

How to Be Sure That You Are Making Spiritual Progress

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Transcript

Praise the Lord, dear brothers and sisters, it's good to see all of you today, morning, evening, night, wherever you are. It's quite a while since we had a global Zoom, but I'm glad to see that the interest in that is still alive, that you're still eager to come together like this. You know, there's an expression called, so much more.

You know where that comes in the Bible? So much more as you see the day approaching, and that is in relation to, you know, that we meet together, Hebrews 10, verse 25, if you're not familiar with that verse, it's a great verse, Hebrews 10, 25, verse 24 says, let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works. So let's begin with that verse, Hebrews 10, 24, I don't think it's a very popular verse with many people. I don't think people will memorize that verse, but it's a very important verse.

Let us consider, let us consider means not just read and forget it, Hebrews 10, 24, let us seriously think about how we can stimulate one another or stir one another up. You know how political leaders and song leaders, especially stimulate people to sing and clap and shout. We are to stimulate people to love.

That means the way I relate to people and the way I speak to people must stir them and urge them to be more loving. More loving, first of all, to Christ, our Lord, and more loving to all their fellow believers and even their enemies. So we know our subject is to consider why we're not making spiritual progress or how to be sure we're making spiritual progress in our lives.

All spiritual progress is a growth in love, first of all, love for Christ and love for one another and love for enemies and whatever else other area you may be growing in. For example, there's a great emphasis in many circles on evangelism. I'm all for it.

There are numerous people that our churches have brought to Christ from many, many religions and around the world. So we're not against evangelism. We believe in that 100%, but not an evangelism that stops with, you know, that they've accepted Christ.

No, Jesus said, go into all the world and make disciples. So once that person has accepted Christ and he's been forgiven and we are sure he's a child of God, he must come to assurance, then he must become a disciple. In fact, Matthew 28 and verse 19, if you read, is saying about disciples being baptized.

So anyway, Hebrews 10, 24 says, let us consider how to stimulate people to love and the good works that come out of love, not just a love in the heart, which we talk about, oh, we love one another. No. If there are no works that come out of our love, we have to say our love is zero.

What would you think of a husband who says he loves his wife, but never does anything to help her, never speaks a word of encouragement to her, and never helps her if she's in need? That's hollow, empty, verbal love. It's not real love. Love and good works, because that's the proof of our love.

So in relation to one another as well, we can't help all the people in the world. That's impossible. Only God can do that.

But God puts us in little churches where we can help one another, and that's why he builds small fellowships. Jesus did not say that the world will know you're my disciples when you love them. I want to just clarify that.

John chapter 13, if you turn there for a moment, John chapter 13. You know, the old commandment was to love God with all our heart. That has not changed.

And then, that's in the vertical direction, the two arms to the cross. The horizontal direction, it was to love others as ourselves. That's the old covenant.

But Jesus changed it in John 13, in verse 34, and said, I'm giving you a new commandment. The new commandment is not love others as you love yourself. That itself is a pretty high standard.

But love one another as Jesus has loved us. That's an impossible standard without the power of the Holy Spirit. And I don't know how many of us have taken that seriously.

Spiritual growth is dependent on love in two directions. I should be loving Christ more than I have ever loved him today. That is spiritual progress and growth.

And I should be having an attitude of love towards my fellow believers, first of all. First of all, in our local church. And then in whatever wider circle God brings you in touch with his children.

I give you a new commandment that you love one another, not the world. Now, we would think that we gotta love the world. Yeah, that's there.

But the commandment is that we love one another among the disciples as Jesus has loved us. And then he said, listen to this, verse 35. All men, John 13, 35, will know you're my disciples if you love for one another.

Now, one would think he should have said, people will know you're my disciples when you love them. That means the people in the world should know I'm a disciple when I love them. No, of course I love them.

I don't hate anyone. But here he says, the world is gonna know that you're the disciples of Jesus when they see your love for one another. When they see how you sacrifice yourself for one another.

When they see how you're committed to one another. When they see especially how you love your fellow believers more than you love your family members. How you're more attached to God's children than to your own family members who are not born again.

I can certainly say that about myself. That I'm far more attached to God's children than to all my family members, my relatives, if they're not born again. Why is that? It's not that I hate my family members.

I believe that we should help our family members and love them. But that's on a different level. When it comes to those are my primary family today is God's family.

I'm part of the family of God. And that's my first family. My earthly family is secondary.

I don't know whether all of you, whether that's true of all of you. Because when you think of spiritual progress, that's one of the first things. Have you become a disciple? Have you become a disciple? Is Christ primary in your life? Jesus said that in Luke 14, that, anyway, let's go to that later.

But let's repeat this, John 13, 35. All men will know you're my disciples when you love one another. And as I said, that's dependent on being a disciple.

Now we can go to Luke 14. We're talking about spiritual progress. A lot of spiritual progress is hindered because we haven't had a good start in our Christian life.

And a good start is by becoming a disciple. I'll tell you my own testimony. I believe that when I got converted, my conversion was radical.

I first accepted, asked Jesus to come into my heart probably when I was 13 or 14. But I was never sure. But when I was 19 and a half years old, when I was in the Navy, I read one verse.

John 6, 37, Jesus said, him who comes to me, I'll never cast out. And that day I had assurance. Now I'm sure I'd read that verse before.

But somehow the Holy Spirit took that verse home to my heart. It's a wonderful thing when you read the Bible in such a way that God picks out one verse and imprints it on your heart. I'll tell you the result of God putting that word in my heart in July 1959, which is 64 years ago.

In all these 64 years, I've never doubted that the Lord accepted me. Not that I've been perfect. I've had a lot of ups and downs in my life.

And in the early years of my life, the frequent falls and getting up, frequent asking him, forgive me, forgive me, Lord, I've slipped up again. But I never doubted that he had accepted me. And that's the first thing I would say to all of you.

You've got to be absolutely sure that when you came to Christ in sincerity, if you have repented, and repentance means not that I'm just sorry for my sins, of course, even a thief is sorry if he's caught. Or we can be sorry because we don't want to go to hell. There's a lot of difference between feeling sorry for my sin because I'm afraid I'll go to hell and feeling sorry for my sin because it has dishonored my creator.

You realize that all the sin in your life has dishonored the one who created you. And it is sort of putting another nail into Jesus' hands. And he died for your sins on the cross.

We have to see the seriousness of our sin by looking at Christ on the cross. I started looking at Jesus, meditating on Jesus, on hanging on the cross for my sin, forsaken by the father for my sin, not for the sin of the world, for my sin. I always made it personal, personal, personal, and frequently.

And I meditate on the cross even today. And God has given me more and more revelation of what that meaning of the cross is, the price that Christ had to pay. And the more we understand, I'll tell you in my own case, the more I understood the price that Christ had to pay for me, the more spontaneously love came in my heart for him.

I didn't have to produce it. It's spontaneous. When you see how much somebody loves you, you don't have to be told to love him.

But if you just get an exhortation, go on, love this person, love this person. Yeah, you may try, but it won't succeed so much. But if you're gripped in your heart by how much that person has loved you, and how much that person has sacrificed for you, then it'll make a tremendous difference to your love for him.

So that's what happened to me when I began to meditate on the cross. And I would encourage all of you to spend a lot of time meditating on the cross of Calvary and say, Lord, please open my eyes to see what does that mean? What did it mean for you? It's not an old, old story. It must be always fresh.

You know that if you read in the book of Revelation chapter five, you read that in heaven they are singing about the cross. Did you know that? They say, worthy is the lamb who died for us. That's the song in heaven.

They sing about the blood by which we were purchased. And I thought that, and it says there in Revelation, we'll turn there for a moment, in Revelation in chapter five, it says, worthy is the lamb to break, because you, this is Revelation five, verse nine, because you purchased us for God by your blood. Imagine, in all eternity, I'm gonna sing about the blood of Christ, of his death on the cross.

If I'm gonna sing about that for all eternity, according to Revelation five and verse nine, why should I be thinking about it now? It's not an old, old story for me. It's a story I heard many years ago, but it's ever fresh. It says here, in verse of Revelation five, nine, they sang a new song.

And you know what a new song is? What is a new hymn, for example? Let's look at it like that. When you hear a hymn being sung, I mean, a couple of hymns that are sung today may be very familiar to you. But supposing there was a hymn that you've never heard before.

That'd be a new hymn for you. That'd be a new song for you. Hey, I've not heard that, and particularly if it's got very gripping words.

I mean, I sometimes heard a new hymn with tremendously gripping words. I said, wow, I wanna learn that. That's a new song, it's a fresh song.

And so when it says in heaven, they sing a fresh, a new song. And what is it? Jesus died for me. You say, that's not a new song, really? You're a backslider.

Yeah, I wanna say that lovingly, my dear brother, sister. Christ dying for me, my prayer was when I read that in Revelation five, nine, they sang a new song. New in the sense of fresh.

That means the death of Christ and Christ shedding his blood is always fresh in heaven, 10,000 years from now, when I stand in heaven and I sing that Jesus shed his blood for me, it will be as if I'm hearing it for the first time, as if I'm singing it for the first time. Lord, you shed your blood for me, a sinner. Thank you.

I wanna be excited about it. And what that taught me was, that's how I must sing about the death of Christ now. In other words, I don't want to become familiar with the fact that Christ died for my sins.

This is why there is very little spiritual progress in many Christians lives. They have become too familiar with the truth. Christ died for our sins.

That's an old truth. I heard it. It's like saying, do you know that two plus two is four? I learned that when I was five years old in kindergarten, two plus two is four.

Is it like that for you? Christ died for our sins. Is it like two plus two is four? You learned ages ago. I say, Lord, let it never be like that for me.

A new song, an ever fresh song. What is it? Christ died for my sins. He shed his blood to forgive a wretched sinner like me.

I want to have that every single day of my life on earth. That is what has made tremendous difference in my own life. That's what's brought more and more of the anointing of God upon my life.

I mean, if you read the book of Leviticus, we read about when they were consecrating the priest. They would put a drop of blood of the animal on their body, in some part of their body. And then they would put a drop of oil on top of that blood.

That's how the priests were anointed and prepared for the ministry. And what the meaning of that is, symbolically, the blood of Christ and then the Holy Spirit. So I find that there's a connection there.

The more I learn to value the blood of Christ in my life, the more I can have the anointing of the Holy Spirit in my life. The oil is put on top of the blood. You read Leviticus sometime and see that.

It's repeated many times. They put a drop of oil and a drop of blood, on top of that, a drop of oil. There are lessons in all these Old Testament laws which have meaning for us.

And I see the meaning for me in this way. I say, Lord, if I will value your blood and what it meant for you, what the price you paid, and I can value what it has done for me and how you suffered on the cross, the more I understand that, the more the Spirit of God will be upon me. I don't have to keep praying and praying, God, send the Holy Spirit, send the Holy Spirit, fill the Holy Spirit.

So many people I've seen who pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And I look at their lives. Their lives the next week are no different from the previous week.

Their lives the next year are no different. Even though they go and shout and yell and scream in their churches and raise their hands, your life should become more Christ-like if you're filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come to make us like Jesus Christ.

That is spiritual progress is what? Spiritual progress is, in one sentence, becoming more like Jesus Christ. In our life and in our ministry, in our attitude to others, in our attitude to God, in devotion to God, in our attitude to others, more like Christ, more like Christ, more like Christ. That is spiritual progress, not Bible knowledge.

The Pharisees had tremendous amount of Bible knowledge. That was not spiritual growth. And that's written in the scriptures to teach us that you can have all the knowledge of the Bible and still go to hell.

You know what Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke 23? How will you escape the damnation of hell? To whom did he say that? To people who knew the Bible more than anybody else in the world at that time. And there's a Roman soldier at the cross who said, this is the son of God who didn't know ABC of the Bible who went to heaven. So it's not by knowledge of the Bible.

Knowledge of the Bible is very important. I've spent 64 years studying the Bible and it has changed my life. And I believe we should all study the Bible.

I'll come to that in a moment. But what I'm trying to say is mere knowledge of the Bible, the Pharisees had, and they studied the Bible. And they looked at Jesus and called him Beelzebub.

Who called Jesus Beelzebub, prince of devils? Not the Romans. No, not the heathen. Not even the Sadducees who didn't believe in many parts of the Bible.

The Pharisees who studied the Bible more than anything else. The other ones who called Jesus the devil, what does that teach me? We won't call Jesus devil, but it does say that you can study the Bible and be spiritually blind. That's what I learned from there.

You can read and read and read and read and memorize the Bible and be spiritually blind. The proof that you've got light from the Bible is that it changes your life. You know, the New Testament speaks of a word called revelation.

In the Old Testament, it is only meditation. Meditate on the law of the Lord, day and night. Psalm 1, blessed is the man who meditates on the law of the Lord, true.

But the Pharisees did that, and they ended up thinking Jesus was the devil. In the New Testament, the word is, Paul says in Ephesians, I pray that God will give you the spirit of revelation. Not meditation, but revelation.

And sometimes I read just one verse in the morning and say, Lord, I want to think of that, meditate on it. Yes, meditate, but not stop and meditate. I want revelation on it.

Lord, give me revelation. What does this mean? Revelation will change my life. Meditation only gives me information in my brain.

I don't want, I've got enough information in my brain about the Bible. What I need is revelation. How do I know the difference between meditation, whether I just memorized or whether I've got revelation? Memorizing the scripture may not change your life.

Revelation will change your life, and I got revelation on the word. So coming back to Luke 14, I was saying that if I don't get the foundation right, there'll be no spiritual progress in my life. And the foundation is, Luke 14, 26, I never get tired of saying this.

Jesus used the word hate. Hate, father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even his own life. Now, I got to compare scripture with scripture.

There are other scriptures which says we got to love our wives like Christ, love the church. So obviously, this is not a contradiction. What does it mean? It means in relation to my love for Christ, my love for other people must be so much less that it's almost like faint light compared to light.

Use the illustration which I always use. Our love for Christ must be the light of the sun in the daylight. At night, you see the stars.

The stars have got light. So our love for our parents, wife, children must be like the stars. We must have love for them.

There must be light there like the light of the stars, very bright. Love them with all your heart. But when the sun comes up in the morning, you don't see a single star.

All the stars disappear. They're not ceased to exist, but you can't see that light in the light of the sun. That's the meaning here.

You see the stars have become dark. So you see your love for your loved ones have become almost like hatred. Not that you hate them, but your love for Christ has become so great that the love for others have almost disappeared.

And if you have that type of love, I'll tell you something in Jesus name, and I proved in my life, you love your parents more. You love your wife much more than you do right now. You love your children much more.

You love other people much more. If you put your love for Christ supreme, who are the ones who love their relatives without loving Christ? Few years later, they hate them. So many people are fighting with their relatives, go to court against their relatives, even Christians.

So the number one condition of discipleship is I must love Christ more than any human being on earth. Even my wife, that if it's Christ or my wife, I have no question as to who is right. I'm talking about spiritual progress consistently.

I remember when I got married, I told my wife, you will always be second in my life. And I always want to be second in your life. Then we'll have a wonderful marriage.

And it has been a wonderful marriage for us because we kept each other second. And so Christ is first. In other words, if Jesus tells me to do something, I'm willing to offend you, my darling wife, in order to do what Jesus says.

And I want you to have the same attitude. The result is we have a very blessed life today after 55 years of marriage. It's like heaven on earth.

And it's because we put Christ first and each other second. I put my parents second to Christ. Every relative, second.

Christ is first. Children, second. I will not do something to please my children if it dishonors the Lord.

I don't care if my children are offended with me. I will not try to please them if Christ is to displease the Lord. Never, never, never.

Completely out of the question. So if we don't get these fundamentals right, my dear brothers and sisters, let me tell you, you will not make spiritual progress. And this could be the reason.

Maybe some of you started like this, but as time has gone on, you've compromised. And you're not so firm in that attitude. The other thing is in the second condition of discipleship is Luke 14, 27.

I never get tired of saying this. I believe we should keep preaching this all the time. Whoever does not carry his own cross, we don't have to carry the cross of Jesus.

No. You know, we read of a man called Simon who helped Jesus to carry the cross when Jesus stumbled and fell on the road to Calvary. So you don't have to carry Jesus' cross.

He can carry his own cross. You've got to carry your cross. It says whoever does not carry his own cross cannot be my disciple.

What does it mean to carry my own cross? It's not being once and for all crucified. Jesus was crucified once at the end of his 33 and a half years. But when he says that we got to take up our cross and follow him in Luke 9, 23, that means he had a cross every day of his life.

Have you understood that? My dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to understand this, that 33 and a half years of Jesus' life, every single day, he carried a cross. An inner hidden cross. And most Christians don't even know about this.

I turn to Luke 9, 23, and I'll make it clear to you. Jesus said here, if anyone wishes to come after me, it's the same as Luke 14, 27, except for one more statement here. If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Here there are two more phrases added to what we didn't see in Luke 14, and that is deny our sin, say no to myself and say yes to Jesus and take up the cross every single day. This is a way of spiritual progress. Every single day, I'm going to wake up in the morning saying the whole day, I'm going to say no to myself and yes to Jesus.

Any situation, there's going to be no to myself, yes to Jesus. Whether it's a matter of telling a lie, very clear, no to whatever advantage I may get from telling a lie. Maybe I'll lose my job if I speak the truth.

That's fine, I'll speak the truth. God will take care of my job. I will not tell a lie because then I'm not denying myself, I'm seeking my own.

To take up the cross means I die to what I think will benefit me. I have to say, Lord Jesus, you are going to be one whom I'm seeking to please here, not myself. And in our relationship, especially as husband and wife, see the two places where we spend most of our time is our home and our office, not the church.

So we think of our relationship with people in the church, and you may have a wonderful relationship with people in the church, good. But I would ask you more important than that, what's your relationship with your husband and wife? You live in peace, you constantly say no to yourself in your relationship with your husband and wife and say yes to Jesus. In other words, supposing there's a little misunderstanding or a conflict or one partner is a bit upset.

Okay, that can happen. It happens in all marriages. What should the other partner do if he's a disciple of Jesus Christ? He's got to die.

That's the meaning of taking up the cross. And you've got to do it every day. Lord, in this situation, I die.

How will a dead man react in this situation? Will a dead man react in anger when the marriage partner is angry? Then you're not dead. I'll tell you that straight to your face, my dear brothers, many of you who think you've understood the way of the cross. Let me ask you a very simple question.

When your husband or wife is upset with you, do you react like a dead person? Then you'll discover very quickly whether you've taken up the cross or not. Whatever you may say, I've understood about the cross. You haven't understood it.

If you have understood it in that situation, you'll be a dead person and not just a dead person, but a resurrected person, resurrected in Christ. In other words, you don't just keep quiet because sometimes you can keep quiet to show your anger. You're going to speak something nice and good like Jesus would.

That is the most difficult part. When your partner is really upset with you, you don't just keep quiet and pat yourself on the back. Oh, what a holy man I am compared to my sinful partner.

I'm holy. I'm controlling my tongue. You're not holy.

You're just stubborn. If you must be resurrected too, Christ must live in you so that you speak the word. The Bible says in Proverbs, a gentle word will turn away anger.

Have you experienced that? I've experienced that on the roads in India when somebody comes and collides his scooter with my scooter. The rule in India is start shouting on the road if you want to prove that you're right and the other fellow was wrong. It's not a question of who hit who.

The question is who shouts loudest. I've seen that and I decided I'll never shout. Even if that fellow came and hit me, you know what I would do? I'd stop my scooter.

I know he's going to shout. Before he opens his mouth, I'd say, I'm sorry, sir. Sorry for what? He came and hit me.

But I'm going to say sorry, sir. And he smiles. Oh, he says it's okay.

He's very gracious and forgives me for hitting me. God bless you, brother. And I move on.

We are at peace. But I see sometimes on the roads in India, two people standing and yelling and yelling and yelling each other. I come back a few minutes later, they're still yelling.

That's never happened to me. But I don't want to take up the cross only on the roads. I want to take up the cross every single moment of my life.

In the beginning, it'll be difficult, just like any new practice, for example. For example, you decide to go to the gym or do some, take a walk every day to keep fit. Yeah, it's not going to be easy to keep that discipline.

But you keep doing it, then it'll become easy. And anything that you do continuously will become easy. You know, little children, when they go to the kindergarten, you think they love to go to the kindergarten? I never had a child of mine that loved to go to the kindergarten.

Not one. They all would scream and say, no, no, no, daddy, no, I don't want to go. But I would drag them and send them crying into the school and come back and pick them up and they'd be crying next morning.

I still send them to school. And now they love to go. So it's like that.

If you persist in something, something will be accomplished. So you've got to persist in it. I'm going to die to myself.

And I'm asking the Holy Spirit to resurrect me and manifest the life of Christ in me. That is a condition for discipleship. And moving on, Luke 14, the third condition of discipleship in Luke 14, 33 is no one of you can be my disciple who does not forsake all that he has, not 10 percent.

10 percent is an Old Testament commandment. There are people still who type. I've got no objection.

All I'm saying is you're a good old covenant Jew. If you pay your tithes. Very good old covenant Jew, because many Jews did not pay their tithes.

But the new covenant is. All that I have belongs to the Lord, I'm not saying you've got to put all your money in the offering box. No, there may be some rare cases where God asked somebody in a particular situation to give everything that he has away.

There are cases like that we've heard of. I've read of a few missionaries like that. I remember the Lord asked me to do it once when I left the Navy in 1966.

He told me to take all my entire life savings and give it away for the Lord's work. And I did it, made my bank account zero, but I've never told other people to do it. Because we read of only one person in the Bible to whom Jesus said, sell all that you have and give it away.

Only one. That Jesus gave a command and the guy never did it in Mark chapter 10. Zacchaeus gave half his good to the poor and Jesus had fine.

And Mary and Martha and Lazarus, I don't know what they gave, but Jesus would never make commands for them. So 10% is not the rule by which we live. We say, Lord, all that I have belongs to you in any case.

I'm in a partnership with Jesus, just like a wife with a husband. And we have a joint account. I have a joint account with Jesus.

That's the best way to put it. He can draw from that account and I can draw from the account. That's what a joint account means.

It's not mine, it's ours. And I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters who want to be disciples of Jesus, want to make spiritual progress. Can you say that your money is in a joint account with Jesus Christ? That he has every right to whatever you own and your possessions as much as you have? I want it to be like that all the time.

And I keep checking because sometimes we can backslide from this. So I keep checking regularly. Lord, I want to make sure that this is a joint account with you and me.

You have every right to ask me to do anything with this. I don't live by any 10% rule. I'm not married 10% to Jesus, 100%.

The old covenant, they did not understand these things. There's not a single word in the new covenant which says I must give 10% to God. Jesus demanded all.

But he's talking here about possessing. And I've often used the example of having and possessing. Repeat it if you didn't see it before.

Here's a pen. When I hold it, I possess it. When I open my palm, I still have it.

But I don't possess it. That's the difference between possessing money as your own and having it. The house is in your name, not in Jesus' name.

But you don't possess it. You say, no, no, this is mine. I'm not going to let anybody use it.

I'm not going to let the Lord use it for allowing any of his people to come and stay here. No, no, no, no. I say, Lord, my house is yours.

Do what you like. That's how CLC started about 48 years ago in our house. You know, it's very inconvenient to have four meetings a week.

That's what we had in the early days in our house when we had small children. And the youngest was only six months old. And we had three children in those days.

The fourth was not yet born during the years that we met. But in the years that we met in our house, I will never call it a sacrifice. Those six years that CLC met in our house, it started in our house with just two of us.

That was the Lord called to start. And in those six years, those are the most blessed years that we had in our home. The blessing of the Lord, we read in the Old Testament of an example where the ark of God, which was brought from the house of the Philistines, was put in the house of Obed-Edom for three months.

And it says the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom during those three months. And I tell you, the Lord blessed our house in six years. And even our little children understood it.

So that finally, when we had a building in Bangalore, where we moved to that building after six years, our children said, Daddy, why are they moving out our house? We love them here. All the inconvenience. They didn't worry about inconvenience.

We had to wipe the floor. Everybody walked in with their shoes and dirty shoes or clean shoes. And then we had to clean the floor four times a week.

My wife had a lot of work to do. We had to fold the chairs and folding chairs. We had steel chairs and put them back and then go back to normal house situation.

And then again, four times a week, Wednesday evening, Friday evening, Sunday morning, Sunday evening. Oh, those are the most blessed days of our life. We remember those wonderful days.

We'd have fasting and prayer from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. We had many people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Those are wonderful days.

We said, Lord, our house is not our own. We don't possess it. It's yours.

But the house is always in my name, by the way. I didn't transfer it to Jesus name or anything. It was my name.

But I didn't possess it. I had it. I had a scooter.

I didn't possess it. I said, Lord, it's yours. If somebody wants to borrow it, he's welcome to borrow it.

And it's yours. Nothing is mine. I don't want my money, if I can use it to help somebody, if I can use it to travel.

I remember once I had to travel to Singapore for a meeting where I felt that nobody, I felt a burden to go there the first time we went there years ago. I had to sell, I had a moped and I had to sell that to buy the ticket to go to Singapore. Well, I said, that moped is not mine.

It's the Lord's. And if the Lord wants me to sell it to get a ticket to go in Singapore, and I'm glad I went. We have a wonderful church in Singapore now.

Though it took some years to develop. But I say, Lord, nothing I have is mine. I'll tell you something, my brother, sister.

If you haven't done it till now, start today. However old you may be. Say, Lord, I want to have things.

I don't want to possess them. I want to just have. I'm not asking you to change anything out of your name.

I'm not asking you to give 10% or even 1% in the offering box. I'm just saying, don't possess. Say, Lord, it's all yours.

You tell me what I should do, I'll do it. It'll change your life. Why do I say that? The lot of hindrance to spiritual progress is because of believers having a wrong attitude to their possessions.

It says here, no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his possessions. Not 10%, all. I possess nothing.

I have plenty, but I possess nothing. I say, everything is the Lord's. Now, don't try and play the fool with God.

He's not deceived. You can say that with your lips. Yes, Lord, everything is yours.

And I know I don't have to give up anything. Yeah, yeah. It's a personal transaction between you and the Lord.

And so if you, the Lord will test you. Say, Lord, I'm determined my time is yours. You tell me how I should, if there's something I want to do and something the Lord tells me to do, I'll do what the Lord says.

I'll sacrifice what I want to do. Do you ever have that attitude? Why is it Christians don't make spiritual progress? I'm just trying to explain things to you. I hope this will not have to be repeated.

I hope you'll be so gripped by the things you hear today that you say, Lord, I don't need to hear this another time. I've heard some of this before, and I want to be so gripped by it. See, when you talk about progress, it's like walking or running.

The Bible says, in turn to another verse in Hebrews in chapter 12, before we get there, I sort of skipped Hebrews 10, 25. I want to get back to Hebrews 10, 25 before we go to Hebrews 12. We were looking at Hebrews 10, 24.

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works. It's a very good verse that we started considering today. How shall I stimulate other people to love? First of all, let me love myself.

Give me the Holy Spirit's power to love. And how can I do something to stir up other people to love? Not to love me alone, but to love everyone. And to show by their good works that love.

Now, I'm not going to tell you any techniques. The Holy Spirit will tell you what you can do to stir other people to love. What can you do? Start at home.

What can you do to stir your marriage partner to love and good works? Not to serve you, but to grow in love for the Lord and to bless other people. Well, Lord, what can we do that we can make our home a blessing to other people? And then we can go on to not forsaking Hebrews 10, 25. Not forsaking our assembling together, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day approaching, the day drawing near.

This is written nearly 2000 years ago. He talks about the day drawing near. What about today? 2023, I believe the day is drawing near.

Live in the light of that, my brother, sister. Christ is coming soon. I said that 60 years ago when I was preaching.

And I say it today. And I'm not embarrassed. You can say, oh, Brother Zach, you said that 60 years ago.

Christ is coming soon. Nothing happened. You can live like that.

I live every day recognizing that Christ may come. So my saying he's coming soon, I believe it with all my heart. I'm not here to determine when Jesus will come.

When Jesus was on earth, you know what he said? Even I, the son of man, do not know the date of my own return. So all these crazy Christians who predict the date of Christ's return, they think they're superior to Christ. Have you read the place in the Gospels where he said, even the son of man does not know when exactly he'll come to the day he knows because he's in heaven.

Today, if you ask Jesus, when are you returning? He knows. He won't tell us, but he knows. But when he was on earth, he did not know the date of his own second coming because he had limited himself as a man.

Even though he was God, he had limited himself. You know, it's just like when we play with our children. We play at the level of children, not because we are children.

We are grown up and we can beat our children in any game we play with them. But we play at their level. That's the only way they can play with us.

Every good father will do that. That's how Jesus came to the earth. He was still God, but he came down to our level.

We were like little children. He lived at our level. The tree acted as though he himself was at our level.

I don't know the date of his coming, but I believe it says here that we must live as one who's always expecting, like the wise virgins. Our lamps always burning and the extra lamp of oil, which is our hidden

life. You know, the difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins was this.

All 10 virgins, Matthew 25, had that external light burning. What is the external light? External light is your good testimony. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father.

That is what Jesus said is the light that shines before men. But what is the extra vessel of oil which they had in their pockets? Which only the wise virgins had. All 10 had an external testimony.

All 10, you read there. You can have a good external testimony and not be ready for the second coming of Christ. Have you thought of that? Are you only thanking God that your external testimony is good? So you're ready for the coming of Christ? That you confessed all your sins, so you're ready for the coming of Christ? That means your light is lamp is burning.

What about you have an extra vessel of oil, by the way? What is that? Oil is always a picture of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. So that hidden in their pockets, nobody could see it. It speaks about hidden life.

The part of our life that other people cannot see. That is the extra vessel of oil. Not the way you behave in the church where everybody can see you.

Or the way you behave in public. But the way you are in private. That is the extra vessel of oil.

Do you have this oil of the Holy Spirit in your relationship with your wife? With your husband? Is Jesus Christ always there between you and your marriage partner at home? That is the extra vessel of oil. If you don't have that and you just have a public testimony, everybody thinks you're a good Christian because you go to church regularly and talk a lot about spiritual things. But you don't have Christ between you and your marriage partner.

I want to tell you, you are a foolish virgin. I'm not saying your light is not burning. It is.

But you're a foolish virgin. Read that in Matthew 25. And more than that, our private life is not just the relationship I had with my wife and children at home.

It's not just, you know, if I don't lose my temper in church with other members, that's the external light burning. Good, you don't lose your temper publicly. What about at home? What about in the vessel of oil? If you're losing your temper at home with your wife and children, you better judge yourself and ask God for power, so that otherwise your vessel of oil is empty.

But many people don't bother about that because they say, nobody can see me. You know, these people who watch pornography, who sit in a room with a locked door, and they're watching some filthy stuff on their phone, or there's a screen, they think, ah, nobody can see me. Ha, you're fooling yourself.

There are 500 demons behind you, laughing with glee. You can't hear their laugh. That this guy who claims to be a Christian is watching pornography.

Ah, wonderful, wonderful. We've got him in our grip. Because tomorrow he'll go and act as a very holy person when he goes to church.

He'll sing the songs as he is a great saint. Today we see what he really is. You watch pornography in secret? Don't answer me.

I'm not your judge. Answer God. It's one of the greatest evils with which the devil has trapped believers and is leading them step by step into hell.

No doubt about it in my mind. Step by step, he's leading them, giving them this urge. Yes, there is a sexual urge in all men.

If you don't have it, you're abnormal. All normal men have a strong sexual urge. Who put it? God put it.

But what should you do? What should Eve have done? The devil says, this is very enjoyable. This tree of knowledge of good and evil. I know God has forbidden it, Eve, but it's very enjoyable.

See how it makes your mouth water when you even look at it. Reach out your hand. You'll really get some excitement.

So the next time you attempted to watch pornography, think of Eve standing in front of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the devil telling her, no, no, no, it's not serious. You will not die. You will not die.

God has said you will die. The devil says you will not die. And that's what the devil says to you.

You watch pornography. No, no, no, it's okay. The blood of Christ will cleanse you.

Just tell the Lord, ask him to forgive you tomorrow morning or just after this is over. Before you go to bed, ask the Lord to forgive you. It's gone.

You can watch it again tomorrow. And before you go to bed, ask the Lord to forgive you. You can spend all your life watching pornography and just ask the Lord to cleanse you and you'll go to heaven.

Well, if nobody's ever told you the truth, let me tell you, you will not go to heaven. You're on your way to hell. And I'm not trying to frighten you.

I don't want to frighten anybody. I want to tell you the truth. If you've got cancer, a good doctor will tell you you've got cancer, but I tell you there's a cure for it.

It's bad news if there's no cure for it. In some cancer, there's no cure, but for pornography, there is a cure. If you love Jesus with all your heart, if you say, Lord, I want to meditate on how much you love me, that's the way to love Jesus.

And secondly, meditate on all the miserable, wretched sins you've committed in your life. That'll help you to love. Why did that woman come with an expensive bottle of ointment and pour it at Jesus' feet in Luke chapter 7? Because she'd been such a sinner all her life and living like a prostitute.

And she was so grateful one day when she heard that she didn't have to go to hell, that Jesus would forgive sinners. He hadn't yet died on the cross. She didn't know as much as we know.

But she was so grateful. She was so fed up of her life of prostitution. That's the equivalent of pornography.

She was so fed up. She wanted to give it up and took all her savings and said, Lord, here, I want to pour it out at your feet. And there was a religious Pharisee, Simon, who was sitting there.

He said, how does this holy man allow this sinful woman to touch his feet? And Jesus said to that man, who will love a person more, one who's forgiven a little or one who's forgiven much? Simon, he said to that Pharisee, you know why this woman loves much? Because she has been forgiven much. Those who are forgiven little will love little. I often thought about that verse.

I say, Lord, I've not been forgiven little. I've been forgiven much. You don't have to commit adultery 100 times and murder a few people before you say you've committed a lot of sins.

When you see the gravity of even telling a lie and see it like an elephant and not like an ant, small lie, you don't see the problem with believers. They don't see the gravity of sin. That's why they think they've sinned very little compared to that guy who's a terrorist.

I'm not like him. I've often said to the Lord, Lord, I am born from the same Adam through which the most wicked terrorist on earth was born. He's not born from some other family.

He and I are the same family, the family of Adam and Eve. I could have ended up as a terrorist. I've got the potential of being a terrorist blowing up planes and buildings in me.

No different. But somehow my upbringing and the way I was brought up prevented me from going that way. Otherwise I'd have gone that way.

If I had the upbringing he had, I'd have been the same. Why do I say that? To show myself to realize that I am no better than the worst sinner on earth. It is only my circumstances and the way I was brought up that prevented me from committing certain sins.

And then I came to know Jesus as my savior and Lord. That's what protected me from doing the stupid things that many Christians do. So if you meditate on that, that you're really no better than anybody else and yet the Lord forgave you of the depth of your sin.

I found the two things that's helped me to love Jesus and to be free from sin. One is to meditate, as I said, on how much he suffered on the cross for me. And the second is to meditate on how much I have grieved the Lord by my past sins.

Like that woman, I'd come to her I'd come with everything I have before the Lord and say, Lord, all I have is yours. My dear brothers and sisters, please think of this. So let us encourage one another and stir one another on as we approach the coming of the Lord.

We turn to one more verse in that connection, 1 John and chapter two. My duty is not to preach something new. My duty is to remind people of what is already in the Bible.

That's my calling. I do not have a lust to get a reputation as a preacher who's always preaching something new. I'm sorry, sir.

I'm not interested in that reputation. I'm interested in making people godly. A good mother may provide the same breakfast every day to his children, to her children.

Same day after day, after day, after year, after year, after year, and she produces healthy children. Not because she's wearing the breakfast. She can do that if she wants.

And there's nothing wrong in that. But even if she's so poor that she can only give the same breakfast every day, her children can be healthy. And I'm determined to make the children healthy not to get the reputation for myself.

She's always preaching some new message. I have no new message to preach. I've only got the same old gospel that has been preached for 2000 years.

That's changed my life. It brought me into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Changed, completely changed the direction of my life.

Made me a supremely happy person. Gave me a supremely happy marriage. Helped me to bring up my children in a godly way.

It's the same old message that I preach. Because I see that people all over the world need to hear this. So 1 John chapter 2, verse 28.

I've never got tired of preaching this and I'll preach it again. There are going to be two types of people among believers when Christ comes. We know that, we've heard that when Christ comes there'll be believer and unbeliever.

But there are two groups among the believers. Read 1 John 2, 28. Always read the Bible carefully.

Now, little children. Is he including unbelievers there? When John says, 1 John chapter 2, verse 1. Little children, I'm writing to you because you've got an advocate, Jesus Christ. Who is he writing to? He's talking to believers.

He does not call unbelievers little children. My little children, when Christ appears we must have confidence with him. That's one group.

And the other group is those who shrink away from him in shame at his coming. Among God's children, when Christ comes there'll be two groups of people and you know where you are, where you will be. One who are bold, confidence.

Yes, Lord, we are happy to meet you. Everything in our life is set right. We have set things right with God and with man.

My conscience is clear. Thank you, Lord, that we've come at last. We were waiting to see you, you've come.

And then there's another group of believers. I'm not talking about unbelievers now. I haven't apologized to my wife yet.

I haven't apologized to my husband. Wait, wait, wait, don't come yet. That guy I took money from, I haven't returned it.

Lord, please wait, please wait. Can you wait a couple of days? They shrink away in shame because there are things in their life they did not settle. They were lazy to settle sin in their life.

That's the only reason they shrink away from him in shame. Which group will you be? I'm not saying Christ will come today, but if he does which of these two groups will you be in? If he comes today, is there

something unsettled in your life with God or with man that will make you shrink away in shame? Or will you say, Lord, I'm ready, ready to stand before you. Examine my life.

I'm ready to stand before you and face the judgment. My conscience is absolutely clear. My sins are all forgiven.

I've confessed every known sin. I've settled everything with God and man. And I'm ready for your coming.

I pray that will be true, not with most of you, but with all of you, with every single one of you. There are nearly 600 people here listening with every single and 600 little open windows and many more in each window. Thousand people listening and say to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, I hope you're ready.

If you keep that attitude, you'll make spiritual progress. How shall we ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit? Ephesians 5, 18, it says, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, I always have taught whenever you read a scripture, don't read a verse by itself.

If you take a sentence out of any letter, supposing your dad has written a 10 page letter to you and you take one sentence out of page five, you may not understand it. Read the whole letter and see what that sentence means in relation to the letter. You know that.

So when it says be filled with the Holy Spirit, what does it say after that? What is going to be the result of being filled with the Spirit? When you're being filled with the Spirit, first thing I have a spirit of thanksgiving, always giving thanks, verse 20. So that is what's going to happen if I'm really filled with the Spirit. How do you know you're filled with the Spirit? Some people say you must speak in tongues.

Well, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 very clearly says, the gift of tongues is given to some people. The gift of being an apostle is given to some people. Everybody's not an apostle.

Everybody's not a Bible teacher. Everybody's not an evangelist. Everybody doesn't have the gift of healing.

Everybody does not have the gift of tongues. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is crystal clear on that. Everybody does not have the gift of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12 and verse 28, 29, and 30. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 28, 29, 30. All do not have all the gifts.

Some have the gift of tongues. Some have the gift of healing. Some have the gift of being apostles.

All of us will readily say, yeah, I don't want to be an apostle. If God makes me one, fine. I don't have the gift of teaching.

But why do we select one of those gifts? Because some group of Christians have promoted that. It's as crazy as saying that every believer must have the gift of healing. I've not met one man in my life who has a consistent gift of healing.

I'll tell you that. That God heals, sometimes I fully agree. But I also know that He doesn't heal often.

We're not unrealistic. But we pray and we commit God's will and we pray, always pray for healing. But then we say, not my will, but thine.

But Ephesians 5, 18, we give thanks. This is one of the first marks of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Always giving thanks.

That means I'll have a spirit of thanksgiving all the time. What is the opposite of the spirit of thanksgiving? It's like, what is the opposite of white? Black. What is the opposite of light? Darkness.

So what is the opposite of thanksgiving? Grumbling, complaining, murmuring. It's very clear. It's like saying, what is the opposite of light and what's the opposite of darkness? It's the opposite of darkness.

So how do I know I have a spirit of thanksgiving? I finished with grumbling, complaining, murmuring. I have a spirit of thanksgiving. It's not that I'm always opening my mouth and giving thanks.

I have a spirit of thanksgiving. I have no complaining against anything. If something happens which is not exactly what I wanted or not what I expected, I say, well, praise the Lord.

God has promised me in Romans 8, 28, He will make everything work for my good. I want to give thanks because of that. Maybe a bit painful, but it'll work for my good.

I've experienced many painful things in my life which worked for my good. God, I wouldn't have chosen those painful things, but they worked for my good. It made me stronger.

I've experienced sickness. I've experienced people persecuting me, people writing, calling me the devil and taking me to court because I stood up for my faith. It all worked for my good.

Every one of them, Romans 8, 28 is 100% true. I proved that in my life for 64 years that I've been a Christian. Nothing, nothing, I mean, absolutely nothing has happened in me, in my life, which has not worked for my good.

Not even one small thing. So I give thanks in all situations. But let's go on from there.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you're seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is what I'm asking. Do you want this life? Some people, they want to be filled with the Holy Spirit because they want to speak in tongues.

God gave me the gift of tongues when I never sought for it. It's a good gift, but God decides whom to give it to. Gift of healing is a very good gift, but God decides whom to give it to.

God's given me the gift of teaching. And how do I know that? When people understand the Bible, when I speak it. That's how I know I've got the gift of teaching.

But God doesn't give it to everybody. I wish everybody had it. I wish everybody had a 10 times better gift of teaching than I have, but I've just discovered that God doesn't give it to everyone.

The same way he doesn't give the gift of tongues to everyone. We have to accept the gift God gives you. For example, there's one gift in that list in 1 Corinthians 12 28 that nobody asks for.

You know what that gift is? Helps. 1 Corinthians 12 28. One of the gifts mentioned there is after the gift of healing, the gift of helps.

Have you ever asked God for that gift? Lord, give me the gift of helps. Always ready to help somebody where I see it. I've seen some excellent brothers like that.

They see some need and immediately, quietly, without anybody watching, they go and meet it. They see some need in a church and they quietly, without any pomp and show, without blowing a trumpet, they quietly go and meet it. Oh, I've admired such brothers.

Nobody sees them. I also accidentally see them. I praise God for those who got the gift of helps.

Seek for it. There's a great need for such gifts in the church. 1 Corinthians 12 28.

Anyway, so always giving thanks. And then here's the part I wanted to come to. When you are filled with the Spirit, I'm asking you, if you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, are you looking for this type of life? Then seek God to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Be filled with the Spirit. Lord, because I want to live a life where Ephesians 5 20, I'm always giving thanks. And Lord, because I want to be a wife, verse 22, who's always subject to my husband.

Is that why you want to be filled with the Spirit, your sisters, married sisters? Don't tell me, tell God. You feel that you're not subject to your husband. You're a bit rebellious, arguing and quarreling with him.

And you want to be filled with the Spirit. Excellent. Lord, I want to be a submissive wife.

That's why I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Blessed are you sisters who seek to be filled with the Spirit for that reason. And while your husbands are all very happy because of what I'm preaching, let me speak to you now.

You want to be filled with the Spirit because, verse 25, Ephesians 5 25, you say, Lord, I want to love my wife. As you love the church, lay down your life, willing to die, deny yourself. Lord, I'm not living like that with my wife.

I'm not loving her to the point where I'm willing to die on a cross for her and give up all my rights. Lord, I'm not living like that. That's why I want to be filled with the Spirit.

Oh, you're a blessed man. Thank God you're seeking to be filled with the Spirit for that reason. Or you're saying as a father, oh, father, I'm not bringing up my children, Ephesians chapter 6. I'm not bringing up my children, verse 4, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

My children are wayward. Forgive me, Lord. I never sought to be filled with the Spirit for that reason.

I wanted to be filled with the Spirit to be a preacher and to speak in tongues. But here it says, be filled with the Spirit. And then Father's, Ephesians 6, 4, bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I want to ask you, most of you have children. How do you bring them up? I'm not trying to condemn you. Please listen to me.

I'm speaking to you as a loving brother. Where are your children today? Are they following the Lord? Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit, that you love wisdom. Now, you may say, brother, I was foolish in my younger days, early married days.

I didn't take it seriously. Nevermind. There is hope as long as you're alive.

There is hope. Like they say, while there's life, there is hope. You're not yet in the grave.

Your children are not yet in the grave. There is hope for you. I tell you in Jesus name, there is hope for your children.

I don't care how wayward they are. You pray to the Lord today to fill you with the Holy Spirit and to teach you to pray for them in the Holy Spirit. God can do a miracle.

God can arrange circumstances in their life that they are brought to a place of need in their life. That they'll turn to you and say, daddy, mommy, how can I turn to the Lord? Can you imagine the joy that'll come to your heart when you get a letter like that from them? Do you believe that God can do it? And if your children are small, thank God, they're still with you. Work with them, work with them.

That's a major part of our ministry. I've spent so many years traveling here and there to so many countries and so many, half my life was away from my home. And most of my time was in the poor villages in India.

And I never did it for money. I don't take money from people. I never received a salary or sent any prayer letters.

But my wife and I decided we want our children to grow up to love the Lord. That's primary. Once I said, Lord, I'm traveling, taking care of your family.

You please take care of my family. Don't let my family suffer because I'm taking care of your family. He's not done it.

When I say he's not done it, he's not made my family suffer. That's what I mean. He's blessed them.

Put God first, put him first. He'll do miracles for you. I never lost out by putting God first in my life and putting his work first.

And say, Lord, I'll take care of your family. You take care of mine. I can tell you after 55 years of marriage, the Lord has kept his word, done it much better than I've done my part.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Say, Lord, this is why I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. To build a godly family life.

To demonstrate in this evil generation how we can live as loving husband and wife. How we can bring up godly children. Pray, cry out to God that you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit.

No matter how much you're filled. I don't want to know how many years you're filled, Brother Israel. God is merciful.

Maybe some of these truths that you're hearing today, you never heard it when you were young. God understands that. If you had heard it many years ago, you would have taken it more seriously.

Nevermind, take it seriously from now. Say, Lord, I can do nothing about the years gone by, but I can do something from today. And you'll see tremendous spiritual progress in your life, in your family life.

In your relationship with your wife. In your relationship with your children. And your usefulness in God's kingdom.

And don't think usefulness in God's kingdom is only by preaching. I met some brothers who cannot preach at all. But who are a great blessing in the church.

Who got the gift of helps. And the church would not function without them. You know, I'll give you an example.

In the human body, the Bible says the church is like Christ's body. You can have a strong forearm. This is called the forearm.

This is called the upper arm. I can have a strong upper arm full of muscle. And a strong forearm.

But if this joint is not functioning properly. If it's stiff. You know what my strong forearm and strong upper arm will be like? It'll be like this.

I can hardly pick up anything. It's like this. My joint will not bend.

That's a problem with a lot of people. Relationships. Husband and wife.

Strong believers. They know so much of the Bible. They can sing so well.

But what about the joint between them? No joint. Stiff. Husband is proud that he's strong.

Wife is proud that she's strong. No relationship between them. The joints.

Very, very important. See what it says here in Ephesians 4 and verse 16. Ephesians 4 verse 16.

I'm not preaching theories. The whole body of Christ is fitted and held together. How? How is the whole body of Christ fitted and held together? By that which every joint supplies.

Your knee is a joint. If it cannot bend, you will not be able to walk. Your elbow is a joint.

Not only that, your fingers. You can have strong fingers, but if there are no joints, you cannot hold a single thing. Joints.

What do the joints speak of? Fellowship. How is your fellowship with your wife? How is your fellowship with your children? Don't just say, I'm so strong in the Lord. What about your fellowship, brother? With your wife and with your children.

Build up fellowship. That's the reason for lack of spiritual progress. I'm not trying to condemn anybody.

I want to judge myself. I decided long ago that I will judge myself every day. For one reason.

Because I'm not yet like Jesus Christ, 100%. I'm progressing. I'm a lot more like Jesus Christ today than I was 10 years ago or 50 years ago.

Or I hope even more than last year. But I'm not completely like Christ. I've got a long way to go.

So what is the way to get there? I've got to judge myself. Lord, where am I not like you? Help me. That's all I'm trying to say to you.

What is spiritual progress in a nutshell? It is becoming more and more like Christ. In our behavior, in our speech, in our inner attitudes, in our motives with which we do things. That is spiritual progress.

And all of us will acknowledge readily. Lord, I'm not yet like you. There are areas I see.

And I want to make progress, Lord. So I'm just trying to challenge you like I challenge myself. And I want to judge myself.

I don't want to judge other people. I want to exhort other people like I'm doing now. I want to challenge other people like I'm doing now.

But I don't want to judge. I don't want to judge any of you. Because I don't know your life.

You know, I said about how people don't know about our private life at home. Let me tell you something else. Your wife does not even know about your thought life.

You don't have to reveal to her all your failures in your thought life. But I'm saying she doesn't know it. We don't confess our sins to anybody except to God.

The only sin we confess to another person is where we have harmed that person. You harm your wife, by all means, confess to her. Otherwise, you don't have to confess your sins and your thoughts to your wife.

But she doesn't understand. She's a woman. But what I'm saying is, you have oil in your vessel, that hidden life, what goes on in your mind, how radical you are to keep your thoughts pure.

That's the oil in the vessel. Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit, so that I can have a pure thought life. So that my attitude towards everything will be Christ-like.

This is the secret, to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I pray that God will do that for all of us. So that in every trial, we can overcome.

I want to say one more thing, and that is the danger of legalism. In the Old Testament, they did not understand what legalism is. But one of the biggest dangers I found with Christians who are pursuing holiness, I would say two big dangers.

When we pursue holiness, one is the danger of becoming rigid, not flexible. Godly people are flexible, not rigid, like the Pharisees. Don't come on the Sabbath day to be healed.

And the Lord said, if your donkey fell into the ditch on the Sabbath day, would you pick it up? That is hypocrisy. Rigid, you shall not work on the Sabbath day. Taking that law to an extreme, you can be like that towards other people.

Judge yourself severely, but be merciful to others. So legalism is a very great danger. It's not a danger with worldly people.

People are just worldly and couldn't care less about the commandments. They are not legalistic with anybody. They say, enjoy yourself.

I'm enjoying myself, brother. But don't be so rigid about all these laws and all. God is not so strict.

They're on their way to hell, and they want to lead you to hell as well. I'm not going to be like that. But at the same time, I'm not going to be a Pharisee, checking up on you all the time, examining whether you're doing this, whether you're doing that.

No, I don't want to have the eyes of a Pharisee. Do you have the eyes of a Pharisee with which you're looking at others? Get rid of it. Replace it with the eyes of mercy.

Look at your husband, wife with mercy, not with laws. Even when a couple gets married, usually what happens is the wife has been brought up in a certain way in her home for 25 years, say. Now she's married.

She expects her husband to behave exactly like the laws of her home. Husband has never been there. The same way when the husband gets married.

He's been brought up for 28 years in his home. He gets married, and he expects his wife to know all the laws of his home. It's such a ridiculous thing, such a stupid thing.

And yet, that's the way many husbands and wives are. Stupid. Mercy.

Jesus once said, I want mercy, not sacrifice. All your sacrifices are worthless if you're not merciful. I remember when we put up our first building in CFC building in Bangalore.

We were thinking about what words should we have at the back over the pulpit. And I said, yeah, I'll tell you. We are preaching holiness from this pulpit.

And the greatest need for people who preach holiness is to be merciful to other people. Because otherwise, we'll become Pharisees. So I said, put up this verse on top of the pulpit.

Be merciful to others, just as God has been merciful to you. And that's what we've had for the last nearly 50 years. Or a little over 40 years that we've had building.

And on the pulpit itself, we wrote, let us press on to perfection. So it's not that we take a light attitude. Let us press on to perfection.

But while pressing on to perfection ourselves, let us be merciful to all people. We need balance, brothers and sisters in our Christian life, balance. If your one leg is shorter even by one inch than your other leg, everybody will see it in the way you're walking.

I'll tell you. One inch less. And there's an imbalance in the way many Christians are.

Imbalance in how much they know and how much they live. Knowledge and life are like the two legs. Many people's life leg is about one foot shorter than their knowledge leg.

You know, walking like this. Others see it. I can't, they say, I can't hear what you're saying because I see what you're doing.

Your life is speaking much louder than your words. And your words are being drowned out by the way you live. May God have mercy on us.

Avoid legalism. Avoid judging others. Judge yourself.

And I wish and pray that you'll make tremendous progress in your life. Read God's word. That's how I get constantly challenged.

Don't let a day go by where you miss out on God's word. Do you ever forget to have your daily food? Even if you forget your breakfast, don't you have your lunch? You never say, I forgot to have my lunch. I forgot to have food today.

But I've heard a lot of people say, I forgot to read the Bible today. How's that? I'll tell you. Because you have placed food above the Bible.

I've heard of many people who have a rule saying, no Bible, no breakfast. No Bible, no food. Follow that rule.

Give place to the Bible in your life every day. I've read it. I'm not telling you what I have not done.

I've done it every day for 64 years, as far as I remember. And if you memorize a lot of verses in your mind, even when you're traveling without a Bible with you, you can remember it. And meditate on something that you've already read.

Don't let a day go by without meditating on something in Scripture. Here is one verse. Yeah, I tried to share now with you what hinders spiritual progress.

And I pray that will make tremendous results in your life in the days to come. Let us bow our heads in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, let your Holy Spirit continue to remind us of all that we heard today.

And stir us on to follow in your footsteps, the way of the cross. Always sing the death of Christ in a fresh way. Let me sing the new song that Jesus died for me.

Thank you, Father. I believe there'll be lasting results in the lives of everyone who's opened their heart to hear what they heard today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/tQPNDj7pTtw.mp4>

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