

Peace and Tribulation

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of recognizing our identity in Christ to maintain peace amidst worldly tribulations.

Duration: 1:05:16

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Persecution", "Spiritual Strength"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm in faith and enduring persecution for the name of Jesus Christ. It highlights the need to follow the example of godly leaders like Paul, to be prepared for difficult times, and to prioritize righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The message encourages believers to be ready to face challenges, persecution, and hatred for the sake of Christ, knowing that God's strength and grace will sustain them.

Transcript

I want to turn this morning to John's Gospel and chapter 16. John's Gospel chapter 16 and the last verse, verse 33. This is the end of three chapters 14, 15 and 16, where Jesus was giving his last message to the disciples at the Last Supper.

After he had washed their feet in John 13, Judas Iscariot had gone away to plan the betrayal of Jesus. Then to the remaining 11 apostles, Jesus spoke these words. I want you to see verse 33 as the last words that Jesus spoke before he went to Gethsemane on the cross.

He never really gave any exhortation to the disciples after this. John 17 is a prayer that he prays to the Father. That was entirely directed to the Father, not to the disciples.

So after John 16, 33, the next thing that happens is John 18, verse 1. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden. There Judas, who was betraying him, came, we read, and betrayed him. That was the end.

So just like before a man dies, if he has the last few words to say to his children, we would listen very carefully. Take these as the last words that Jesus spoke before he went to the cross. He wanted to encourage his disciples, and he does not encourage them the way we encourage people saying, I'll make you prosperous, I'll make you healthy, you'll have no problems in life.

Quite the opposite. He says, you'll have a lot of problems. See, God's way of thinking is so different from our human way of thinking, and if we don't allow our mind to be renewed to God's way, I tell you, whether you know it or not, you will move towards the health wealth gospel preached by Babylon, without a doubt, and the great danger that all of us face, because that is the gospel that is more attractive to the flesh.

The gospel that Jesus proclaimed and the apostles proclaimed is not attractive to the flesh. So read it like that. These things I have spoken to you, so that in me, you will have peace.

But you're still in the world, so you'll have tribulation. But take courage. I have overcome the world, and therefore, you can overcome the world too.

There's a little expression there in the middle of, in the beginning, the first sentence, in me, you can have peace. This phrase, in Christ, is something that comes very often in Ephesians. Now most of us, in our Christian life, we think of the other truth, that Christ is in us.

That is also true. You read about that in Colossians. Christ in you, the hope of glory, and we say we receive Christ, and Christ is living in me.

You ask me how I know he lives. He lives within my heart. And most of the time, Christians think of Christ in them, which is a good thing, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world, so we can overcome.

But this other aspect, which is also true, that we are in Christ, very often, we don't think about that so much, because that is actually what gives us boldness when we come before God. Not that Christ is in me, which is true, but that when I stand before God, I am in Christ. Christ's righteousness clothes me to come in the name of Jesus, in prayer, is not primarily thinking of Christ in me, it's thinking of me in Christ.

In Christ, I come to the Lord in prayer. And when it says, in me, you will have peace, I see there that the reason why peace goes away from Christians is because they don't recognize their place in Christ. If I really labor and strive to understand, as the Holy Spirit explains, what it means that I am in Christ, one proof of it will be that I will always be at peace in my heart.

There may be tribulation in the world around, but in my heart, I will be at rest. All the time, no matter what happens, no matter what goes wrong around me in the world, no matter if I lose my house, or lose my job, or like Job, lose my children, or whatever it is, in Christ, I will have peace. So for myself, I've taken it like this, that the moment I've lost my peace and lost my rest, at that moment, I have not recognized my position in Christ.

I am in Christ, but I don't recognize it. It's like having a million rupees in the bank, but I don't know it, and so I'm in a panic. It's there, I don't know it.

So I'm in a panic, saying, hey, I'm gonna starve. So when I lose this recognition, that is when I lose my peace. If you recognize your position in Christ, you can never lose your peace.

You can never be in unrest, no matter if the whole world is against you. No matter if everything goes wrong in the world around you, in your office, in your place of work, with your relatives, no matter what happens, like the Psalmist says, when the mountains collapse and fall into the sea, well, it won't disturb us. They could only say, because God is with us, the God of Jacob is with us.

My God is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, like a lot of Christians pray even today. I've heard some ignorant Christians say, oh God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, show me one place in the epistles where any apostle prays like that. They were Jews, but they never prayed like that.

It's amazing how much the old covenant has penetrated Christians, and they never think of the new covenant, the God of this world, the devil has blinded their eyes. My God is the God of my Savior, Jesus Christ. Ephesians says, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You never read about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the epistles. I'm just telling you some things to show you how blind Christians are to the new covenant. And you know, sometimes people say, oh brother Zach, I never saw it till you showed it to me.

I say, that's because you don't read the New Testament carefully. You're careless, you're brainwashed by people, you listen to preachers more than you listen to the Bible. Dear brothers, and that's why we miss out on the level of Christian life that every one of us can live.

That's my burden. I'm burdened that so many people in CFC, some of you sitting, many of you sitting here, are not living at the level of the Christian life you can live. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, right through our life.

I never lived like that myself for so many years, because I was ignorant. I didn't have a spiritual father to explain to me the new covenant is like this. I had to discover it myself.

Please, please think of what you're missing. Life is slipping by, another year has gone by. Are you going to live one more year with this up-and-down type of experience, just with all the information about the new covenant in your head, but not in your daily life? I hope it won't be so in 2015.

Think of these last words of Jesus before he went to the cross, in me you will have peace. I say, Lord, I'm gonna live there every single day of this year, for the rest of my life. I'm not gonna let anything bring unrest into my heart.

I don't care what it is. It doesn't matter how people behave around you. It's got nothing to do with that.

In the world you'll have not only people disturbing you, as Jesus said, in the world you'll have tribulation. Tribulation is the strongest word you can use. Now we get disturbed when somebody says something bad about us.

That's not tribulation, that's a mosquito bite. Look at the little things that have disturbed you in the past year, 2014. Look back and say what are the things that disturbed you in this last year, that took away your peace and unrest, what your relatives said or what they did not say.

I tell you some believers are such slaves to their relatives. Amazing. That's why Jesus said you can never be my disciple, till you hate your father and your mother and your brothers and your sisters and your wife and your children.

You don't do that, you're not a disciple. Well, no wonder you have problems. Those who are not disciples of Jesus will have tremendous problems.

I decided long ago that I will never allow anything that my relatives say or don't say or do or don't do to disturb me. I'm in Christ. Take that position at least this year and don't keep complaining, so-and-so didn't

do this, so-and-so did that.

When are you going to finish with that? Are you a member of CFC that preaches the new covenant? Or are you a member of some dead church that's going the route of Babylon? Think about it. In the Old Testament they could never say I'm in Christ. One of the great chapters in the Old Testament a lot of people love to read is Psalm 91.

I read it, it's good. But when I read it, I say to myself, this is how old covenant people lived. I can have that and I can have more.

So I'm not saying you shouldn't read the Old Testament promises. But when you read the Old Testament promises, say I can have that and I can have more because I'm in Christ. Because Psalm 91 is not written for people who are in Christ.

Psalm 91 is for people who dwell in the shelter of the Most High. That means they're not in the Most High. The Most High is sort of sheltering them.

It's like a father saying, okay I'll look after you. And then the shadow of the Almighty. The Almighty is here and they are in their shadow.

I'm not in the shadow. I'm in the Almighty. You see the difference? Have you ever noticed that when you read Psalm 91, you thought Psalm 91 is so great.

I'm in the shadow of the Almighty. It's like these people who say, I come to the foot of the cross. I never want to be at the foot of the cross.

At the foot of the cross are the Pharisees. You want to be there? I don't want to be there. I say I want to be on the cross.

Not at the cross, but on the cross. On the cross I'm victorious. At the foot of the cross you'll be defeated all your life.

You can live in the shadow of the Almighty. And you can sin like Old Testament people. I'm just showing you scripture.

It's good. That's all they could have. Jesus said now you're going to be in me.

On the day of Pentecost something happened that brought me into Christ. Christ into me. I never think of myself now apart from that.

So I want to encourage you to think of this my brothers and sisters. That in Christ you can have joy. In Christ you can have victory.

Let me show you this verse also in Ephesians in chapter 1. Ephesians 1 and verse 3. Ephesians 1 verse 3. This is new covenant. Not the God and Father. Not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We finished with all that. Remember it's Paul writing this. For years, for 30 years Paul called God the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But you know sometimes we develop a habit that we can't get rid of. Like people who are brought up in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. Even years after they are born again when they finish their

prayer they do the sign of the cross.

I'm not against it. Jesus never taught me to do it. What I'm saying is a habit of praying never goes away from us.

And Paul had a habit of praying God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for 30 years. But he got rid of it when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. And he said blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Never for 30 years he thought of God as Jehovah. We still sing some songs Jehovah. A lot of Christians do and they don't even see the inconsistency of it.

Paul called him father. Jesus said when you pray, when you sing, call him father. I call him father.

That's why my life is secure. You won't be secure knowing Jehovah. You'll be secure when you know that Jehovah is your father.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us. In the previous verse he says grace to you from God and peace from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this God has blessed us.

Now read carefully, very very carefully, with every spiritual blessing. That means every blessing of the Holy Spirit which is love, joy, peace. Love, joy, peace, every blessing of the Holy Spirit is mine.

Where? In Christ. There's that expression again. In the heavenly places in Christ.

That means because Jesus is in heaven, God has placed me in my spirit. In Christ in heaven even though I live on this earth. This is an amazing truth and that's why the atmosphere of heaven can be found in my spirit even though my body is suffering in the world.

The Christian lives in his spirit in heaven and his body on this earth. This is the true Christian life. That there can be turmoil and storms around him all the time but in his spirit he is in Christ and Christ is in the heavenly places.

Christ in me is good. It's a truth. But I can still think hey I'm here on this earth and Christ is in me.

But when I think that I am in Christ, where is he? He's not on earth. He's at the right hand of the Father and when I am in Christ I'm accepted by God. And when I came, when it says pray in the name of Jesus, this is what it means.

That I pray recognizing my position in Christ. I mean these are truths that we should have known the day we were born again. I wish I had known these truths the day I was born again.

That would have made my life so wonderful right from that day but it took me many many years to discover it. You know the Bible says if you seek me with all your heart you will find me. I wanted to see God with all my heart and I discovered so many things that other Christians could not teach me.

I want to tell you you don't have to learn it from me. You seek God with all your heart you'll find it yourself. But be diligent to read the scriptures because it's only here.

It's the only book God's given us in the world where we can know his truth. So this is something very important. Turn back to John 16.

The last words that Jesus spoke. The last word Jesus spoke before he went to the cross. In me you will have peace.

And that's why I've spoken these words to you. I have spoken these words to you so that in me you may have peace. And that's why I read the words of Jesus.

That's why I study the words of Jesus in the Gospels. And then more than what Jesus said. If you turn to John 16.

He also said in verse 12. This is important to know this. John 16 12.

I have many more things to say to you. Remember he's coming to the end of what he's saying to the disciples. He already spoken to them.

John 14, John 15 and John 16. Towards the end he says actually there are many many more things I want to say to you. For example concerning building the body of Christ.

Concerning the meaning of grace. The difference between mercy and grace. Concerning how the church is built on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets.

Concerning the different gifts with which the body of Christ will be built. Etc. Etc.

Many many things. Jesus never spoke in the Gospels at all. But when the Holy Spirit the truth has come.

He will guide you. He's telling his apostles. He will guide you into all the truth.

And that time you'll hear from the Holy Spirit what I cannot say to you now. Because you can't understand it now. And after the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came on these apostles and Paul and others and said what Jesus wanted to say.

So when I read Paul's epistles. I say hey this is Jesus speaking. Have you ever thought of it like that? This is what Jesus wanted to tell his disciples when he was on earth.

But he told them I can't say it to you now. Because you guys won't understand it. It's like trying to teach geometry to a kindergarten student.

And you have to say geometry is a great subject. But I'm sorry you can't understand geometry yet. You have to be content with ABC and addition and things like that.

But there is a thing called geometry or algebra. You'll understand it a little later. When you grow up a little.

And that's what Jesus was saying to these apostles. A day will come when you will understand. And remember it's me speaking.

Only thing it'll be me Jesus saying. It's me speaking through Paul or Peter or John. So when I read the epistles.

You know there are some people who say no I don't read the epistles. I read only the Gospels. Well you've left out a lot of things that Jesus said then if you don't read the epistles.

Because John 16:12 says those are the things he wanted to tell them. For example he never told them about what explained to them. What it means to be in Christ.

And Christ in you the hope of glory. And many things about the defeat of Satan explaining how we can overcome resist the devil and he'll flee from you. All that Jesus didn't say there.

But he said it through James and Peter and John and Paul. So that's why I don't consider the epistles as not the words of Jesus. According to John 16:12 they are the words of Jesus.

Which he could not explain to them. But you know how there are many things that Jesus said about the birds and the flowers and all. People like to listen to that.

It's great. And then they come to things in the epistles and they say oh boy this is difficult to understand. That's like saying geometry is more difficult to understand than ABC and 1 2 3. I agree.

But do you want to stop in kindergarten? Why do you just read the elementary things about Christ and we're happy with that? We must move on to understand the deeper things that the Bible says. Just like you want your children to go on. You don't want your children to drop out of school and drop to second standard.

So well they've learned to read and write. They can add. That's enough.

None of you will say that. You'd be disappointed if your child dropped out at second standard or fourth standard or sixth standard. Can you see the disappointment God our Father has when some of his children drop out after understanding some elementary things in the Bible.

I'm going to heaven now. That's enough. He feels as disappointed as you would feel if your child said to you after second standard.

I know how to read and write. I know how to add. That's enough dad.

And you say okay fine son. I don't want anything more for you. None of you will say that.

You'd be disappointed if he said dad I'm not going to school. Can you imagine how disappointed he'd be. I want to say to all of you who don't read the Bible carefully.

God is disappointed with you just like you would be disappointed if your child dropped out of school in second standard. I'm sorry to say many of you have dropped out of school in second standard spiritually. Otherwise you'd have had many mature men and women of God here after all these years that they've attended ZFC.

Why is it not so? Are you going to be spoon fed spoon fed spoon fed forever? Or are you going to learn to feed yourself from Scripture? I don't mind speaking strongly because I'm seeking your good. I'm seeking to deliver you from this half-hearted shallow Christianity there is in the world today which is affecting many of us because we mingle with such people. Not all churches are the same my brothers and sisters.

No. There are churches that are accomplishing God's purpose on earth and there are others who accomplish only part of it. There are schools that close with second standard and there are other schools that go all the way to college and to PhD.

Not all schools are the same. There are churches where all you can study is up to second standard and there are churches that go much beyond that to college level. So don't forget that.

We have to be in Christ. We must understand that every blessing of the Holy Spirit can be mine if I take my place in heavenly places in Christ. Read that carefully again.

Ephesians 1.3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us with not one or two but every single blessing of the Holy Spirit. Do you want every single blessing of the Holy Spirit? Is that reserved only for some preachers like me or is it for every child of God? Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Is God your Father in Jesus Christ? Then God has blessed you already with every blessing of the Holy Spirit but where is it? It's not on earth. It's not a material blessing.

Two things you need to see there. First of all it's a spiritual blessing and secondly it's not an earthly blessing. It's in the heavenly places.

If you can understand these two things you'll be delivered from this Babylonian health, wealth, gospel which has only got to do with earthly things and material things. Not with spiritual blessings in heavenly places. What are the things people are interested in heaven right now? You think they're interested in money? You think they're interested even in healing? No.

They're interested in a lot of other things like love, joy, peace, worship, praise. Those are the things they're interested in and if I want the blessings of heaven which are a million times better than the blessings of earth I can have all of them in Christ and you say well then how will you take care of our earthly needs and our children? All those other things will be added to you. I'll tell you that.

He'll give you health. He'll give you enough for your material needs. I proved that for 55 years that God will give me enough health even if I'm 100 years old to do his will.

I don't know what his will is but if his will is for me to travel around the world preaching the gospel at the age of 100 I believe with all my heart he'll give me that health but that's not what I seek for. I seek for the blessing of the Holy Spirit in heavenly places and he'll give me enough money for my needs without my having to ask a single soul on earth for one cent and without my having to beg or hint or borrow from anybody. I cannot imagine Jesus going around borrowing money from people saying hey my father let me down can you please help me with some money I'll give it back to you in five or ten years.

Can you imagine Jesus saying that? I said well if Jesus wouldn't say it I'm not going to say it either. I'd rather starve than disgrace my heavenly father and a lot of Christians don't think like that. They're thinking it's exactly like the world okay.

My question is I'm not saying you're sinning. I'm saying why do you want to live at that low standard? You don't sin if you drop out of school in the second standard. That's not a sin.

You can't say if a child dropped out of second standard he sinned. No he didn't sin but don't you want him to go a little further? You can live at a low level in your Christian life and it's maybe not sin but don't you want to go a little further? Don't you want to get to know Jesus intimately personally? Like the bride knew the bridegroom in the song of Solomon. I want to know Jesus like that every day of my life.

Every single blessing of the Holy Spirit, every spiritual blessing can be is mine already. It doesn't say he's going to bless you. He's already blessed you.

He's put it to your account but I have to take it. But instead of taking that if I run after all the earthly blessings like Babylon in Christianity does you may get it. Look at all the worldly people of other religions.

They have pursued money and think of how much they've got. Many of the millionaires and billionaires in the world they would never have got all that money unless they pursued it. And you can pursue it and you can make a lot of money too.

There are people who do all types of things in order to improve their health. Go here there and do all types of things and okay fine you can also do that and improve your health. But if you seek the things of heaven first and the things of the Holy Spirit first these other things will be thrown in like a bonus.

And it's much better to get it that way than to pursue after them. And the reason is it says in verse 4 of Ephesians 1, because the Father in heaven chose us in Christ. Again that phrase in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Before Genesis 1 verse 1. That's another thing you got to believe. I believe it. You heard me make some daring statements because I believe scripture.

It's not pride. When you quote scripture you're not proud. That before Genesis 1 way back before the angels were created way back in eternity there was the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Zach Poonen in the Father's mind.

If you think that's arrogance it's not. It's because I believe Ephesians 1 verse 4 which you may not be believing. It's true for you as well.

According to your faith be it unto you. I believe with all my heart way back in eternity before he created the angels he the Father saw me in Christ way down in the 20th century and chose me. I'm a special favorite of God.

So are you. If you can believe scripture and pursue spiritual blessings in heavenly places your life will be so wonderful with earthly blessings just thrown in like a bonus. You don't even go running after.

You pursue after the things of God. My brothers and sisters this is the way every single person sitting here is supposed to live because you've heard these truths here. Not worried about those other people who never heard these truths but you heard them.

Don't miss out on this in 2015. A heart filled with love for Jesus Christ where there's no love for the things of the world. A heart filled with love for all believers even people in other denominations with whom I disagree but I can love them.

Not only them a heart that's filled with love for those who hate me. Those who call me bad names. Those who accuse me of being a false teacher and heretic.

I love them that I can bless them. Love those who are my enemies. Those who have taken me to court.

Those who hurt me. I can love them. That is a part of the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Can you love them? Can you say with all your heart you can love your mother-in-law? No problem. Can you mother-in-laws say you love your daughters-in-law? Why do I say that? Because the mother-in-law daughter-in-law problem is one of the biggest problems in the world in marriage. It's impossible without the

Holy Spirit but it's possible with the Holy Spirit.

Anything that Jesus commanded is possible in the power of the Holy Spirit because it says every single blessing of the Holy Spirit is mine but I want it in heavenly places in Christ and I say Lord just give me whatever you think I need on earth. Enough health to do your will. You know when it says give us this day our daily bread I connect it with the previous request.

Do you know what is the previous request in the Lord's Prayer? You remember it? You don't repeat the Lord's Prayer here like in the Anglican churches. If we did we'd know it by heart. Thy will be done on earth that is in my life as it is done in heaven and in order to do your will please give me this day my daily food.

You see the connection? I'm not asking God to give me daily food to make money no or to become a great man. I'm saying Lord I want to do your will on earth exactly as it is done in heaven. I can't do that unless I have some food to eat.

Please give me daily food. Why do you ask God for daily food? Why do you pray over your meal at breakfast lunch and dinner? I hope it is so that you can be strengthened to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven at least from today onwards. You have no excuse now now that you've heard the truth.

Like I always say it's a very dangerous thing to come to this church and listen to the word of God because your responsibility will increase like tremendously. If you have no interest in obeying God my advice is don't come to this church because your responsibility will increase to whom more is given more is required. But it's a good thing to go to a higher class.

Aren't you happy when your children get promoted to higher class? Aren't you happy when your children say I want to go to college dad? I want to do a master's degree dad. God's also happy when his children say Lord I want to go further. Think of the way you react to your children wanting to go further.

See that's how God is delighted when you say Lord I want to go further in the Christian life. I want to live this type of life that the apostles lived. This is the type of life that leads to a person to say I can rejoice always.

I can have a joy unspeakable and full of glory. I can have a peace that passes all human understanding and I can have a love like Jesus loved me. It's wonderful to live this life.

I want to go further in John 16. See once we come to this solid position in Christ it says in John 16 33 in the world you will have tribulation. That is also equally true.

Now if you try to think of that without coming to this position of being in Christ and having his peace then you'll be scared of the word tribulation. You'll be scared of it. You'll be scared of the word suffering.

Then okay don't go there. That means you're not ready to study geometry yet. Go back to the kindergarten and learn ABC.

That means go back to the kindergarten learn that you're in Christ and you can have peace. Then only go to the next section of having tribulation. You can't study geography and science and all before you've learned ABC properly.

So if you haven't learned that in me you have peace then words like tribulation and suffering will scare you. We don't want to hear all that. Let's always talk about peace and joy and love.

It's like saying let's always talk about ABC and CAT and BAT. You want to spend all your life just talking about that? Let's move on brother. As eager as you are for your children to go to college, God is eager for you to go to the higher levels of the Christian life and it says in Romans chapter 5. Here's a description of some of the higher levels of the Christian life.

Romans chapter 5 there are he says here how he exalts. First of all he says in verse 2 Romans 5 to we exalt in hope of the glory of God. That's great.

I'm going to heaven when I die. But he says I want to move on to college. We exalt in tribulation.

Wow. Have you ever met a Christian who says I rejoice I'm going to heaven and I rejoice in tribulations. Praise the Lord.

That's a serious Christian. But it's in the very next sentence and you see how blind Christians are. They don't see it.

They stop with verse 2 and say that's all. We don't want to go to verse 3. We have an introduction by faith verse 2 into the grace in which we stand and we exalt in hope of the glory of God. Full stop, full stop, full stop, full stop, full stop.

I'm sorry that's not how scripture is. Not only this, not only a kindergarten class we exalt in tribulation. Because tribulation brings about perseverance or patience.

You know why some of us have never learned to be patient with others? Why you get so irritated and upset? Because it's only tribulation that works patience and perseverance. You want to get to the goal without going the way God has appointed. But tribulation works patience and perseverance.

And perseverance brings a proven character. I want a proven character. I don't want to be a type of character who's one day so spiritual and next week I behave just like the devil himself.

I don't want that. And the reason why some Christians are like that is they've always avoided tribulation. Any difficulty, any suffering, oh they go this way.

I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Go further this year my brother, sister. Go from verse 2 to verse 3 in 2015 and say I'm going to rejoice in tribulation.

Because I want a proven character. And then I'll finally come through proven character to hope. And hope will lead me to the Holy Spirit filling my heart with the love of God.

It's great. That's how we end up. I believe that's the mark of a spirit-filled man.

Verse 5, that his heart is filled with love for Jesus, love for his fellow believers, love for enemies and everything else. Because he never hesitated to go through tribulation. Because Jesus said in the world you'll have tribulation.

Turn with me now to 2nd Timothy chapter 3. You know that I've often said this. There are two people in the New Testament who said follow me. One was Jesus.

The other was Paul. In fact in the whole Bible nobody said follow me except Jesus and Paul. So I'm not afraid to say.

I'm a follower of Paul by the way. Some people are afraid to say that. They don't want to say.

They say no no no I don't want to be ashamed. I don't want to mention any human being's name. It's only Jesus.

And some of you who say that you're only following Jesus, look at the condition of your life. It doesn't look very much like Jesus. Humble yourself and maybe you should follow some human example that you can see before you go to the high level of following only Jesus.

Just humble yourself. I'm not ashamed to say I seek to follow Paul. And not only follow Paul but others like Paul who follow Jesus.

Now I'll tell you why before we go to 2nd Timothy. Let me show you Philippians 3. This is scripture. The Holy Spirit says.

This is the words of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 3. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in Philippians 3 17. Brothers follow my example.

Am I wrong in saying I follow Paul's example? The Holy Spirit tells me to follow Paul's example. I follow it. So don't be super spiritual and say no no no I only follow Jesus.

Not like you fellows who follow some man. Okay. I'd like to see the quality of your life who claim to be following only Jesus.

Your life should be much better than those who are following Paul. And he says not only me but also others like me who are walking according to the same pattern. So it's not only Paul.

The Holy Spirit commands me to follow any godly example I see on earth. The human example that I see who's following Jesus like Paul and others like him. I obey the Holy Spirit's command in Philippians 3 17 and I'm not ashamed of it.

And I tell you as a result of it I will go further spiritually than all these people who say I only follow Jesus. It says in scripture Jesus said follow me. It also says in scripture brethren follow Paul and others like him who are following Jesus Christ.

So there are things that Paul writes to Timothy. In 2nd Timothy 3 I want you to see this. 2nd Timothy 3 he says in the last days difficult times will come and the living bible says it'll be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days.

Why? Primarily because of two reasons. Primarily because of compromise among Christians and secondly because of persecution in the world. Two reasons.

So he deals with both. The reason why it'll be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days in India is because there'll be compromise in Christendom and persecution from anti-christian forces. Two things.

It'll be very difficult to be a Christian. We might as well face it. We don't want to pretend we are in a picnic.

It's like you join the army and the general comes along and says well fellas we're going for a picnic. We are going to the borders of Kashmir to have a picnic there. No.

They tell them listen fellas you may not come home. You better say goodbye to your family before we go up to Kashmir because there are many people who went up to fight on the borders of India and Kashmir who never returned home. So say goodbye and settle all your matters before you go.

That's how our soldiers go to battle. They go to die and that's what Jesus said. Come and die.

If you follow me take up your cross die and follow me. Jesus' invitation was to come and die. You know that song we sing come and dine the master call it.

I say come and die the master call it. That's what he's calling us for. So in the last days it's going to be difficult to be a Christian first of all.

Now he's not talking about worldly people. Worldly people have always been like this. He's talking in verse five about people to hold a form of godliness but don't have its power.

In other words he's talking about Christians who speak the right words, sing the right songs but don't have that inner power of godliness. There is a form of godliness and a power of godliness and there are lots of people with the form the right doctrine and words but they don't have the power to live a godly life. So he says it's going to be difficult to be a Christian in the last days because you're going to be surrounded by Christians.

Verse two who love themselves first of all. I say Lord then I don't want to be a lover of myself. You know there's a false teaching going around in the world today among Christians and some great Bible teachers teach this.

Listen to this. This is the false teaching. If you want to love your neighbor as yourself you must first learn to love yourself.

Isn't that clever? Only if you love yourself you can love your neighbor. Absolute rubbish. The Bible says in Ephesians 5 which man is there who doesn't love himself.

You don't have to teach anybody to love himself. You have to teach a little child to love himself. It's already there.

Jesus says love others like that. Do to others as you want others to do to you. So men will be lovers of self.

That means they're concentrating only on themselves and be lovers of money. I say Lord deliver me from being a lover of money. This is how it's going to be.

If the form of godliness is going to have people with the outward appearance of being wholehearted Christians but inside they love themselves. I say Lord deliver me from that. Inside they love money.

Lord deliver me from that. Inside they are boastful. Please deliver me from that.

I never want to boast about myself but anything what Jesus did. I don't want to be arrogant. You know how you look down on certain people and speak in a rude way to them.

I mean never be found in me even to a little child. Like you know in when I was in Kerala I had to teach the people there say don't ever say to anybody and all that type of stuff. Do you know that in Kerala I don't

know about other places they even tell their wives Eddie.

I should never call your wife Eddie. It's a Malayalam word but one brother came to me and said brother that's an expression of love. I said then why don't you allow your wife to call you Eda.

Oh no no no no. She must respect me uh-huh. What about you respecting her? These are the type of things where heathen culture has got into so-called believers and they explain it away saying it's expression of love.

You don't even talk to your children saying Eda, Eddie. Say Moine, Mole. That's the way to say it in Malayalam.

Be gracious. Don't be arrogant as if somebody is a lower level of society than you. We talk about the Hindus having a caste system.

I tell you I've seen caste system among Christians. Yes it's not called caste system. It's a disguised caste system where you look down on people of another community.

You can't they're not at your level maybe intellectually or somewhere else. Arrogance. Oh lord deliver me from that.

Revilers. That means people who speak evil of others. Speaks later on about malicious gossips.

Disobedient to parents. Boy don't you see that in our children? Even in CFC children. I know of a Christian couple who wrote about bringing up children and they said the way we brought up our children was we would tell them a command once.

Son come here. That's it. If he doesn't come we discipline him.

If we don't have to say the second time. Imagine bringing up a child like that from childhood. Those children will learn to be godly because they've learned to obey their parents.

It's a very good testimony. Disobedient to parents. Now a lot of people can criticize them saying oh you're going to an extreme.

Okay say they're going to an extreme but just see how your children are going to grow up. Obedience to parents is the first commandment with a promise and the only commandment given to children. Isn't that good that god didn't give 10 commandments to children but only one? Be obedient to parents and in the last days people are going to be disobedient to parents and if CFC is going to be a light in the midst of the world we got to have children who are obedient to their parents and that training is not going to start when they are five or six.

It's going to start before they become one and if our children have grown up beyond the age of one you better hurry up because it's very difficult to correct wrong tendencies like a plant it's growing crooked. You better straighten it up quickly with some ropes and wires and all otherwise it'll grow crooked. Straighten it up now so that it'll grow up straight.

This is formal but these people who've got children who are wildly disobedient oh they'll speak spiritual language. Oh new covenant and victory over sin and all that but are you teaching your children to be obedient? Ungrateful that's another mark of form of godliness but no sense of gratitude. That's why I've

often said in this church be thankful.

Be thankful for your parents. Be thankful for your elders. Be thankful for those who serve you.

It says Jesus said that if somebody gives a cup of cold water he won't lose a reward and I've learned to remember that. If people have done something for me I remember that as long as possible and I thank them. The other day when I met some of the teachers in Clarence school who taught my children I went and thanked them.

They taught my children 20-30 years ago. I said thank you very much for teaching my children. I won't forget it.

I've learned from Jesus to be thankful for even a cup of cold water. Even years later you know imagine somebody Jesus said you won't lose your reward. Imagine 2,000 years later that at the judgment seat Christ says to some person hey I remember 2,000 years ago you gave a cup of water to my servant the apostle Peter.

I want to thank you for it. 2,000 years later thanking somebody for giving a cup of cold water to apostle Peter. I say Lord Jesus you're my example.

Many people who say I only follow Jesus. I won't follow any man. Don't you learn these things? Well learn to be thankful.

It's a very very important habit. Learn to write little notes of thank you on a scrap of paper. You don't have to buy expensive thank you cards.

No ordinary scrap of paper. Thank you very much for mommy, daddy or somebody else. It's a very very good habit.

At least once a year on their birthdays all of you should learn to write a thank you note to your parents even if they are 90 years old. It'll make their day and tell them you learned it in CFC and they'll be drawn to the Lord. Yeah we don't want people to glory CFC but if CFC is teaching people to follow the Lord let them come here.

That's all I say and malicious gossips. I don't have to go the time to go through the whole thing but malicious gossips. Those are people who you know keep on speaking evil of others.

They get some delight in saying something bad about other people instead of something good and with some malice. If I can tear that person down I'm a bit jealous of him so let me just tear him down a bit. Get rid of that my brothers.

There'll be people with a form of godliness who talk about spiritual language, the new covenant and all and they'll be speaking all this thing. That's why it's going to be a difficult to be a Christian. It's going to be a difficult to be a Christian because in the last days they'll be pre-talking about the new covenant but they're also gossiping at the same time and you're in the midst of such people you'll find it very difficult to be a Christian because that will infect you.

You get the chickenpox from somebody else because you get too close to them. Stay clear. Remain in Christ and say okay let them go that way.

I can't. I decided long ago I can't change everybody in CFC. I can preach the word but I'm not going to let their way of life influence me.

You can all backslide. I will not backslide. I have seen my savior.

I know what he did for me on the cross. He was willing to be forsaken by the father for my sin and I'll never forget that. That's why I love him.

He paid the ultimate price to save me from hell. So I want to follow him. I can only show you the way.

Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. I never want to see one dirty picture on my computer. Never.

I never want to go to a link which may be suspicious. No, I don't want to go there. If I'm looking at a magazine there's a dirty picture I want to turn the page.

I don't want to see any movie which has got scenes that are dirty, nakedness, improperly dressed women. Yeah, there's a pleasure in it for worldly people. I don't want to be a lover of pleasure because it says there's a contrast.

Lover of pleasure or lover of God. You're choosing and in that moment like Eve stood there. Tree of knowledge and in that moment when you're tempted, pleasure or God, you say pleasure.

You know that's what some of you are choosing? Are you going to keep choosing that in 2015? Remember that next time you see something questionable in a magazine or a book or a television or on the computer. Remember think of Eve standing between two trees. Which should I choose? And you're standing there between pleasure and God and you're choosing something.

And you keep choosing it, you will end up there one day. But you can talk about new covenant and you can come here every Sunday and sing wonderful songs. It's very going to be very difficult to be a Christian because of this.

And he says there'll be people like Janice and Jambres, that means these magicians, verse 8, who opposed Moses. Moses was the man who did genuine miracles. Janice and Jambres also produced frogs and turned their rods into snakes.

No, they turned their rods into snakes and produced blood as well from water, make magic. And there are a lot of Christian so-called healers who are like magicians. To me they're just like Janice and Jambres.

There are people like Moses, they are rare, genuine men of God who do miracles like Paul. But most of them are like Janice and Jambres today, the so-called healers fooling millions of Christians, most of these so-called healers on television. And there will be men like Janice and Jambres in the last days who opposed the truth, fooled people with their magic shows.

I can only warn you that they will not make many further progress. One day their folly will be evident to everybody. But he tells Timothy, but you, who did you follow? My teaching.

I say, hey Paul, isn't that arrogant for you to say you followed my, can't you tell Timothy to follow Jesus? The Holy Spirit inspires Paul to say to Timothy, you followed my teaching. You followed my manner of life. The Message Bible says, my way of life.

You watched my way of life. Yeah, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say that. You followed, you saw my faith, you saw my patience, you saw my love, my perseverance, my persecutions, my sufferings.

Yeah, we should be like that. You should be able to tell your children, follow me, follow the way I lived. I taught you something.

Look at the way I live. Look at my manner of life. See how I spoke to you.

See how I was patient with you when you did something wrong, when you messed up something. See how I didn't get so upset with you and get flare up. I was patient with you and I told you, don't worry my brother, the only thing serious is sin.

Everything else is unimportant. You've heard me say that many times. Follow my example, Paul said.

And he says, I went through many persecutions. Out of them all, the Lord rescued me. The Lord stood with me.

Like Jesus told the disciples in John 16, 32, the verse before the one we read, all of you will leave me today, but my father will be with me. And I believe that's the thing that we need to remember in a time of persecution. People may leave me, but Jesus will be with me.

And that's the only thing that matters. The Lord will be with me. I want to move on to chapter 4 where Paul says, when he was taken to court, Paul was taken to court and he says in verse 16, that my first defense, no one supported me.

Just like everybody deserted Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. All deserted me, but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that through me, the proclamation might be fully accomplished. And that all the Gentiles might hear and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

What does that mean? Christians were being thrown to the lions in those days when they said, Jesus Christ is Lord. I want to show you a picture of that. Can you put that on the screen, please? Let me know when it's up.

This is what the Christians faced in the days of the Roman empire. Is it up there? Can you see it? All of you? So what do you see there? You see a godly man who's leading a group of believers, kneeling down and praying. They are the Christians.

And if you look around that amphitheater, you see a number of Christians crucified on crosses as well. And the lions are being, lions and tigers, you can see them being let out of their cages to eat up these Christians. The Christians are told, just deny Jesus and you can come out of there.

They say, no, Jesus Christ is our Lord. Look at those young children, women, men. These are the brothers and sisters you will see when you go to heaven one day.

And they will tell you of their experience. Paul said, he delivered me out of the lion's mouth. But later on he was beheaded.

And we may also face, maybe not lions in India, but other forms of persecution. Be ready for it. Be bold to stand for Jesus.

I remember some time ago in UP, one of the towns of UP, many years ago, I think about 20-25 years ago. There were a number of non-Christian people standing on the roads and asking you to proclaim the name of their heathen God. And to say Jai, or victory for that heathen God's name.

And if you didn't do it, they'd deflate your tires, car, scooter, whatever it is. Now deflating a tire of a car or scooter is not as bad as being thrown to the lions. But what would you do if somebody said that on the roads? Unless you say Jai, to the name of our God, we'll deflate your tires.

Then you have to push the scooter or car after that. A lot of inconvenience. What would you do? We got to prepare ourselves for days coming when it's not going to be easy to be a Christian.

The early Christians lived like that. Paul said, I went through many persecutions. One last verse.

Okay, you can turn that off. In Matthew's gospel, in chapter 24, when Jesus said, when they asked him what's going to be true in the last days, there'll be rumors of wars, everything else he said. And then he said in verse 9, what is the sign of your coming? Matthew 24 verse 9. They will deliver you to tribulation and will kill you.

And you will be hated in India because of my name. It's there. All nations includes India.

Let's apply to ourselves. You'll be hated in this country because you take my name, the name of Jesus. And at that time, many will fall away.

Oh, this is too much. I can't afford to pay this price. And they'll betray one another.

It's not me. It's that guy. That's the guy who's following Jesus, not me.

Betray one another. And that's the preacher who taught people to follow Jesus and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, mislead many.

And then many people's love will grow cold. They'll hate one another and they won't love Jesus either. But if you endure in love to Jesus and to one another till the end, you will be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom, and we saw at the last meeting what the kingdom is, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14, 17. There are not many churches preaching that. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This gospel, where you can come to a life of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the power of the Holy Spirit, will be preached in the whole world. Praise the Lord. There are a few preaching it today, despite the persecution.

Brothers and sisters, what shall we say? Oh, how sad. No. I said, praise the Lord.

What an honor, what a privilege to be able to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, while our heads are bowed in prayer, we want to honor you.

And we ask you to give us that grace. We know that you will never allow us to be tempted beyond our strength. Not a hair of our heads can be touched without your permission, because you are sovereign God, and you have placed us in Christ.

And even Jesus could never suffer until his hour had come. It will be the same for us. Only when the hour comes, you will permit even a hair on our head to be touched.

We know that, Lord, because we have more value to you than many sparrows. We are your children who were chosen before the foundation of the earth. Help us to live in the heavenly places in Christ and to claim every spiritual blessing that's ours.

Everyone here, Lord, we don't want just the majority here to experience this. We want every single person here, man, woman, child, to experience this and to be witnesses for you in the coming generation. Whatever the price we have to pay, give us grace for it when the time comes.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. It shall be so.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/qOCe4U4U-HM.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/peace-and-tribulation/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net