say, oh, that's okay, most people do it. You live by the conscience of others.

One of the things I'll tell you, I've been a Christian now 61 years, and by the grace of God, one of the things that's preserved me from the beginning is, I decided not to live by the conscience of other people. Even fine believers, they would say, this is okay, Zach, and I'd say, fine, go ahead and do it. I don't feel free to do it, so, excuse me, I will not be involved in that.

So, many people thought I was very peculiar in my younger days, when I was in the Navy. Well, that's fine. I live with a clear conscience today, and I've lived with a clear conscience for many years now, and it's made such a difference in my life.

It's like breathing fresh air, it's like being able to sleep peacefully at night. I say, the best pillow you can sleep on is a good conscience. So, always the test is, is God more important, or this other thing that looks so attractive? There are people who tell lies in order to get some benefit.

I know a lot of Indians have told lies in order to get a visa to come to the United States, because coming to the United States is such an attractive thing, and nobody's going to catch you, except God. And so, we tell a lie and get away with it and get that visa and come there. And we live here and work here, and it looks as though everything is okay, everything looks okay, until the judgment seat of Christ, when everything is exposed and you discover where you're going to finally end up, or even if you do get to heaven.

What a wasted life you lived on earth, because you made a slight compromise at one point. I don't want to face that. Many times I've said to the Lord, Lord, don't show me anything at the judgment seat of Christ, which you don't tell me now.

I want to hear it now, because then I have no opportunity to set it right. Am I fooling myself in some area? Am I deceiving myself? Am I thinking that my Bible knowledge makes me spiritual? Please show me. I

want to be absolutely clear so that at the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord has zero charges against me, because first of all, the blood of Christ has taken care of my failures in the past.

That's taken care of. I'm justified by the blood of Christ, and to the best of my knowledge, I'm living with a good conscience now. I want to encourage you, dear brothers, please preserve yourself in this, because I find around me deception is increasing like anything, and I'd say almost the maximum deception is among those who claim the most, and in Christendom, those who claim to have the maximum spirituality are among Pentecostals and Charismatics, and I've been in their midst, and I've been amazed at the amount of deception there is about what true spirituality is, fake healings and all types of things which ordinary, sensible people can see through, who are not even Christians, and here are people who call themselves Christians who are deceived, so it's very real what Jesus said.

Take heed that no one deceives you. Satan is called the deceiver of the whole world. I hope you know that verse in Revelation.

It's one of the titles the Bible gives to Satan, Revelation 12 and verse 9. He deceives the whole world. If you live in this world, there's a deceiver who's out to deceive you. So the question comes to us, why does a loving father allow such a deceiver, okay, at least why doesn't he protect his children from being deceived? Why does he allow deception to come into the midst of God's people? To whom did Jesus say, take heed that nobody deceives you? He didn't say that to the Pharisees.

He didn't say that to unbelievers. He said that to, not just to believers, but to wholehearted disciples who had forsaken everything to follow him. People had given up their jobs, sold their fishing nets, and decided to follow Jesus.

Radical disciples, he tells them, be careful nobody deceives you. Do you think any of us can escape that? I want to be careful. I don't want to think that because I've committed myself to the Lord and I wanted to follow him wholeheartedly, therefore I'll escape deception.

See, the Bible says in Jeremiah 17 verse 9, Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9, the heart, the human heart, is more deceitful than everything else, Jeremiah 17 verse 9. So look at the things that are fighting against us. First of all, the devil, who's there to deceive the whole world. I'm born with a heart that is deceitful about everything else.

That means it can fool me completely about whether I'm born again or not, first of all. There are numerous people I have met. It's crystal clear to me as a servant of the Lord, this guy's not born again.

This lady is not born again, but they are absolutely convinced they are, and nothing I tell them will ever wake them up. The heart is deceitful about all things. You must be humble enough to accept the word of God.

Let me show you another thing that deceives us. I told you Satan deceives us. Our heart is deceitful.

Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians 4, it says here, remember Ephesians is written to believers, it's not a letter written to unbelievers. And he says in Ephesians 4 verse 21, you have heard him, you've been taught in him, just as the truth is in Jesus. And he talks about your former unconverted way of life.

Now you believers, he's talking to the believers, remember that applies to you and me, leave aside the old man. I thought my old man was crucified with Christ. True, but I need to lay it aside.

Because that is corrupt according to deceitful lusts. So here's another thing that deceives us. Our lusts, the devil, our heart, and those desires within us deceive us, saying, I can make you happy.

They don't make us happy. They make us miserable. Or it tells us, oh, that's not serious.

They deceive us. Look at the number of believers, believers who secretly watch pornography, married people who secretly have a glance at something pornographic. You go to the believers, you ask them, don't you think that's bad? Yeah.

But those deceitful lusts in that moment tell them, oh, it's OK. Just not doing it all the time, just a few minutes, it's over. You can always repent.

You can always come to Jesus and ask him to forgive you. That would be like teaching your child who's going for an examination. If you can cheat, cheat.

Take some answers in your pocket and look at it during the examination or glance over to your neighbor's paper and see what the answer he's writing, and you can always come back at the end of the exam and come back to the Lord and ask him to forgive you. See, then you've got the benefit of cheating and passing in your examination and the Lord's forgiven you too. Now, we won't teach our children that.

But there are many believers who act like that. What does it matter if you watch pornography a little bit, you can always ask the Lord to forgive you. What's wrong if you do a little wrong there, you can always ask the Lord to forgive you.

What does it matter if you don't control your temper and you yell at your husband or wife, you can always ask the Lord to forgive you. There's absolutely no difference between that and telling your son, cheat in the examination, come back and ask the Lord to forgive you. What's the difference? Deceitful lusts.

So the devil, my heart, deceitful lusts. Why does God allow all this? I believe there's a purpose. One of the great things that God does through the circumstances of life is to sift.

In India, we used to, if you're not very well off, you have to go and stand in a ration shop and get wheat supplied by the government. We used to stand in line and get the wheat when we were there, my wife and I, earlier on when we were not so well off. But that wheat that you get is mixed with so many other things, there's a lot of chap in it, and you have to sift out the wheat from the chap if you want to use it.

You can't cook it as it is. Here you get cleaned meat perhaps, wheat rather, but we have to do that all the time. I believe that's where, and there's a little sort of tray in which people keep throwing the thing up so that the chap flies away and get the wheat.

I thought of that as that is how God is using deception. He's allowing deception even to come into the church, because he's sifting the wheat from the chap. That is the purpose.

It's not like that little tray which folks in India used to toss the wheat up and chap up and throw away the chap and leave the wheat behind, the various ways in which people sift the wheat out from the chap. Or whenever people want to get something concentrated, when they want to get pure gold from a mixed metal, they put it in the fire to get the pure gold out. So deception is like that.

Deception is like a fire which purifies the gold and God gets the gold out of it and the rest, which is mixed, gets burnt up or thrown away. So that's the purpose of deception. So that's God's way, is the way he

drives the chap away from the wheat.

And the only way to escape it, how can we escape it, how can we ensure that we remain as the wheat and we remain, that we are not deceived? For years and years I used to seek God about this and I said, Lord, I don't want to be deceived. I want only one life to live. I mean, we are so careful that people don't cheat us in money matters.

Boy, in money matters we are really smart, almost all of us. You can fool a little child in money matters. A five-year-old goes to the market or something like that, he'll get cheated.

You can't put a five-year-old, you can't ask a five-year-old to put money in the stock market. You lose everything. They can be deceived.

But we are not five-year-olds, we are smart, right? Most of us think we are pretty smart with money matters, you know, people can't fool us. Maybe not in money matters, but in something much more serious than that. In our eternal destiny, in our eternal wealth, in the wealth that really matters, it's very easy to be deceived.

And I believe that many, many Christians are being deceived. So, as I've studied the scriptures and sought to escape from deception myself, here is the one verse that has helped me the most, and I want to share it with you. It's talking about the deception of Satan in 2 Thessalonians 2, specifically speaking about deception.

It says here in 2 Thessalonians 2, in verse 9, in the middle of that verse, it says about the activity of Satan, which is with power and signs and false wonders, fake healings, and a lot of it today, with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish. Why do they perish? Here are the two reasons, and this is what helped me. They perish, number one, because they don't receive the love of the truth.

And secondly, they don't want to be saved from sin. For this reason, which reason? They don't receive the love of the truth, and they don't want to be saved from sin. For this reason, God himself, let me paraphrase it, allows them to be deceived, allows them to believe something totally false.

God himself allows some people to believe they are born again when they are not born again. And even when a discerning spiritual man comes up to a person and tells them, brother, I don't think you're born again, they say, oh, I don't know, I'm okay. God himself allows them to believe something totally false, to believe that they are very spiritual when they are downright carnal.

How can I escape this? It's not enough that some elder brother thinks I'm spiritual. I tell you, I couldn't care less if every man of God in the world comes and tells me I'm spiritual. They may be all deceived.

They don't see 99% of my life. How can they know? I want to be absolutely sure, because this is a matter of eternal life and eternal death. How careful we are in matters of physical life and death, how easily people are willing to spend millions to be healed from cancer or from some deadly disease.

This is more serious. I don't want to believe what is false, I don't want to be deceived. And so I find my salvation in this.

Lord, by your grace, I'm going to love the truth. I'm going to love the truth that God shows me in the word about myself. I'm going to love the truth that God shows me about his ways.

And I'm willing to change my mind when I see something in God's word, which is different from what I've always believed. I've found many, many believers are not willing to do this. See, more than 90% of Christians believe that Jesus will take us up when he comes and we will escape the great tribulation.

That's the belief of 90% of people who call themselves believers. And more than 90% of all the Bible colleges teach that, that the Christians will escape the great tribulation and be raptured, Christ will take the church up. I believed it for years from the time I was converted because I belonged in the brethren, the Plymouth Brethren Assemblies who taught that.

I was only young, 23 years old. But as I studied the scriptures, I found that's not what the Bible says. I found that the Bible says that Christ comes after the great tribulation.

And that then I would hear the sound of the angel in the trumpet. And when I started preaching that, people thought it was a false doctrine. Let me just show you what it says here in Matthew 24 and verse 29.

I'm just giving you one example of deception. Matthew 24 and verse 29, he's talking about the last days and the great tribulation. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, there'll be so many powers and heavens will be shaken, etc.

And then, when, immediately after the tribulation, and then, verse 30, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and the Son of Man will come, verse 29, with clouds of great glory and he'll send forth his angels and with a great trumpet and they will gather together. This is the rapture. He's elect from the four corners of the earth.

How much clearer can it be than that? How is it that 90% of believers throughout the world believe that Christ will come before the tribulation? It's amazing the work that Satan has done to deceive people, even though it's so clearly written by the words that they say, the word of God that Jesus spoke. I'll just give you one example. I could show you numerous places in Scripture where people don't accept what is clearly written.

This God's word is the truth. Jesus said that in John 17. He said, Father, sanctify them through thy truth.

Thy word is truth, okay? But they did not receive the love of the truth, so God allows them to be deceived. That's just one example. There are many other things like that.

If I see something in Scripture, I've seen numerous people, for example, who've taken infant baptism as a baby, and they're born again after that, and they don't feel the need for baptism. I said, you know what baptism means? The word baptism means immersion. Were you immersed as a child? No.

Oh, that's not serious, isn't it, from God's eyes? So there are places in Scripture where it says John the Baptist was baptizing in a place because there was plenty of water there, and Philip was speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch, and when they came to a place where there was a little pond and a lot of water, he said, baptize me. He didn't take a glass of water and pour it on his head. It's so clear in Scripture, but there are multitudes of believers in many denominations who are never baptized, okay? It's amazing how they don't love the truth.

In my own life, my spiritual, I was born again 61 years ago, but I took one and a half years to take baptism because I was baptized as a baby, and people told me, well, that's accepted by God. You don't take a second baptism. I said, oh, okay.

But I was young. I was only 19 and a half, and I started studying the Scriptures, and I saw clearly that baptism is after you're born again. Baptism is a symbol of burial, and you bury a person after he's dead, not before he's dead.

So when I was born again, my old man is dead. It's after that only you can bury him, but I fought against it for one and a half years, and every time I knelt down to pray, I felt the Lord saying to me, you're not listening to me. Why should I listen to you? Still, I got fed up, and I said, okay, I'm going to get baptized.

So it was one and a half years after I was born again that I took baptism, and I know in my own life, it may not be true in everybody's life, my spiritual growth started from the time I was baptized, because it was an act of obedience against a certain teaching that I had accepted. If I did not love the truth at that point, I would be in that same state today after 60 years. I thank God He gave me grace to obey it, to love the truth.

That means when I read something in God's Word, and it tells me something about myself, God is asking me, do you now love the truth about yourself, which I've shown you? You can listen to the message, and in the message, God speaks specifically to you about something in your life, and you know God is speaking to you. Maybe your wife or somebody else, or husband is sitting next to you, and God's not speaking to them. It's to you, and you know it is to you, and then the question comes, will you love the truth? Or will you immediately bring out some justification, no, this is why I did it, that's why, or it's not like that, etc.

We are such masters at self-justification, every human being, even a little four-year-old child is a master at self-justification. You try that with any child, they'll give you an answer for any wrong thing that they did. So, and through years of experience, we've become experts at self-justification, even towards God.

God allows such people to be deceived. Love the truth when you see it in God's Word, when you see something in God's Word that's different from what you've always believed, I'm not saying act immediately, study it carefully, and when you're convinced it is the truth of God's Word, give up what you've always believed and accept the Word of God. This is how I have left one church and gone to another, and left that church and gone to another, because I said, hey, these guys are not preaching the truth.

I grew up in the Syrian Orthodox Church, and I discovered they're not preaching the truth, like I said about water baptisms, so then I joined the Brethren, and I discovered they're not talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they don't even talk about it. So I visited a Pentecostal church, and there was a lot of confusion there, they were not preaching the truth. I mean, Holy Spirit, what's the Holy Spirit supposed to do? I know what an evil spirit does, makes people evil.

I know what an unclean spirit does, makes people unclean. I know what a deceitful spirit does, deceives people. Okay, so what should a Holy Spirit do? Make us holy.

But I found that people who talk about the immersion of the Holy Spirit were not talking about holiness, they were just talking about babbling, making some noises with their tongue and saying that's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I came away from such a thing. I said, Lord, I don't want to be deceived.

Evil spirits make people evil, unclean spirits make people unclean, and deceitful spirits deceive people. Holy Spirit must be making holy. If he doesn't make me holy, it must be some other spirit that I got.

So I decided that I'm going to be, I love the truth, and I want the genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit, not some fake to fool myself for years to just convince other people I'm baptized in the Holy Spirit. What's the point? What's the point of fooling other people? If a man's got cancer and dying of it, what does he gain by convincing other people that he's healthy? He's only ruining himself. So love the truth.

When you see something in God's Word is contrary to what you always believed, study it, accept the truth. When God tells you something about your own life and you see that is the truth, humble yourself and accept it. That's the way we can be saved.

See, for example, I'm going to give you one or two examples. Turn with me to James in chapter one. James 1, let me paraphrase this, James 1, 26.

If anyone thinks he is spiritual, does that apply to you? I think most of you think you're spiritual. That's my guess. If anyone thinks he's spiritual and he cannot control his tongue when he speaks to his wife, when he speaks to her husband, when he speaks to somebody who's irritated him and provoked him, he cannot control his tongue, his, paraphrase, his Christianity is worth zero.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that someone who thinks he's spiritual, but he cannot control his tongue in a provocative situation, do you believe that his Christianity is worth zero? What does worthless mean? Worthless is another way of saying it is worth nothing. His entire Christianity is worth nothing. He deceives his own heart, speaking about deception in this way.

He's deceiving himself. He cannot control his tongue, but he thinks he's spiritual. He's just deceiving himself.

So, it's amazing how easy it is for us to deceive ourselves. When you read something like that, you must face up to it and say, Lord, I don't want to fool myself. Help me.

Help me to be a genuine child of God, one who's really seeking to be your disciple. Let me show you another verse in Galatians, in chapter six, I told you earlier on it speaks about if anyone thinks he's spiritual. Here also the Holy Spirit is referring to Galatians six and verse three.

If anyone thinks he's somebody, I'm an important person in whatever sphere, spiritually perhaps, when he's actually nothing, he deceives himself. He speaks about deceiving ourselves and thinking that I'm a very spiritual person, when I'm not at all, imagining that I'm spiritually rich, when I'm actually poor. Do all these verses sort of disturb you and shake you a bit? Good.

If you're established in Christ and you're walking in the light, you will never be shaken. The solution is to walk in the light of God. There is no condemnation to those who walk in the light.

But I have to be ruthlessly honest. That's the word I often use, ruthlessly honest with myself and never allow myself to be impressed by the opinion other people have about me. My dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you in Jesus name.

Never be impressed by the opinion other people have about you. Those people, do they know how you live at home? Do they know how you speak to your husband or your wife every day? No. What do they know about your spirituality then? They see your public image when you go to church or when you meet them, which is we are always putting up our best front when we are there.

So the opinion of others is worth nothing. In fact, the opinion of Satan about me is better than the opinion of people because Satan sees me at home and always in my private life and when I'm all alone also he sees me. His opinion is far more important than people's opinion because they don't see me all the time.

Of course, God's opinion is the most important. So to imagine that I'm spiritual is very easy, very, very easy and since this is a matter of our eternal destiny, we have to be very, very, very careful. Imagined importance and that's why God gives us certain checks sometimes where, for example, when you slip up and fall some way, it can happen to any of us, you say, Lord, what do you say when you slip and fall into some sin? Don't just say, oh, I'm sorry, I slipped up, Lord, please forgive me.

That's good. Ask for the cleansing in the blood, but go beyond that and let me tell you what you should do when you slip and fall into any sin, even in a small way or a big way, just a slight slip up, maybe a bad thought came in, a bitterness against somebody, a little murmuring just for a few seconds about something that happened in the home, some complaining, murmuring. It's not the spirit of Christ.

Romans 6, 14 says, no sin can have power over you when you're under grace. Small sin, big sin, nothing can have power over you when you're under grace. It's like if I'm under a roof, however much it may rain outside, not one drop falls on my head.

I'm under a roof that protects me from the rain, the rain is falling all around. Sin is all around, but it can't fall on me, it cannot touch me because I'm under grace. Sin shall not rule over you when you're under grace.

So what should I say when I slip up and fall into sin? Lord, at that moment, I was not under grace. I did not receive grace at that moment. Then the next question comes.

Why did I not receive grace? That's also very simple. 1 Peter 5, verse 5, God gives grace only to the humble. He resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

So I have to face up to the fact I did not get grace because I was, God saw that I was proud, even though I may have a reputation for humility and everybody thinks I'm humble, God saw I was proud and he did not give me grace. If you love the truth about yourself, I'm telling you the way I've gone. Anytime I slip up, I say, Lord, I don't ask why, I know why I didn't get grace.

And I know why I didn't get grace. I was proud and I say, Lord, I only ask one question. I don't ask, why did I slip up? I say, Lord, show me where I was proud and the Lord will show me.

Maybe something that happened last week where suddenly I began to have some high thoughts about myself in some situation and a little bit of that poison of pride got in and I didn't get grace. It's a battle to keep ourselves humble. It's easy if you keep looking at Jesus, if you keep looking at Jesus, it is impossible to be proud because he never saw his own glory in anything, always taking the low place, he was never offended if people called him the Prince of Devils, he would forgive them and never, he was never offended with anyone, he was patient with people and I say, Lord Jesus, I want to look at that, I want to look at that Holy Spirit, I want you to show me the glory of Jesus and make me like him.

You know, the double ministry of the Holy Spirit is described in 2 Corinthians 3. Nobody in the Old Testament could experience this. Our New Testament privilege, I mean, if you were living before Christ, you could never experience this. Old Testament people were proud without knowing it.

They were defeated in sin. No Old Testament person had victory in his thought life. If there was pornography available in the days before Christ, a lot of so-called God's people would be watching it.

But not today because now we have the Holy Spirit and it says in 2 Corinthians 3 in verse 18, that God has removed the veil and now I can see the glory of Jesus in the mirror of God's word. The mirror mentioned here, by the way, in 2 Corinthians 3.18 is the word of God, the law, the perfect law of liberty. In James 1, it says the one who looks at the perfect law of liberty is looking into a mirror.

So God's word is like a mirror in which I see my need and not only my need, but in this mirror, I see the glory of Jesus Christ. So in God's word, I see the glory of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit shows me that. And not only shows me, then it says he transforms me into that likeness.

So the double ministry of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in verse 18 as showing me the glory of Jesus in the scriptures and changing me into that likeness. Once I understood that, my passion, I'll tell you this honestly before God, my passion when I start to read the Bible is not to get a message to preach to other people. No, it used to be in my younger, immature days, I read the word of God to get some message to preach to others.

Now, I read the word of God, it says you have to see the glory of Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, to see the glory of Jesus, do you remember it says in Luke 24, you look at that sometime in Luke 24, it says when Jesus walked with the two disciples to Emmaus, he took all the scriptures, it says the law and the prophets. That means from Genesis to Malachi and showed those two disciples the things concerning himself in all those 39 books.

So the Old Testament scriptures are full of Jesus. If I want to see the glory of Jesus, it's there in the Old Testament, much more in the 27 books of the New Testament. And the Holy Spirit has come to show me the glory of Jesus in the scriptures and to change me into that likeness.

If I make the Holy Spirit Lord of my life, it says here in verse 18, as from the Lord, the Spirit. So the way to be humble is by looking at Jesus. I won't be fooled.

I say, Lord, and it's amazing the number of revelations God has given me as I read the scriptures of the humility of Christ in different, different situations. And I say, Lord, I'm not like that. I want to be like that.

I want to be like that. It's not something that will happen overnight. But if you have a passion for it, if you hunger and thirst for it.

The Holy Spirit will do it for you. So it's a wonderful life. We don't have to be deceived and to love the truth.

And I want to be saved from sin. That's the second thing we read in Second Thirstful Remembrance, to love the truth. When I see the truth in God's word and God shows me the truth about myself, the other thing is to be saved from sin.

In other words, my desire must be to be totally saved from all sin. And the way I apply it to myself and I would encourage you to do also is, do you want to be 100 percent healthy or 90 percent? How many of you are happy with 90 percent health? I know it's probably impossible in this world to be 100 percent healthy, but don't you want it? Would you ignore a small sickness and say, oh, that's a small sickness, it doesn't matter? No. Even if we get an injury on our hand, minor injury, you say, hey, that can get infected.

Let me wash it off and if necessary, put some medicine on it. We don't want to get sick, even a small injury. We're so careful with our bodies.

And I say, Lord, I want to be just as careful with my spirit. That there's no defilement. See, 2nd Corinthians and chapter 7, 2nd Corinthians and chapter 7, since God has given us these wonderful promises and what is the promise? The previous verse, chapter 6, verse 18, I'll be a father to you and you will be my sons and daughters.

And verse 16, I will come and dwell in your midst. Great. With all these promises, what should I do? Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all the filthiness of flesh, which is external and of spirit, which is internal.

Pursuing perfection in holiness. In the reverent fear of God, we'll never get there if we don't pursue it. I have to have a passion to perfect holiness.

All of us will acknowledge we're not perfect. We'll never be perfect on this earth. But here it says we have to perfect holiness in a reverence for God, in a reverence for scripture.

When I read scripture, I see things in myself. See, I've been reading the Bible for 61 years. And I'll tell you honestly, nearly 62 years now.

I'm getting things new from the Bible to my need even now. Even this morning, as I read the scriptures, something for myself challenged me. Maybe one sentence, but I never wanted to let a day go by without at least one thing challenging me.

It's more important to have one thing that scripture challenges me about than easing my conscience saying, I read one chapter today. Once you use easing your conscience saying I read so much today, it's good to read scripture. I spent hours reading and studying scripture in my younger days.

But I don't want to know the facts of scripture. I want scripture to challenge me to perfect my holiness. In reverence for God.

Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and God will help us. If I love the truth and if I say, Lord, I want to be saved from all sin. I don't want to just get a reputation for others that I'm a holy person or what is it? It's worth nothing.

The opinion of people I say is good for the trash can. Unless it's a very godly person. Who tells me the truth about myself.

Otherwise, everybody else's opinion is good for the trash can. Because God speaks to me if I want, if I'm eager to know my true condition, I tell you God will give you a scan. He'll give you a scan.

Just like if you have a doubt about your inner health, you go and get a scan done. We need to have a scan until we become perfect. It's only when Christ comes again.

Lord, I want to be saved from all sin. I want to love the truth and you can test me out on that. And then I guarantee my brothers and sisters, you will have, you will not be deceived.

And here is one of my favorite verses. I'll close with that. 1 Corinthians 11, which I often quote, 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 31.

If we judge ourselves rightly, in the day that I stand before the Lord at his judgment seat, I will not be judged. The Lord will say, your record is clear. I have nothing to say to you, my son.

Nothing to be judged. Do you know that we can live like that on the earth? 1 Corinthians 4, Paul gives his own testimony. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 4, I am conscious of nothing against myself.

If he could live like that on the earth, why can't you and I? What he's saying is, my conscience does not convict me of a single thing at this time. But he says, that doesn't mean I'm perfect because I have a whole lot of unconscious areas where I'm unlike Christ, that the Lord is, will examine me and show me little by little. You know, we have two parts to our life, that which we are conscious of, which our conscience tells us, and then the unconscious area, which God reveals to us little by little, by little, by little, if we are passionate to become like Christ.

But we are called to live in total assurance that our conscience is clear, that I'm aware of nothing that the Lord convicts me of every single day. That's how we are supposed to live. That is a true disciple of Jesus.

How does he live like that? As soon as a speck touches his conscience, he immediately confesses it, asks the Lord to cleanse it. The moment he realizes he's hurt somebody with a rude word or an unkind word, he immediately asks forgiveness, if necessary, many times a day. People may laugh at us, your wife may laugh at you, you're always asking forgiveness, because I want to keep my conscience clean.

One day you will see the result of that. You will not speak those rude words anymore. Because you took, every time you said it, you took it seriously.

You don't take it seriously, I guarantee, till the end of your life, you'll be speaking rude words and hurtful words, you'll be murmuring and complaining because you take all those things lightly. It's because we take certain things lightly that we keep on falling into those areas. Dirty thoughts, wrong attitudes, the occasional lustful look, it's because I don't take these things seriously.

I pray that all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, will really seek the perfect holiness in the fear of God. Take heed that you are not deceived. May God help us.

Shall we bow in prayer? If there are impressions that the Holy Spirit has made upon your heart today, I want to urge you, my dear brother, sister, ask the Holy Spirit to deepen that conviction. And perhaps when you're lying in bed tonight, when you're alone, before you go to sleep, think about what you heard. That's one of the best times to meditate on what happened during the day, just before you go to sleep.

Have a clean conscience. Say, Lord, I'm serious about following you. I want a major uplift in my spiritual life.

Do that for me. I've been stagnating for too long. Help me, Lord.

Lord, help us all. We are in need. I'm in need.

All of us are in need. Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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