

Loving Christ Supremely

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship, maturity in Christ, and the heart of a true shepherd, and encourages listeners to fall before Jesus and say, 'Lord, I desire nothing but you.'

Duration: 58:28

Scripture: Psalm 73:25, Matthew 10:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 7:47, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 1:15, Hebrews 3:13, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Christian Devotion", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of developing a deep and pure devotion to Jesus Christ, focusing on the need to love Him fervently and to understand the depth of His forgiveness towards us. It challenges listeners to prioritize worshiping God above all else, to seek a genuine relationship with Him, and to be aware of both conscious and unconscious sins in their lives. The message encourages a humble and repentant heart, acknowledging the need for God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and grow spiritually.

Transcript

every day of your life, can you say these words in Psalm 73 verse 25? It's a verse that I started my Christian life with 55 years ago and the Lord said, this is the way you must live and I've tried to live according to it. Psalm 73, 25. 25.

Speaking to the Lord Jesus, as we do today, whom have I in heaven but thee? Besides thee, I desire nothing on earth. If you can say that you're a worshiper and if you can mean it, that means you're saying to Jesus, Lord, from the depth of my heart, I can say to you, I'm not saying this before men, I desire no one on earth but you. If I have you, that's enough.

And I desire nothing on earth but you. That means I don't desire a house or property or money or health or wealth or anything. If I have you, that's enough.

I'll tell you honestly, don't say that too quickly. Think about it. If you say it, you've found the secret of worship.

Most Christians never worship. They sing, they give praise, they thank God. A lot of our singing is praise and thanks.

That's not worship. Worship is here. When you fall before Jesus and say to him, every day of your life, Lord, I desire nothing but you.

Why do I say, why should we say everything every day of our life? Because it's so easy to say that one day, particularly when we are young and we're not married and we are very dedicated and wholehearted and then other things come along. We get married and we have children and we have accumulated a little wealth and then we need to say that again. Because it's very easy to lay your Isaac on the altar and a few years later take him back.

What is it that the Lord was testing in Abraham? Am I really more to you than the most precious thing on earth? And I believe the reason why many Christians do not progress in their Christian life is because they cannot say this. You don't become spiritual by knowing more of the Bible. It's good to know the Bible.

But you become spiritual when you're a worshiper. We must be worshippers more than anything else. That is the greatest thing of all.

The first book of the Bible written was the book of Job and what we see there is a man who worshiped God. Job chapter one is a very important chapter. It's the first chapter that God wrote in the Bible long before Genesis.

Job lived 500 years before Moses who wrote Genesis. And in the first chapter of the Bible you read of a worshiper, not a preacher. You read about preachers later on in the book and they were, God said, I don't, I hate those preachers.

But the contrast you see in Job is between three preachers or four preachers and a worshiper. Job was a worshiper. He wasn't just quoting scriptures to others.

He was one who, when he lost everything, he, it says, he bowed down and worshipped God and said, I came into this world with nothing, naked. I didn't even have a stitch of clothing when I came to this earth. Everything I had on this earth, God gave me.

And he has every right to take it all away. And he has taken it away. All the wealth I accumulated, all my children, I worship God.

That is the first message that God wanted man to hear. That's why he wrote that in the very first chapter of the very first book of the Bible that God wrote. That's important to understand that.

And that's the type of person about whom God could boast to Satan. Remember this, my dear brothers and sisters, whatever this church may think of you counts for zero. The opinion of this church about you is fit for the trash can, throw it there.

But what the devil thinks about you is more important than what everybody in this church thinks about you. And of course, what God thinks about you is most important. But remember this, that the devil's opinion about you is much more valuable than the opinion of men.

Because most people don't know anything about your private life or a lot of details of the way you live at home, how you talk to your wife. Your devil hears it all the time. So don't be fooled by people thinking you're very spiritual.

Throw that in the trash can and ask yourself, what does the devil think about you who sees you all the time? What did the devil think about Job? God could boast about Job to the devil and say, have you seen that man? He's not like those preachers, Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar and not even like Eli, who's a little better than them. Job, there's not a man like him on the face of the earth. That is the challenge that comes to us from the very first chapter of the very first book of the Bible.

And that can be our testimony too. If we can say this every day of our life, Lord, I really desire nothing on earth for you more than you. When I get up in the morning, I seek to worship God all alone.

I don't even have to open my mouth. Worship is something from the heart. And all you have to sincerely say to God as you begin every day is, Lord, this day, I desire nothing but you.

I'll tell you what will happen in your life. You'll be 100% freed from murmuring and complaining. Do you know why you murmur and complain at home or a place of work or when the traffic is heavy? It's because we desire something other than Jesus.

You want a comfortable life. You want less traffic on the road. You want the food to be up to the mark or something else.

You don't want to be irritated at home. That means you are more important in your life than Jesus Christ. If a man says to Jesus, I desire nothing but you, I don't desire a comfortable life at home.

I don't desire that I should be free from all tension and free from sickness or free. Everything must go smoothly according to my way. A lot of Christians are like that.

They imagine that they love Jesus Christ. I tell you they don't. And because they're keeping on increasing in Bible knowledge and in a church like this, you can increase in Bible knowledge by leaps and bounds and fool yourself that you're spiritual when you're not.

Permit me to speak to you lovingly as a father would to his children. Make this the goal of your life, my brothers and sisters. This is what Jesus came for.

He didn't come to produce a bunch of people who sing well or increase in knowledge. He came because he loved us and he wanted a people who will love him supremely. Once he told his disciples, if you love even your father or mother or wife or children more than me, you're not worthy of me.

That's what he said in Matthew 10. Do you know that? If you love your job or your money more than Jesus, Jesus says you're not even worthy of me. Imagine hearing Jesus say to me, you're not worthy of me.

Oh Lord, why is everybody in the church thinking so highly of me? If you turn around and say to me that I'm not worthy of you, does the praise of men mean more to you than the approval of God? Dear brothers and sisters, live before God's face. I urge you. It's very easy to slip back from that.

Maybe we turned wholeheartedly to God in the day when we were converted and sinners, but things have gone well with many of us in the last few years. Maybe you're prospered in your business and you're part of a good church now. You're not part of a dead backslidden type of church.

All these things can go to our head. And we can be, I believe that's one of the great dangers of people pursuing holiness, that we can begin to think, wow, like the Pharisee, Lord, I thank you. I'm not like other

men.

I thank you that I'm not like other churches. We're not like other churches. We're special.

We're different. We hear the truth. We preach the truth.

We're not ashamed. We're not after money. We're after God and all this type of stuff.

I thank you, Lord, that I'm not like other men. That's exactly what the devil wants you to think. You can never think like that if Jesus is the passion of your heart.

If you say to him, Lord, I desire nothing on earth but you. Even ministry is not important for me. I say that I've been 50 years in the ministry, I say to the Lord regularly, Lord, my ministry is not my God.

You can take it away. My health is not my God. Money is not my God.

I'm prepared to live very simply all the rest of my life. Jesus is everything to me. Those are the people who will live the most useful life for God on earth, even if they're not great Bible teachers or evangelists or church leaders or anything.

Many who are lost on earth will be first in that day because the Lord is looking for those for whom he is most precious. Those of you who are married husbands, let me ask you, what do you desire from your wife? Do you desire someone who cooks well or who keeps house well? You ask yourself as a husband, what do you desire most of all if you're a good husband? If you're one of these useless worldly husbands, you'd want someone who cooks well and washes your clothes, keeps the house. But if you're a really Christian husband, what do you want from your wife most of all? It doesn't matter one bit.

If she doesn't know how to cook or keep house, if she loves you with all her heart, that's what you want. But that's exactly what Jesus wants too. It's not your service.

It's not attendance in church. It's that you, that he is more precious to you than anything else on earth. That's the secret of a good marriage.

And that's the secret of a good relationship with Christ. And that's a way to spiritual growth. And the reason we read the Bible is because it's only through the Bible that I get to see more and more of my bridegroom.

I feel sorry for people who don't read the Bible regularly and study it because I don't believe they'll get to know Jesus. How can you know Jesus without, which book in the world tells me about Jesus? No book except the Bible. And if you're really passionate about knowing Jesus, you got to read the Bible.

That's what happened to me. I, when I was converted and that God gave me that verse right at the beginning, 55 years ago, I became passionate to read the scriptures and to study it because I see here's where it tells me about my bridegroom. I want to know all about him.

And I see something happening in America nowadays. In churches that I preach, I find a lot of people don't even bring a Bible. I don't believe that was true in America 60, 70 years ago, but we become lazy.

They don't even bring a Bible to a meeting. Can you imagine children going to school without bringing their school books? This is a tragedy. I remember in our church, we had the option of projecting every verse on

the screen, scripture, so that whenever a verse is quoted and projected on the screen, I said, I'll never allow that in my church.

It'll make people lazy. They won't bring their Bibles and the end result will be they'll never know their Bibles. People who don't bring a Bible, I can tell you in Jesus name, you don't know the Bible.

You will never know it. There's something about even people on the street, seeing a man taking a Bible and going to a meeting. It's a witness for Christ in a godless world.

In our church back home in Bangalore, whenever I quote a scripture, I see everybody's head is down. Everyone, because they got a Bible. When I preach in most churches in America, they're looking up and staring and I guarantee they don't even know what the verse says.

They're not interested. It's because they don't love Jesus. You cannot be like that if you love Jesus Christ.

My desire, my brothers and sisters, is not to instruct you. It's to lead you to love my Savior. To lead you to know him and love him because this is what the devil is leading people astray from.

We got to see that. In 2nd Corinthians, you know Paul was writing, let me begin with 1 Corinthians. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, he says, Brethren, I determined, verse 2, to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now there are many people who quote that verse and say, that's all I'm going to preach. Jesus Christ and him crucified. But you know that was spoken to people who were babies.

That's milk. He says in chapter 3, verse 2, I gave you milk to drink. That's milk.

That's for a baby. Jesus Christ died for your sins. Did you sin? Just confess it.

The blood of Jesus will cleanse you. That's baby food. So to boast and say, oh I'm a preacher.

I only preach Christ and him crucified. Well then you must be preaching to babies all the time. Your church must be full of babies.

See what he goes on to say. I determined not to know anything but Christ and him crucified. So that your faith should not rest in the wisdom.

And yet, 1 Corinthians 2, 6, yet we do speak more than that wisdom among those who are mature. But you guys are not mature. Because you're not mature, I can only tell you Christ died for your sins and your sins can be forgiven.

Don't worry. God loves you. No matter how much you sin, he'll forgive you.

The blood of Jesus is always there. That's because you're babies. But among those who are mature, I can speak wisdom.

It's like you tell a kindergarten class, listen children, let's learn to say CAT is cat and DAT is bat. And let's learn 2 plus 2 is 4. How long are you going to sit learning that? It's like a kindergarten teacher saying, I'm determined not to know anything among you except, you know, reading simple words and adding a couple of digits together. But among those who are a little mature, those who want to press on in their education, then we can teach them something more.

We can teach them physics and geography and history and calculus and mathematics and so many things which you babies are not interested in. That's what Paul is saying. Among those who are mature, we can speak wisdom.

Not the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of God which is like a mystery, a hidden wisdom which God predestined for our glory. I don't believe we can partake of the glory of God fully if we don't seek to press on to maturity. We must not be satisfied as babies.

And when we seek to press on to maturity, it says here, there are things which our human eye cannot see, verse 9, 1 Corinthians 2, 9, which our human ear cannot hear and which our mind cannot understand. But God, verse 10, reveals them through the Holy Spirit. That's why as a person who's wanting to press on to maturity, he's got a passion to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire.

He's got a passion that the Holy Spirit will fill his inner being so that he can show him those things which human eyes can never see. Things revealed by God through the Spirit. It's the very thoughts of God.

It says in verse 11, in the last part, the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. You know, it's an amazing thing that the Holy Spirit has come to reveal to me how God thinks. Like a wife, after she's lived with her husband a number of years, knows how he thinks.

I mean, the day she gets married, she may not know what his favorite food is or what he wants at home or different things of the way he, what he values. But after she's lived with him a few years, she knows so many things about his way of thinking and his way of living. And that's one of the wonderful things, that we come to know the thoughts of God if we are really walking with the Lord every day.

And the more we get to know the thoughts of God, we begin to behave like him. It's been a tremendous grief to me to see, a real grief to my heart, to see people who have heard some of these truths for so many years, still losing their temper at home, still murmuring and complaining. I say, what in the world have you been listening to in the church all these years? Just accumulating knowledge? Just trying to get a reputation before other believers? You're a hypocrite, I say.

You're a first-class hypocrite. Repent of your hypocrisy. I don't want your blood to be on my hands and that's why I say that.

Get to know the thoughts of God. Humble yourself. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't be satisfied that you're better than others. Press on. This is God's, the burden that, and later on in 2 Corinthians, he writes to the Corinthian church, 2 Corinthians chapter 11.

He says the reason, you know, Paul spoke very firmly to these Corinthians, why in chapter 4 he said, shall I come to you with a rod? Only a father would speak like that. Shall I come to you with a rod, he says. And he says in 2 Corinthians 11, 1, I wish you'd bear with me a little in my foolishness.

You know, they thought this guy speaks so strongly and chapter 10, verse 10, his letters are weighty and strong. He speaks so strong, this man, Paul, but his personal presence is very unimpressive. He speaks strong, but he's not a very impressive personality.

He says, okay, chapter 11, verse 1, you can bear a little, bear with me in my foolishness, whatever you may think of me. The reason I speak like that, he says, is I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy. You know, that's the heart of a true shepherd.

A true shepherd is not one bit bothered what his sheep think about him. He's bothered the sheep will get good pasture and be healthy, free from sickness and grow. And that's how Paul was.

I'm jealous for you, he says, with a godly jealousy, because I'm like a person who's preparing a bride for Jesus Christ. A bride for Jesus Christ that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. The Lord is looking for a pure virgin and a true shepherd will long to make the church he's responsible for to present it as a pure virgin to Christ one day.

I believe all of us should have that heart. I mean, if you're parents, you need to have such a heart for your children. And you've got to start very early when they're one year old, start preparing them to be a pure virgin for Jesus Christ one day.

If you work on it from the time they're one, you will achieve it. The Bible says, train up a child when he's young, when he's old, he will not depart from it. And you determine that in your heart, more than anything else, you're going to prepare your children to be a pure virgin for Jesus Christ, protected from the influence of the world, living in the midst of the world, but not out of the world.

You're not making your children monks and nuns who have no contact with the world. They live in the midst of the world, but they're unaffected by it. Think of Moses' mother, who trained her son just for a few years so well that when he grew up in the midst of Pharaoh's palace, the most wicked place on the face of the earth, he came out pure.

At the end of that time saying, I don't want the wealth of the world. I don't want the honor of Egypt. I want the reproach of Christ.

I want to be with God's people. I mean, if an Old Testament mother like Jochebed, the mother of Moses could do that, why can't we do it today with the power of the Holy Spirit? Why can't we train up our children so that when they grow up, they're going to refuse the wealth of the world and refuse the honor of men and refuse the pleasures of sin and decide to live for Jesus Christ. Every one of them.

If you have 10 children, all 10. That must be the passion of our heart, a godly jealousy, because we believe this is the most important thing in life. Yes, we must train our children to have some earthly profession, important, very important.

I believe that, that I must train all my children to earn their own living because I didn't want them to become a parasite on the church or a parasite on society or beggars and tramps and homeless. No, we don't want our children to be like that. But that's not the main thing.

The main thing is that they must have a passionate love for Jesus Christ. And the same with, we have a responsibility for one another. Don't say, that's the responsibility of the elders.

We got some elders in the church. They'll do that. Don't say like Ken, am I my brother's keeper? You are your brother's keeper.

Don't say, am I my sister's keeper? You are your sister's keeper. If you're older than other sisters here, you have a responsibility for them. If you're older than other brothers here, you have responsibility for them.

It's like in a home, you know. It's not dad and mom who takes care of everything. Think of a home with 10 or 12 children.

Don't you see the older children taking responsibility? The older boys and girls doing things around so that, I mean, dad and mom have very little to do when the older children take responsibility. Think of a church like that where the elders can sit back because there are others who have grown up to maturity and who are taking responsibility to encourage and shepherd and maybe call up the other brothers and find out how they are. That's what it means to be a brother's keeper, to be a sister's keeper.

Not just to see if they're sick but, you know, to fellowship with them once in a while to see how they're going spiritually. That's a responsibility we have. I remember once in my own church in a bit of a humorous way and I said, a lot of you like to be elders, right? Okay, I'm hereby appointing all of you as elders to everybody younger than you right now.

Now, take responsibility for them and shepherd them, bless them, encourage them, find out how they're growing spiritually. There, you're elders now. What more do you want? What does it mean? You want a title? You want to stand up in front? Oh no.

Be mature. Let's take responsibility just like what would you think of a home with our 10 or 12 children. Here's the 20-year-old boy sitting lazily around and the 19-year-old girl just lazing around and making mom and dad work hard in the kitchen and mow the grass and do everything in the house and the children all lazing around.

What type of home would that be? But I tell you, many churches are like that where they leave the elders to do everything and they take no responsibility. Now, that's okay if you were born again yesterday and I say if you're born again within the last two years permitted. But if you've been a believer for more than two years, it's about time you began to help the little babies and the ones younger than you and not just sit back lazily and think only of yourself and have your whole life centered around yourself.

Where am I growing spiritually? Everything's okay with my family? No, it's not the way. That's the part life of a baby. A mature person always thinks, how can I help somebody else? How can I bless somebody? I don't want any title or position in the church, but I want to be mature and I want to have a godly jealousy that that person should be a pure virgin for Christ.

And he says, I'm afraid, 2 Corinthians 11:3, that like the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness. If any of you are, I mean, it's good to be smart and clever. That's okay.

But if any of you are proud that you're smart and clever, I tell you, you're no match for the devil. He's smarter than you, he's cleverer than you, he's craftier than you, and he'll make a complete fool of you if you're proud of your smartness and your cleverness. The only person whom the devil cannot tackle is a person who is humble.

He's scared of humble people. The only person the devil is afraid of is a humble man or a humble woman. He can tackle all the other Christians.

He can tackle the people who are proud of their knowledge and their ability and their spirituality and every one of them. He's scared of the humble. He was scared of Jesus because Jesus was the humblest man that walked on this earth.

He was scared of him. He was scared of Moses in the Old Testament because Moses was a humble man. It's true.

So, if you really want to overcome the devil, pursue humility. He'll run away from you. He's scared of people like that.

You, such a man, resist the, you know that verse, 2 Corinthians 4, sorry, James 4, 7. A lot of people know only the second part of that verse. Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. You know what the first part of that verse is? Submit yourself to God.

Humble yourself before God. Then resist the devil. He'll flee from you because God gives grace to the humble.

Now, turn back there. Turn to that verse for a moment. James chapter 4. It's important to know these great verses.

James 4, it first says in verse 6, God gives grace to the humble. That's the introduction. James 4, 6, the last part.

God gives greater grace and that grace, verse 6, is given to the humble. And since God's greater grace is given to the humble, you guys should humble yourselves. Submit to God, verse 7, and then resist the devil and the devil will flee from you.

The devil does not flee from most believers. I'll tell you that. He does not flee from most believers homes.

The devil is ruling in many homes. He rules over many husbands in homes. We need to be reminded of that.

I remember once preaching in a conference back in India that when you get angry, you know the devil's sitting on top of your head. And I remember one sister telling me that once she lost her temper at home and her little seven-year-old girl said to her, Mommy, you remember what Brother Zach said that when you lose your temper, the devil's sitting on top of your head? And she said, that really spoke to me. My seven-year-old daughter told me that.

She heard what you said in the meeting. Yeah, resist the devil and he'll flee from you. But otherwise, if you're not humble and you're not seeking to go down and humble yourself, you're not getting grace.

And one mark of not getting grace is you're not able to overcome sin. Because it says, sin shall not rule over you, Romans 6, 14, when you're under grace. That's the clearest proof of a man receiving grace from God that sin cannot rule over him.

When sin rules over me, I have to fall before God and say, Lord, I have not got grace from you. And I have not got grace from you because whatever other people may think of me, you see that I'm not a humble man or a humble woman. Forgive me.

I don't want to fool myself and live on this earth. I want to take my Christian life more seriously. Dear brothers and sisters, please take the word of the Lord today.

Forget the past. Acts 17, 30, God overlooks your times of ignorance, but he commands everyone to repent today and take it seriously. Resist the devil.

It's not God's will that we should be running away from the devil. I'll tell you what God's will for us is, that the devil should be running away from us. That's from James 4, 7. But that's only before humble people.

Take James 4, 6, and 7 seriously and go before God and meditate on it and say, Lord, why isn't the devil running away from me? Why isn't the devil running away from my home? Why isn't the devil running away? Why isn't he scared when he sees that I'm coming somewhere? It should be like that. That's because the devil says, Jesus, I know, and Paul, I know, and so and so I know, and so and so I know, but who are you? I know all about your life. I know all your pride.

You're trying to resist me. What a shame. It shouldn't be like that.

So Paul says in second, back to 2nd Corinthians 11, verse 3, he says, I'm afraid, lest like the serpent, the devil, deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ. That's why I started the message with Psalm 73, 25. I'm afraid that the devil who deceived Eve by his craftiness, who told Eve, ah, it's not serious.

A small sin is not serious. You think God's worried about you're eating a little fruit from this tree? Surely. Don't you know God is a God of love? Don't you know that he overlooks mistakes? It's okay.

It's not a sin. It's not a serious thing. And look how good it is.

And just once, it won't matter once, deceived, deceived her. And, you know, I, for many years, I used to think, okay, the tree of knowledge of good and evil I can understand. That means to know what is good and what is evil.

In other words, a life where I know what is good and evil, I don't have to consult God about it. Then that's what the devil was trying to get Eve to partake of. You know, if you get this knowledge of good and evil in you, you won't have to keep going, referring to God every time.

Shall I do this? Shall I not do this? Shall I do this? Shall I not do this? You won't have to. You'll be a little more independent of God. You won't be an evil person.

Look at all, I mean, look around in the world of the atheists and non-Christians. There are a lot of very decent people in the world. I've known atheists who won't tell lies, won't cheat, are faithful to their wives, don't murder anybody, who more or less keep the Ten Commandments, don't worship idols.

You know, they're good people. They have a knowledge of good and evil. But their knowledge is, they don't need God.

They've got the knowledge resident within themselves. They say, why do I need God? I'm not like these murderers and thieves and adulterers. I'm living an upright life.

That's exactly what Adam got and Eve got when they partook of that tree. And that's what the devil wants, because that doesn't look like evil, right? You look at these, these lot of decent people and say, what's

wrong with them? And a lot of Christians even say, well, they'll go to heaven, right? What happened to Adam and Eve when they got the knowledge of good and evil? They were turned out of God's kingdom. That's what the devil wanted.

We need to understand this. And then I used to think, what is the tree of life now? I never understood it fully till I read this verse, 2 Corinthians 11. The devil led Eve astray from the tree of life.

What was the tree of life? Simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ, to God, to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. The verse that we can quote very glibly but what does it mean? It means to say to Jesus and today for us, this is the tree of life. To me, this is the tree of life.

The devil led Eve astray, we can say from the tree of life. And that tree of life is defined here as devotion to Jesus Christ, simple, pure devotion to Christ. It is to turn to Jesus and say, Lord, I desire nothing on this earth but you.

And when I get to heaven, I desire no one but you. I'm not looking for the golden streets, or the pearly gates, or mansions. What will I do with a 10-bedroom mansion in heaven? Is that what you're looking forward to? You know, we sing in that song, I'm satisfied with a little cottage below but I've got a mansion over the hilltop.

Is that what you're looking forward to? I tell you honestly, I'm not interested in a 10-bedroom mansion in heaven. You can have it if you want, even if God gives it to me. That's not what I'm interested in.

What are you looking for? Crowns, going around with crowns in heaven? How many crowns? Four or five, one on top of each other? Is that what you're looking forward to? Or some others say, well, well, I'll be finished with all this sickness and the problems I have here. I'll tell you honestly, my relationship with Christ has come to this place where I say, Lord, I'm willing to be sick for all eternity if I can be with you. I desire nothing in heaven but you.

I don't even desire hell. I once said to the Lord, Lord, I'm ready to go to hell. If you're there, that'll be heaven for me.

I desire nothing in heaven but you. I don't know who this guy as SF was who wrote that, you know, Psalm 73. It wasn't David, but he must have known the Lord in an amazing way to write a verse like that.

I've tried to find a better verse than that that defines worship. I haven't been able to find it where I desire nothing on earth and nothing in heaven but Jesus Christ and God. That's all.

There's a beautiful hymn which you've probably sung here, God, my God, how wonderful thou art, thy majesty, how bright. It's a hymn of worship. And in the last verse of it, it says, Father of Jesus, love's reward, what rapture it'll be.

Prostrate before thy throne to lie and gaze and gaze on thee. People say, won't that be boring just to gaze upon God? Have you seen true lovers, how they keep looking at each other into each other's eyes? You ask them, isn't it boring constantly looking at your wife like that? Well, those are fed up with their wives, I suppose it is boring. Those are fed up with their husbands, it is boring, I suppose.

But when you really love Jesus, it's not going to be boring. I don't think so. I'm looking forward to the day when I see him face to face and I don't think I'll have eyes for anybody else.

Like we sing in that song, I want to see my savior first of all. When I get to heaven, I shall know him, I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hands. I shall know him.

So he says, the devil led Eve astray from that simple, pure devotion to Christ. That was Paul's prescription to the Corinthian Christians to mature. See, if you want to become mature, you better develop a simple, pure devotion to Christ.

Everything else will flow out from that. When you read scriptures, don't study the scripture to get knowledge. Don't study the scripture to preach sermons.

But look into the scriptures and let the Holy Spirit show you the beauty of Jesus there. God has given us his word to show us the beauty of Jesus Christ. And as you see the beauty of Jesus there, you'll be drawn to him, you'll love him.

We need a stimulus for our love, to be fervent in our devotion to Christ. And the first stimulus for that love for Christ is what's mentioned in 1 John 4 and verse 19. We love because he first loved us.

So 1 John 4 19, we love him because he first loved us. So if you don't love the Lord more, the reason must be that you haven't understood how much he loved you. We all know the verse, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Yeah, we'll all say Jesus loves us and all that and God loves us. But maybe you don't know how much he did, how much that love is. Perhaps we have not meditated enough on the cross.

We must go beyond the little baby knowledge of Jesus where you think of his suffering, his nails, and his whipping and weep because we think of that. And to go a deeper understanding of the cross where we see that that was not the worst part of his suffering. The worst part of his suffering was when for three hours on the cross the father forsook him for my sake.

That's the love we need to see, that he forsook him. And then for three hours on the cross, Jesus experienced the hell that I should experience for eternity. That's the worst part of the cross.

When I was a, Paul said when I was a child, I thought like a child. When I grew up, I put away childish things. So when I was a child, I understood Jesus, the physical suffering of it.

That's what really moved my heart to tears and all that. But I found something that even after I was moved to tears thinking about the, you know, Christ Jesus being crucified, I'd still go back and live the next week the same old way I lived before. Didn't make much of a difference in my life until I began to see that the cross was more than physical suffering.

It was, you see, the punishment for my sin is not physical suffering. The punishment for my sin is not physical death. And if that is all that Jesus went through on the cross, then he did not take my punishment.

The punishment for my sin is nothing less than eternal hell. And if Jesus did not take that on the cross, then he has not taken my punishment. But he did take it.

The horrors of an eternal hell were concentrated into three hours on the cross. And he said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That was an agony which we will never experience. And we'll never know even a little bit of what it meant till we get to heaven and see him face to face what, you know, the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

I was a Christian for nearly 16, 17 years before I began to see it. What it meant for Jesus to be on the cross. Now I want to distinguish this from what a lot of charismatics are preaching today that Jesus went to hell for three days after he died on the cross and then came back.

That's a lie. We know where Jesus went on the three days after he died on the cross. He told the thief very clearly, I'll be in paradise with you today.

He was in paradise as soon as he died with the thief on the cross. He didn't go to hell. The word Hades used in Acts chapter two and all is referring to the place of the dead, the grave, but he didn't go to hell, but he did experience hell.

It means being forsaken by God for three hours on the cross. And we know that the punishment is over by the end of the three hours because he said it's finished. And we know he was facing punishment during those three hours because he never called him father at that time.

He called him God. Do you know that in all eternity, the only time that Jesus called his father God was those three hours on the cross. He's always calling him father, father, father, father, father, father, except when he was taking my punishment.

He says, my God, my God, that relationship was now not father and son, but the judge of the universe, almighty God, the judge of the universe, the father punishing someone for my sin. Make it personal. And I say, Lord, I'll never understand what you went through.

What are you expecting me? The Lord says, the love of your heart. I don't want anything else. I say, Lord, I'll give it to you.

Nobody else will share it. My wife will always be second in my affections. It was like that when we got married.

It's like that today. No brother is ever going to be more important to me than Jesus Christ. No money, no property, nothing.

When I think of what he went through on the cross, we love him because he first loved us. And as soon as the three hours were over, once again, it was father. Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.

I don't know whether you noticed that switch from father to God for three hours, and then father again, the punishment is over. It's all there in scripture, but it's like it says it's hidden. And God reveals it to those who really want to see it.

Most people don't want to see it. They're quite happy to just go to heaven when they die. And they're quite happy to just go to church and have a good testimony.

They don't want to see more of Jesus. Let me encourage you, those who are really serious about your Christian life, read the scriptures to see more of Jesus Christ. That's the most important thing.

That's the way to grow spiritually. Eternal life is to know Jesus Christ, to know God and Jesus. That's the definition of eternal life.

And the more I get to know God and Jesus, the more I have of eternal life in my, and the more I have of eternal life, I'll tell you, it'll be very easy to overcome sin. It'll be very easy. The more you have of eternal

life, the reason why fighting with sin is such a struggle is because you don't have the power to overcome it.

You're just using the resources that ordinary people have, willpower, determination, New Year's decisions, and these things don't help. You need the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Communicating eternal life to us, and eternal life comes through knowing Jesus Christ, knowing God.

And if you come to the scriptures in order to know God, to know Jesus, you'll have eternal life that makes overcoming anger so much easier, overcoming dirty thoughts so much easier, to walk away from internet pornography easily, and to overcome bitterness against somebody. It'll be easy to forgive people, and it'll be easy to be free from the love of money, and the love of honor, and fellowship with Jesus will become precious. And that's what the devil led Eva stray from.

So that's the tree of life. Passionate devotion to Jesus, that's eternal life. And that's what the devil turned Eva away from, and that's what he's turning Christians away from, and that's why Paul had this tremendous burden.

I have a passion, he says, a godly jealousy that made him use strong words, not only to the Corinthians, even to the Galatians. He says, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you've turned away from Jesus. We don't hear such preachers today, and I'll tell you why.

Because we don't have preachers who passionately desire with that same godly jealousy, that their congregations should have a fervent devotion to Christ. You have people who tickle people's ears, and they don't want to offend anybody, don't want to hurt anybody. Paul wasn't like that.

He loved people too much. He loved people too much. That's why he's willing to hurt them.

It's like a doctor who loves a patient so much that he cuts open his stomach, no matter what the pain is, no matter how much he screams, he says, I'm going to get rid of, get that cancer out of your system. Paul told Timothy, be a preacher like that. We need to hear more of that.

The second thing that helps us to love Jesus more is the knowledge of how much he has already forgiven us. Luke chapter 7 and verse 47. The one who is forgiven little loves little.

The one who is forgiven much loves much. It's a law, Luke 7 47. The one who is forgiven little loves little.

You know, the Lord said there was a creditor who a certain moneylender had owned. He gave 500 denarii to one person and 50 to another. He forgave both of them.

Who will love him more? And the Pharisee said, definitely the one who was forgiven more. He said, that's right. And he says in that connection, the one who is forgiven more loves more.

I mean, if somebody forgave you a debt of 10 million dollars, and somebody forgave you a debt of two dollars, there's a bit of a difference there. Sure. And that's the picture here.

The one who's, he's forgiven me so much. The one who's forgiven more, Jesus said, will automatically love more. Now, let me ask you something.

Do you really believe you've been forgiven little? I mean, God kept me from so many sins in my life, but the closer I've come to God, I'm amazed at how much he forgave me. Because I see little, little things which I never even realized were sin before. And I can see how Paul, towards the end of his life, said, I am

the chief of sinners.

I mean, if he said I was once upon a time the chief of sinners, we can understand that. But how does he say at the age of 65, in 1 Timothy 1.15, I am the chief of all the sinners. That was not a grammatical mistake.

It's absolutely true. And I never understood it fully till the closer I've come to the Lord, I've come to see that there's a thing called unconscious sin. See, most of us are aware of conscious sin.

Bitterness, complaining, grumbling, murmuring. Anger, telling lies, lusting with our eyes, and cheating, and all that other stuff. That's 10% of sin.

There's another 90% within us called unconscious sin. You know, selfishness, and little bits of pride, and seeking our own, and a lot of things which we don't even take so seriously. And then, there are what we call the sins of omission.

The things that we did not do, which we don't even call a sin. When was the last time you confessed a sin of omission? I'm pretty sure that it was probably many years ago. Committing sin, we confess readily.

Oh, I'm sorry, I did that, I didn't do that. But when was the last time you confessed a sin saying, I didn't do that? You know the story of the Good Samaritan? There was this man beaten up on the road, and a priest, and a Levite went by. What was their sin? Did they kick him? Did they spit on him? No.

Their sin was, they did nothing. Can you commit a sin by doing nothing? That was exactly the sin of the priest and the Levite. They walked by that man, they did nothing.

That's what I mean by sins of omission. So when we get closer to God, we see a massive, huge list of sins of omission. For example, the Bible says, encourage one another daily.

One of the biggest sins of omission. Do you encourage your wife? Do you encourage your husband? I know you didn't slap him or slap her, that's okay. But did you encourage him? One is a sin of commission, the other is a sin of omission.

Perhaps you do ask forgiveness from God if you got upset and yelled at your husband or wife. But what if you didn't encourage her, encourage him? We don't even dream of that as a sin. But it is.

Encourage one another daily. Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 13. So I see that the closer we come to God, I'm not trying to put anybody on a guilt trip here.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm just saying that the closer we come to God, we see a whole lot of things which we who thought we were so spiritual, we suddenly discover we're not so spiritual as we thought we were. Because we've been comparing ourselves with others.

We're better than them. We're like the Pharisee. I thank God I'm not like that publican there or the people in those church there or some of these other half-hearted people who come to church.

I'm not like them. Lord, I thank you. I'm a little better till we come close to God.

We come closer to the Lord and say, oh Lord, I'm the chief of all the sinners. And then we realize how much we've been forgiven. We never compare ourselves with anybody else thereafter.

We say how much I have been forgiven. And what's the result of that? One who's forgiven more, loves more. So, let's just bow our heads before God.

By and by, when I look on his face, I wish I had given him more. By and by, when he holds out his hands, nail-pierced hands, I wish I had given him more. We don't want to regret in that day.

We want to respond today. And I want to invite you to respond to the Lord in your heart, to whatever he's spoken to you. Heavenly Father, we pray that your spirit will work freely in our hearts, in the areas where you have spoken to us, that we can be brought closer to you, know you better, partake more of your nature, and be those whom you can boast about to Satan as your worshippers on earth.

Make us all like that, Lord, we pray, Father in heaven. For you long for people who will worship in spirit and in truth, and we want to satisfy the longing of your heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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