

Living With the Consuming Fire

by Zac Poonen

To live an unshakable life, we must cultivate a deep reverence for God, show gratitude for His blessings, and serve Him without expectation of reward.

Duration: 59:25

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 25:1-13, 2 Corinthians 6:16, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 12:25

Topics: "Fear Of God", "Holiness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living in reverence for God and the need to maintain a healthy fear of God to gain wisdom. It highlights the significance of not refusing God's warnings and the importance of gratitude, sincerity, and righteousness in our actions. The message stresses the need to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit to dwell with God as a consuming fire and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Transcript

Let's turn to a verse in Hebrews and chapter 13. Hebrews 13, I'm sorry, Hebrews 12. It's the last few verses of Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12, 25. One of the first marks of backsliding is a loss of reverence for God. And one way we can see the world having drifted away from God is that it has lost reverence, respect, the fear of God.

When we lose the fear of God, we lose wisdom. Because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then we become foolish. So here's a passage that speaks a lot about this.

See to it that you don't refuse him who is speaking. For those did not escape, and they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven. And his voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised saying yet once more, I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.

And this expression, yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things, in order that those which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. I want to tell you one reason why we decided not, like in some churches, we do not put the verses on the screen, because it makes people lazy.

Some of you are already lazy, you didn't even bring your Bibles with you. Which child goes to school without school books? All of you who have not brought your Bibles with you, you should be thoroughly ashamed of yourself. I want to say that again, you should be thoroughly ashamed of yourself.

You would never go to school without your school book, but you dare to come into God's presence without a Bible when you're studying the word of God? I hope that will never happen again. You know there are, I used to belong to a church where they used to ask everybody to raise their Bible up and sing a song, the best book to read is the Bible. And the leader of that church would say, all those who haven't brought their Bibles, you should be ashamed of yourself.

I agree with that. So that's the reason why we don't put the verses on the screen, because we want people to become familiar with the word of God and not to despise it and say who cares for that. I think it's a great testimony when people see someone carrying a Bible on Sunday morning and going to a meeting.

We must never be ashamed of it. To walk with a Bible in our hand on Sunday morning, people know there's a man who's going to, respecting God and going to church. Okay, here it speaks about our God in the last verse being a consuming fire.

Now very often people think that's only an Old Testament thing, fear of God is something in the Old Testament, and we don't think of it in the Old New Testament. But here it says in the Old Testament, God spoke to people through earthly messengers on earth, verse 25, but now God is speaking from heaven and it says in verse 25, if those when they refused, those who warned them on earth and they didn't escape, how much less will we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven. And as we approach the end of time, the coming of the Lord is near, and everything around us indicates the coming of the Lord is near, especially the things that are happening in the Middle East.

It's always in the Middle East that the problems have been, and because that's where Jesus was crucified, and that's why it's a very important part of the world, it's where Jesus rose from the dead, that's where Jesus ascended up to heaven, and that's where the Bible says when he descends, he will plant his feet on the Mount of Olives, exactly the same place where he went up to heaven from, and God has placed that Mount of Olives in the center of the whole earth, and so there's always conflict around that area, which is one indication of the fact that the Christian faith is the true faith, and that Jesus Christ is coming back. So as we approach the end of time, a lot of things are gonna be shaken. It says in verse 27, things that can be easily removed will be shaken, created things, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

So we have to make sure that nothing in our life is shakable, and one reason why God allows us sometimes to face some little problem, a little trial, a little difficulty is to show us areas in our life that can be shaken, so we get rid of them. Say, all right, Lord, that particular time I shook in that area, I don't want it to happen next time. Next time when I face a situation like that, I'm not gonna shake.

That is God's purpose. Shaking indicates, you know, like Jesus said about the man who built on sand? His house began to shake, and if he had been careful when a little wind came and the house began to shake, he could have done something about the foundation so that when the big storm came, his house wouldn't collapse. So if you find in a little trial you get upset or you get terribly anxious and fearful about what's gonna happen, that's like a little shaking God is doing in your life in order to help you to overcome that so that little by little by little, every area of our life becomes unshakable.

There are many trials on earth which shake us a little bit, but if you listen to God's word, we won't be shaken. I mean, there are certain things that can bring fear into our life because we are experiencing it for the first time sometimes. It's like being, if someone pushes a child into a swimming pool and doesn't know how to swim, he gets a little disturbed, but if he learns to swim, if he uses that as a challenge, well, I don't want that to happen again.

I wanna learn how to swim so that if somebody pushes me into the swimming pool, I'm not gonna be scared. And so there are different situations that come into our life where we initially get a bit shaken, but we wanna conquer it immediately. We don't want the shaking to continue.

I mentioned how the first time somebody took me to court, I was 59 years old, and I'd never been to a court before. I was a bit shaken because I'd never experienced it before. It was exactly like being thrown into a swimming pool, not knowing how to swim.

But as soon as I entered the court, I heard the Lord say to me, I've been to court before you. Religious people took me to court, so why are you afraid? Just look for my footsteps here, and you can walk in my footsteps of faith and love. That brought complete peace to my heart, and I was the happiest person in the court that day.

I'm just using that as an example to say that if you listen to God in any trial or anxiety that comes into your life, as soon as it comes, if you say, Lord, speak a word to my heart now, I wanna hear you. And the Lord will give you something if you develop the habit of listening that'll calm you in that situation. And there's one area that I've been to court for, you've overcome one shakable area in your life that has now become unshakable.

And there are many, many, many areas like that in our life that we can bring shake. It can be a financial difficulty, and you shake, and then God gives you a promise, and he sees you through that, and say, well, I've conquered in that area. God wants us to bring these giants down one by one by one so that we are unshakable, that's God's will, immovable.

That is God's will for every single one of us. And you can't do that by human strength. Even the richest person in the world can be shaken by things, no matter how much money he has, or even influential people.

The only one who can really come to a place where he can be completely unshakable is the one who says, Lord, I want your word here. You see, the only thing in this world that's unshakable is the word of God. The word of God can never be shaken.

So if you put your feet on that, you cannot shake. Jesus said, he who hears my word and does that will be unshakable. So please remember that, and that's the reason why we encourage you to bring your Bible so that you become familiar with the scriptures, and that's the reason why we encourage you to study the scriptures at home, to memorize the scriptures, so that we have solid ground under our feet, like we sing in that song, standing on the promises of God.

We keep our feet on that, and we are completely unshakable. I hope we have, over a period of time, a church where at least 90% of the brothers and sisters are unshakable. It'll always be a 10% who are half-hearted and worldly.

Jesus had one like that among his 12, and we cannot build a church better than Jesus' church. But I long to see a church where at least 90% of those who are part of the church, I don't mean the visitors, those who are part of the church, who are serious about their Christian life will be unshakable. But as every year goes by, we are more and more unshakable.

We're coming to the end of this year, and we want to move a little more into an unshakable territory. And then it goes on to say in verse 28, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have gratitude. See, the Bible says that when we are anxious, we must immediately bring our requests and make it known to God in Philippians 4, 6, and not stop there, but with thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is the proof that I believe God has heard my prayer. If I pray and I don't give thanks that God's heard my prayer, then I'm in doubt, has he really heard me or not? The Bible says be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer with thanksgiving, make your request known to God. It's one of the great habits that we can develop that can lead us to an unshakable life.

Just a little action of gratitude, and gratitude to God and gratitude to men. Jesus said that he would even thank a person who gave a cup of water to one of his disciples. It's a habit which I find in India, very few people have of saying thank you sincerely from the heart, being really grateful to human beings who've done something for us, and that's because we're not grateful to God.

Even some of the songs we sang today, you know sometimes we can sing, I found that very often we sing without thinking about the words. Can you remember some of the words we sang this morning? The chances are no, because you're so familiar with them that we just sing them. Were there some expressions of gratitude to God there? It's something which we must develop, it's good for you to learn some hymns of thanksgiving and praise that you can sing, I do that very often, it encourages me in times when I'm tested or in trial to sing something which just by myself to God, an expression of thanksgiving, of gratitude.

It says if you have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken, then let us have gratitude. Gratitude and not take what God has given us for granted. Gratitude is the mark, one of the marks of a humble man.

And the reason why we are not quick to say thank you to people who serve us or help us is because there's pride in us, we've got to face it. There's pride in us which prevents us from expressing our gratitude. Some people feel oh, we shouldn't say thank you and all, that's a heathen culture that you have acquired if you haven't learned to say thank you.

Don't let the heathen culture influence you. Jesus said even for a cup of cold water, he would give thanks and there are people who have given us much more than that, we need to be thankful. I sometimes write a email to someone who did something for me years ago or did something for my children years ago and I say thank you because Jesus doesn't forget even a cup of cold water that he gives to his disciples.

These are little, little habits that can help us to come to a very godly life. So if you receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we offer to God an acceptable service. We all want to serve God but there are certain ways in which God accepts our service one is if it is an expression of gratitude.

The sad thing is that a lot of service for God today, even giving money to God is not out of gratitude but wanting something in return. Look at all the churches, multitudes of churches today that preach, if you give

money to God, God will bless you. It's on television all the time, 90% of television preachers preach that.

You send some money here and God will bless you. That's not gratitude. There you're not giving money to God's work out of gratitude.

There you're doing business with God. I give you this, you give me that. In any transaction where you go to God and say, I'll do this for you, you do this for me, that's not the God of the Bible.

That's not following Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ never served his father like that and the apostles never served Jesus Christ like that. So there must never be in our minds this business of I'm doing something for you, you do something for me and I wanna say all of that is a false teaching.

It's true under the old covenant. In the old covenant, God said, if you obey me, I will bless you, I'll reward you. So the moment you get into that realm, you're back in the old covenant and you're back with all the curses of the law for those who don't keep it.

You know, the problem with going under the old covenant is there's a curse. I don't know whether you realize that. And that's the reason why some people never seem to make progress in their life because they're living under the law where there's a curse.

The Bible says, cursed is everyone who does not keep everything in the law. That's the old covenant. So I don't wanna go to the old covenant at any time.

Jesus has abolished that and brought us into a new covenant and one mark of the new covenant is I don't do business with God. If you take some time to read Deuteronomy 28, which I've often quoted, if you obey me, it's a big chapter, which says, if you obey me, I'll do all these blessings, I'll give you all these blessings. And if you disobey me, all these curses will come upon you.

I don't wanna go into that chapter at all because that's not where I live. I live in the new covenant and I want every one of you to realize this, don't do business with God. Don't listen to these preachers who encourage you to do business with God.

You do something and you believe God will do something for you in return. It could even be in prayer. Lord, you pray and you bless me in my exam.

That's not why I pray. I pray because I wanna fellowship with Jesus Christ. See, there can be this spirit of getting something from God by my giving.

And I may be giving money, I may be giving a prayer, I may be giving something, God has to give me something in return. I don't want anything from God in return. I believe the way I look at it is, God gave me more than I can ever deserve when he gave his son to die for me on the cross.

What more do I want? It's like a man who gave me millions and billions and billions and billions of rupees. Then again, I go and ask him for something. That's what the cross of Christ is.

And when I see that cross of Christ, I say, Lord, my heart responds not asking you for something more, but in gratitude. And everything I do in my life should be out of gratitude. Receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude.

Let us show our thankfulness to God for what he's done for us. In the Old Testament, gratitude and thanksgiving only came when God actually did some physical thing for them. He killed Egyptians.

And then we read, they sang his praise. But in the New Covenant, we say Jesus has done, has taken away our sins on the cross. And based on that, my entire life is a way of saying thank you to God.

And I hope you see your entire life to be an expression of gratitude to God for what he's done. And then you'll never complain that somebody else is not doing something or somebody else. So what? If the world is full of ungrateful people, why should I be part of that crowd? Let me show you a verse in Philippians which shows the opposite of gratitude.

It says in verse 14 and 15 of Philippians 2. We've looked at this verse many times. It's not one of the verses that most churches look at, but we keep looking at it because we want to obey it completely. Philippians 2, 14 and 15.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing. That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you appear as lights in the world. The world is a crooked and perverse generation because it is always grumbling and complaining about something.

Something I didn't get, something somebody didn't do for me, husbands and wives, complaining, grumbling, complaining, and murmuring about something that not done up to my expectation. The solution for all that is gratitude. Lord, I'm immensely thankful for what you've done for me.

The only thing I deserve is hell, but you've done a lot more for me than that. And I'll never, never cease to be grateful. I'll never, never cease to be grateful for my husband, for my wife, for my children, for what you've done for me, for giving me a job, for saving me from being a beggar, to have this spirit of gratitude all the time so that grumbling and complaining is completely eliminated from our life.

And it says here in verse 15, that is how you show that you're a child of God. Do you see that? That is how we show there that we are children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And that is how you show yourself as a light in the midst of darkness.

Please remember this, dear brothers and sisters. If you're gonna be part of this kingdom that cannot be shaken, show gratitude. And then that's how we offer up to God an acceptable service.

Not, the acceptable service is not in the principle of business. And then it says further that this acceptable service must be with reverence and awe. Any service that I do for God, if it is not with the respect and reverence and fear of God is not acceptable.

So the number of things that we must remember whenever we are offering anything to God, whether it's prayer or praise or anything we do for the Lord, it must be with gratitude. It must be with reverence for God and it must be with respect because our God is a consuming fire. The reason I picked that verse is because we often think, oh, this God is a consuming fire is all Old Testament stuff.

It's not, it's right here in the New Testament. Our God, our New Testament God is a consuming fire, but it's not a fire that we are afraid of. It's a fire that helps us.

You know, every day we use fire at home to cook our food. Fire is the only thing that can purify impurities. So it's not a fire that destroys, but a fire that purifies.

Why do we use fire at home? It's to destroy germs and to purify the food we eat because if it's not cooked, it can be a lot of germs in it. So that's how we look at God. It's a God who does not consume us, but wants to consume everything that's like germs and things that harm us, something like strong antibiotics that go in and kill those germs.

That's what God is, a consuming fire. So having looked at that verse, I want you to turn with me to a verse in Isaiah 33. Now I've often thought of this as a picture of how our church should be.

You know, we've been thinking in the conference about how we can preserve the glory of God in our church. And the glory of God in the Old Testament is pictured always like a fire, a fire that rested on the tabernacle. During the conference, we thought of that verse where God says, let them make me a tabernacle.

Let them make me a sanctuary, a holy place where I can come and live. And the way God manifested his presence there was by this fire on top of the most holy place. So the fire is a picture of the presence of God.

And here, and Zion is a Old Testament expression for the church. Isaiah 33, verse 14 says, sinners in Zion are terrified. I've always felt that's the type of church I wanna be in, that a sinner who comes here, if he does not repent, if he wants to keep on sinning and keep on thinking that he can be a part of CFC and play the fool with God, the word of God should terrify him.

Those who are repentant are not sinners. They're moving out of sin. These are people who continue in sin and they sit in Zion and because nobody can see what they do, they try to play the fool.

Well, I hope you're terrified. Sinners in Zion should be terrified. And trembling has seized the godless or in another translation, I think in King James Version, it says the hypocrites.

Trembling has seized the hypocrites. I pray that in every meeting of our church, hypocrites will tremble with fear. That means those who are trying to play a double, live a double life.

Those who wanna give one impression of what they are in public and are living quite another life in private, I pray that every meeting they will tremble in fear, that the sense of God's presence, and we can't do it, no sermon can do it, but I believe if there's a sense of God's presence in our midst and we really want the presence of Jesus Christ to be there, that they will tremble in fear. You remember when the Pharisees who appeared to be so holy came to Jesus with a woman caught in adultery. Now those guys may not have physically committed adultery, but they had committed a lot of other sins in private and hypocrisy is much worse.

So here's a picture of a church, Jesus in the middle, maybe some of his disciples there, and this woman who was a sinner, and all these hypocrites trying to accuse her, and because the presence of the Lord was so powerful, all those hypocrites had to go away. Not one was left, but the sinner, the repentant sinner, she was still there, and his disciples who were not hypocrites, they were there. The Pharisees all left.

To me, that's a picture of how the church should be, a crowd of people, but gradually the hypocrites have to go away one by one by one by one, and you're left with repentant sinners like the woman caught in adultery, and the disciples who want to follow Jesus. That is the goal towards which we work in our church. Sinners must be terrified, hypocrites must tremble, and I pray that that will be so in our midst, because, see what it says, who among us can live with the consuming fire? That's the same verse we saw in Hebrews in the New Testament.

Who can live with a consuming fire? I'll tell you, those who want everything in their life to be consumed, which is un-Christ-like. If I see anything un-Christ-like in my life, I want it to be consumed. There's a habit in my life that's un-Christ-like.

It may take time to burn, but I want it to burn away completely. If, for example, there are programs you watch on television that Jesus Christ would never be able to sit and watch with you, do you want them to be consumed out of your life? Do you want to get rid of them? If there are books you read and people you are moving around with bad company that Jesus would never be with. Jesus was a friend of sinners, but he never went along with them in their sinful ways.

Jesus was a friend of sinners to pull them out of their sinful ways. Now, if you're pulling sinners out of the sinful ways, by all means, mingle with them. But if sinners are dragging you along into them, then you should get rid of them, because you're not strong enough to pull them towards the Lord, then you must leave them immediately.

Who can live with the consuming fire? I want to, and you know, gradually what will happen is that the consuming fire will so purify you that your very presence will make people aware of God. They'll be careful when they're around you. They don't speak like they speak when they're in the midst of sinners.

Who among us can live, verse 14, with continual burning? Do you want to live with God? Then you must live with continual burning. That is the true Christian life. When it says, walk in the light.

Today we have light that doesn't burn us, bulbs. But you know, when the scripture was written, there was only one way to get light, and that was with a fire. That was the only way to get light, to walk in the light, 1 John 1, 7. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, that's the same as saying, living with a consuming fire.

Because the light of God is a consuming fire. We need to see whenever the New Testament speaks about light. Very often we have not thought about it as a fire.

But remember, that is the only light there was in scriptural times. And so when the Bible speaks about walking in the light, it's the same as walking with the consuming fire, with continual burning. And yet we live, because we wanted to burn away everything that is un-Christlike.

You know, when people have cancer, they are told to take chemotherapy. And the chemotherapy is meant to burn away the cancer cells. And even though it's painful and it disfigures them, they lose their hair and things like that, they yield to it.

Why would a person yield to something that's gonna be so painful, that's gonna make them lose parts of their body? I mean, hair and things like that? Because they hate cancer. They submit to something that is so painful because they know it'll make them healthy. It's something like that.

The day we see every un-Christlike area of our life like cancer, we will gladly submit to it exactly like people with cancer. Not only submit to chemotherapy, they pay thousands of rupees in order to get that chemotherapy for the cancer to be burnt away. And in some cases, they've even got to cut off some of the organs of the body because that's the only way to remove the cancer.

This is the way we got to see it, brothers and sisters. If you want to walk with the Lord, otherwise we are playing the fool with the Christian faith. We have to live with continual burning and live with the consuming fire.

So think of your walk with God as living with a continual burning that will never burn away. I mean, doctors sometimes have to cut away parts of a human body when they try to heal a person of cancer, but God will never, never take away anything good in this burning. This burning is only going to destroy the things that are destroying our life.

I wonder if we see that any un-Christlike habit, you may not see it, but it's destroying your life. We know that smoking hurts our lungs. We know that drinking alcohol hurts our liver, even though we don't see it.

That's why we don't smoke and we don't drink. There's no external evidence that that cigarette or that alcohol is ruining me, but it's ruining me all the time and it's shortening my life. It's the same way with sin.

I often think of sin like smoking a cigarette or drinking alcohol. There's no external indication that I have deteriorated, but inwardly it's destroying me. It shortens my life.

And so I should be very thankful for a God who is willing to get rid of things like that in my life, burn it away, even if it's painful, so that I can have a good life. And if you young people from a very young age can be gripped by this, Lord, I want everything in my life that's un-Christlike to be burnt away. Make that a prayer in your life.

Lord, everything that I cannot do in fellowship with Jesus Christ, that's a test. Can I do this in fellowship with Jesus Christ? Sometimes the phrase, what would Jesus do, doesn't always give the answer. Because we may think, well, there's certain things we don't know whether Jesus would do because he was not in our world.

Would Jesus drive a car or these are the type of things we don't have an answer to. But the question we need to ask ourselves is a better question is, can I do this in fellowship with Jesus Christ? That is the meaning of doing it in the name of Jesus Christ. Can I do this in fellowship with Jesus Christ? That means, is there anything I'm doing here right now which would break my fellowship with the Lord? When I sign a paper, can I sign it and ask Jesus to be a witness to what I'm signing? That means he agrees that everything you have signed for is correct.

There's so many lies and falsehoods that people sign nowadays, usually for some little earthly gain. Can I do this in fellowship with Jesus Christ? This is what it means to walk in the light. This is what it means to walk with continual burning and with a consuming fire.

I don't mind repeating it. And it explains here who can walk and dwell with the consuming fire. Notice a few things here.

One who walks righteously, verse 15. One who speaks with sincerity. One who rejects unjust gain so that he shakes his hand from holding any bribe.

And one who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed and who shuts his eyes from looking upon evil. Such a man will dwell on the heights. He will dwell in heavenly places.

His refuge, nobody will be able to shake him, an impregnable rock. He will always have spiritual food. Every single day, God will give him spiritual food.

I wanna live that life where every single day God gives me the bread of his word and the water of his spirit every single day. And you can live this life, brothers and sisters, if you just determine, I wanna live with a continual burning. So let's look at these things mentioned in verse 15.

Walk righteously. And as we have often said in this church, that is up to the level of your understanding. My understanding of God's righteousness may be higher than yours.

Then God will test me at a higher level. It's like the 10th standard student is tested at a higher level than the second standard student. But you don't have to worry about the 10th standard subjects.

If you're in second standard, be faithful at that level. And I hope next year you'll go to the third standard. In other words, there's a progress.

This is what it means to walk in the light, to walk with the continual burning. So to walk righteously. You know, this is also described in case you don't know that verse.

Proverbs 4 and verse 18 speaks about the pathway of the righteous. Proverbs 4, 18. Many of you know it.

Some of you probably don't know it, but you must know this lovely verse. The path of the righteous. That means if you're walking along the path of the righteous, it's like the sunrise when you're born again.

And like the sun shines brighter, brighter, brighter, the day becomes brighter and brighter. If you're walking the path of the righteous, your life will become brighter, holier, purer. It's not all of a sudden the sun reaches midday.

It's such a slow progress that if you look at it, you can't even see it. You can't see the sun moving. But over a period of time, you see it has moved.

So spiritual progress also is not something we can see day by day. But over a period of time, you'll say, hey, I've become more sensitive to sin in that area. The darkness is going away.

It's getting brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter. That is the only path of the righteous. And if that is not true in your, let's not say daily, but your yearly experience.

In other words, if you're not moving to a higher level of God's life, at least in a year, you are not walking the path of the righteous. Even though you may think you're a holy man, you're a righteous man, maybe you'll come to a certain level. Maybe because of all that you heard here in the church through the years, you're not like others sitting in the kindergarten in other churches, maybe you moved up to third or fourth standard.

But maybe you moved to fourth standard 15 years ago. And you're still there. Then you're not walking the path of the righteous.

Something has happened. And you're in great danger of backsliding. It's like an airplane in the sky.

Either it moves forward or it's dropping. If it stops, it drops. There's no such thing as an airplane standing still.

If it's moving forward, it's okay. The moment it stops, it drops. Christian life is like that.

There is no such thing as standing still in the light. It's walking in the light. So I feel that it's possible that some of us sitting here are content that our standard of life is so much better than the lives of many other Christians in other churches.

It's true. I believe we do have a standard that's higher than others in many areas. The danger is that we can be content with that and not see whether we are progressing.

The path of the righteous is like the shining light that shines more and more and more and more. And the perfect day is when Christ comes again, when we'll be exactly like him. So it's a progress from the life of Adam, which we rejected when we were born again, all the way to the fullness of the life of Christ, little by little by little by little, something like the first chapter of the Bible, where every day God did something and he saw it was good.

Next day he did something more. Why didn't he do it all in one second? To show us this is how God works in the new covenant, little by little by little, with the Holy Spirit and the word of God. So that's the way to know whether we are walking righteously.

Who can dwell with the consuming fire? That's the question in verse 14, those who walk righteously. So let's ask ourselves, is there anything that you're conscious that is unrighteous in your life right now? Are you dealing unrighteously with somebody? Are your financial dealings righteous with people? I'm talking particularly about people, individuals. Do you cheat any human being? Have you returned things you have borrowed and taken from people? The second thing is our speech.

There's a lot mentioned here about parts of our body, hands, eyes, ears, tongue, notice that. Here it is, the tongue. Many parts of our body, because it's with our body that from our heart, sin comes through the parts of our body.

Who speaks with sincerity? That doesn't mean he's perfect, but it means he's honest. Sincerity means there's no hypocrisy, that's all it means. It doesn't mean I'm mature.

Not speaks with maturity, but speaks with sincerity. I heard a story about this word sincere. I don't know whether it's true or not, but they say it comes from some other language where the word means without wax.

You see, in those days when they made marble statues, it's very difficult to make a marble statue of a person. Guy chips and chips and chips at the marble to make this perfect, and supposing he makes a mistake. Supposing he knocks off the nose or something.

What can he do? Can he throw away the whole marble and start all over again? It's expensive, very difficult. So what he does is he takes a little bit of wax, which looks just like marble, and fixes it there. And a person who comes to buy the marble statue doesn't even see it.

So that's what they called it, they guaranteed without wax. Sinesere, that means sincere, without wax. They would put out these marble statues in the burning sun to see if any part of it melted away.

And that's how it is here. There's no wax in me, brothers, sisters. What you see in me is exactly what I am.

I'm not patching up something when I come on Sunday to show you something different from what I am the rest of the week. That's the meaning of sincere. It does not mean perfect.

It means sincere. Maybe the marble statue is not yet complete. Maybe only the legs have been done.

But so far as it's been done, it's perfect. There's no wax there. And little by little, the whole statue will be complete.

But there's no wax at any point. We don't use wax. We are without hypocrisy.

We are what we are. Sincere. See, to be holy is difficult.

But to be without hypocrisy, do you know that a prostitute who's still a prostitute can be without hypocrisy? She says, I'm a prostitute. So it's very easy to be without hypocrisy because it just means being honest about what you are. Not claiming to be something we are not.

Now, always remember that the first sin God judged in the early church was not murder or adultery, but hypocrisy. The sin that Jesus condemned the most was hypocrisy. Do you find him condemning the murderer on the cross? No.

Not even the one who didn't repent. Do you find him condemning the adulterous woman? No. But he condemned the Bible reading, weekly synagogue going, praising, thanking Pharisees for hypocrisy.

Again and again and again. There's a whole chapter he condemns the hypocrites in Matthew 23. Now, if we see this, we see that this is what Jesus hated.

In the Old Testament, there's a lot of condemnation of idolatry and adultery and all that. But in the New Testament, Jesus comes and condemns hypocrisy. You got to see that many sins we may take time to overcome, but from day one, we should be free from hypocrisy.

That means never, never at any stage, if you're in standard one, don't say you're in standard five or even in standard two. Children are, I've never seen a child who's a hypocrite in that area. I've never seen a child tell me I'm in standard four when he's in standard two.

Have you ever come across one like that? They are so honest. I'm in standard two. That is being without hypocrisy.

It doesn't mean perfection. This is where I am. Not pretending.

The first sin that God judged was Ananias and Sapphira. Pretending to give everything when they didn't give everything. And Peter said, you didn't have to give one cent.

Before you sold your property, it was yours. After you sold your property, 90% was yours? No, all of it was yours. That shows us there's no tithing.

Peter didn't say, if you sell your property, give a tithe to God. No, you see that passage in Acts five. Before you sold it, it was yours.

God doesn't want your money. After you sold it, it was still yours. But why do you pretend? Why do you want to pretend that you're giving all when you're giving only 50%? Do you know that Ananias and Sapphira were judged for giving perhaps 50% of the sale property of their house? Can you imagine a Christian being punished for giving 50% of the sale property, sale value of his house? That's what happened.

Because of hypocrisy, it's the first sin that God judged. Okay, let's move on. Sincerity and rejects unjust gain, shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe.

That means he does not want to make money in unrighteous ways. He doesn't want to do something wrong to make money. We're living with the continuous burning, remember.

That means he's not such a lover of money that he wants to get it by hook or by crook. If he can't get it honestly, he says, well, that's fine, I'll be satisfied with what I have. This is the person whom God purifies.

The one who says, Lord, I don't want one paisa in my bank account that was not earned righteously. That's an area where we need to examine ourselves. And I tell you, it's the rich people who are more in danger than the poor ones.

I find as people tend to become richer, there's a gradual tendency to be more and more unrighteous. You gotta watch out on that, be very, very careful. I don't want to have any unrighteous profit or gain in my life.

And sometimes we can pray some radical prayers, and I prayed that, I remember. Once I said, Lord, I don't know if I have got any money which is unrighteously mine in my bank account. If I'm unaware of it, please show it to me.

If I've cheated the government of some tax which I should have paid, please show it to me. Or let me lose it in some way. I remember in the old days, it was many, many years ago, I was making a phone call to somebody in a foreign country.

And those were before cell phones and all that. And after I finished the call, the phone would not disconnect for some reason. Because the system in the telephone exchange was primitive in those days.

And I would try and try and try to not disconnect it. Remember, every second is money. And I said, what to do? Then after quite some time, I had to go somewhere else and go call up the exchange and get them to disconnect it.

And by that time, I'd lost a lot of money. I said, okay, Lord, thank you. That may have been the amount that I owed the government somewhere or something.

Thank you. I have no complaint. That's the way I looked at it.

I said, Lord, I don't want a cent in my account, not one that belongs to somebody else that is unrighteous. I want to be absolutely righteous. I'd rather live with little and not buy some things I can't afford than have this thing in my conscience.

And one day when the Lord comes and somebody has to complain, Lord, you can't take him because he owes me money. I don't want anybody to say that. Be very, very clear in this, my brothers.

It's not worth it. Be honest, who shakes his hands from all unrighteous gain. And then it says in verse 15 further, who stops his ears from listening to bloodshed.

In practical terms, that means I stop listening to gossiping. Somebody comes and wants to gossip about somebody and I say, listen, can we talk about something else? Or an even better way, say something good about that person about whom he's saying something evil. That'll stop it immediately.

Or another way, when somebody comes and tells me something about someone, I say, really? Are you sure it's true? I'd like to call up that person right now and find out if what you say is right. Just hang on, let me go to call him. No, no, no, brother, this is only for prayer or something.

No, no, no, I said, I believe in checking up everything with the source. You told me something about that, brother. I'll call him up right now and find out if it's true.

People don't come and gossip in my house now. Do you wanna keep your house free from gossiping? From people coming and dumping their garbage in your front room and they come and dump it once and next time he comes again with some more garbage and you welcome him in to dump some more garbage in your front room? Do you wanna dwell with the everlasting burnings? Do you really want the fire of purity in your home? Now, I'm not referring to situations where we need to speak about a brother to an elder. I mean, if you find something wrong with a brother in this church, it's perfectly right for you to go and speak to an elder, that's not gossiping.

That's like going to the doctor and explaining somebody is sick in your family so that the person can be cured. But if you go around talking about it to people who can do nothing for that person, that is gossip. But if you talk to an elder brother who will, I know what I do if somebody comes and tells me about someone, as I said, I go and find that out.

Is it really true? So that I can help that person. So be careful. We gotta stop our years.

There's a sense here, I wanna dwell with the everlasting burning. I wanna stop my year from hearing bloodshed. And then the last one there is shutting my eyes from looking upon evil.

And that means, that's one reason God has given us eyelids. I hope you know that. Think if you didn't have eyelids and the Lord said, don't lust with your eyes, that'd be quite a problem.

Isn't it good that God's given us eyelids? So that we can, serious areas, you know, where I can be tempted. He's given us a mouth that can shut. You know, God could have given us a mouth that's always open, like ears, always open.

Lord, I can't stop talking, I gotta keep, no, you can stop talking if you want to. You can stop looking, you can close your eyes. Who shuts his eyes from looking upon evil, anything with, I cannot look at that with Jesus.

Lord, I'm looking at that. And are you looking with me? If you can't say that, you should turn your eyes away from it. From anything that's on a computer screen, anything in the newspaper, anything in a book, or anything on the roads, or in a billboard on the roadside.

To shut his eyes from evil. Why is a person so serious about his eyes and his ears and his tongue and everything? Because he has a great passion to dwell with continuous burning, to walk in the light. The

reason I say this, my brothers and sisters, is because I believe that many of us should have made a lot more progress in our spiritual lives by now.

And another year is coming to an end, and we want people to take their lives seriously, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter three. It's in chapter seven, 2 Corinthians chapter seven.

It says, along the same line, it's talking about dwelling with the continuous burning. Okay, that's the subject. 2 Corinthians six, verse 16.

We are the temple of the living God. In the middle of that verse, God says, I will dwell in them and walk among them. This is dwelling with the continuous burning, with the consuming fire.

How shall we do it? God dwelling with us, chapter seven, verse one. Having such a promise, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in reverence for God. Back again to the same thing that we saw at the beginning.

Perfecting holiness, impossible under the old covenant. In the old covenant, they were always at one level. Kindergarten, kindergarten, kindergarten, 50 years, kindergarten.

But now we perfect holiness in the fear of God. We press on to perfection. This is our calling as new covenant Christians.

Cleansing ourselves with the external sins and the internal sins, filthiness of the flesh, which is visible and filthiness of the spirit, which is invisible. When you think of the 10 virgins, you know that all of them had lamps burning. Their external life was good.

They had cleansed themselves from filthiness of the flesh, but only five had cleansed themselves from filthiness of the spirit so that they had oil in their vessel. The others didn't have it. And they were not ready for the coming of the Lord.

And the bridegroom came and they'd only cleansed themselves externally. Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, external and internal. That's the only way to dwell with the consuming fire and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This is what we have taught in the church for 40 years. In a sense, it's just a repetition of what we have proclaimed every year, almost everything I said today. But for the benefit of those who have come newly and have grown up in our midst, there's a need to hear once again, this is what CFC stands for.

We want to dwell with God as a consuming fire in our midst all the time. Let us pray. I want you to think about any particular area that God spoke to you today.

Don't let the devil take it away from your mind until you've done it, until you've settled that matter, that apology that you have to make to somebody, do it today. That person you have to forgive, do it today. That financial matter that you had to set right, do it at the earliest opportunity.

That may take a little time, but do it. Start on it and say, Lord, I want to be right before you. I don't want anyone to point a finger at me, accusing me of something.

Heavenly Father, please give us grace to honor you in everything we do and give us light. We want to dwell with you, Lord, every single day of our life. We want to walk with continual burning, you as a consuming fire.

We want to love it because it's only gonna get rid of sin from our lives and nothing else. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ja3DRm7yHRc.mp4>

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