

(Pure Testimony) the Witness of One Man

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon highlights the importance of understanding God's thoughts and maintaining a pure testimony in our Christian lives.

Duration: 1:00:37

Scripture: Job 1:1, Proverbs 4:18, Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 11:25, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

Topics: "Purity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of one person's influence. He uses the examples of Daniel and Noah to illustrate how even a small group or family can have a significant impact on others. The speaker encourages listeners to be fully committed to God, even if no one else is interested in the high standards they preach. He also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a constant and unwavering spiritual fire, rather than fluctuating in one's faith. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God freely gives His blessings and thoughts to His people, and that doubts and grumblings should not arise when faced with challenges or delays in receiving healing or blessings.

Transcript

I want to turn, first of all, to a verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. There is a private area that God has given all of us, where no one is allowed to come in. Not even our closest friends, wife, husband. And that is our thoughts, our mind.

You can be married for 70 years, and your husband and wife can't read your thoughts or mind. It's a very private area. Very, very private.

And it is in that area, you know, it's an area we like to keep to ourselves. We don't, we select what thoughts of ours we share with others. With some we will share some of our thoughts, with some others a little more of our thoughts.

But we like to keep this area very private. I don't think any of us would like people to enter our thought lab. Now I want you to see how God is.

God has also got thoughts. But he wants to share all his thoughts with us. It's amazing.

Think of a husband who says to his wife, I want to share everything that is in my mind with you. And think of that wife, acts disinterested and say, well, okay, go ahead, I got other things to do. There won't be much

fellowship with them, between them.

But think how delighted that husband will be who wants to share all his thoughts with his wife. And the wife is so eager, sets aside thoughts, things that she thinks are important. And sits and listens to her husband.

Particularly if she realizes that her husband is a much wiser and more godly man than she is. And there's a lot she can benefit by listening to him. Very often, you know, there is a saying in English that familiarity breeds contempt.

That means the more familiar we become with one another, we don't value one another so much. And very often, wives don't care much for what their husbands are saying. They say, ah, I got other things to do.

And very often that happens also in our relationship with God. Can you think back to your early days when you were first converted? How you were so eager to read the Bible, so eager to know about God, so eager to keep yourself pure and to attend all the meetings and everything else. But after a period of time, familiarity with God has brought contempt.

That means you take a lot of things for granted. Now in 1 Corinthians 2, we read, verse 11, Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Our thoughts are so private that even the devil cannot hear them. The devil can hear your words, but he cannot hear your thoughts.

If you pray in your thoughts, the devil can't hear you. If you pray in an unknown tongue, the devil can't understand you. But when you pray in a known tongue, of course the devil understands, he hears.

The devil cannot understand your thoughts, he cannot hear your thoughts. And one of the clearest proofs I've discovered of that is in casting out demons. I can never cast out a demon by thinking in my mind, get out of him in Jesus' name, Satan.

I think that in my mind nothing happens, because that demon cannot hear my thoughts. I have to speak it, in Jesus' name, get out of him. And the demon is gone.

Even Jesus could not cast out demons with his thoughts. He had to speak and command the demon to go. So there are many instances like that which prove to us the devil cannot hear our thoughts.

He cannot understand our thoughts. But he's very sharp and very clever, and when he sees us dreaming in a particular way, he guesses what type of thoughts are going on in our mind, and he stimulates us. Because he's watched men for 6,000 years, and when he sees a certain look in their eyes, he knows what's going on in their mind.

But he can't read their thoughts. So it says here, even so, the thoughts of God, no one knows except the Spirit of God. When God speaks something into my spirit, the devil can't hear it.

I'm very thankful. He can't hear it. If he spoke audibly like Abraham, oh, the devil can hear that.

But today we have a relationship with Jesus that is like a bride and a bridegroom. And supposing you're, you know, when you want to say some very loving words to your wife in your bedroom, you use a microphone and make sure everybody hears what you're saying. No, you don't want anybody to hear what you're saying to your wife.

And that's the type of relationship we need to have with God. And God wants to speak to us, not audibly, but in our thoughts. This is New Covenant.

This is New Covenant privilege. And it says here that, now we have received, verse 12, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God. This is why the baptism in the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, is so important.

We receive the fullness of the Spirit so that the primary reason is so that we may know the things that are freely given to us by God. Now, here is a quotation from the Old Testament, Isaiah 64, in verse 9. Just as it is written, The things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, which have not entered into the heart of man, God has prepared for those who love Him. Now when you read that, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it's not even entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Many, many people think of heaven. Oh brother, your eye has not seen, your ear has not heard, it has not entered into your mind what wonderful things God has prepared for you in heaven. That's true, but that's not what this verse is talking about.

And the proof of that is the next verse, But God has already revealed them to us through the Holy Spirit. You can't say anymore that human eyes and human ears can't understand it, but God has revealed them to us through the Holy Spirit. And we can know the things that are freely given to us by God.

It's not enough to read the Bible, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has got to take that scripture and show you what you have been given freely by God. Everything God gives is free.

Someone said, the devil is always stealing, man is always selling, and God is always giving things free. When you steal, you're like the devil. When you sell, people sell their sermons.

Go to the internet, you'll find sermons are sold. Many preachers who are invited to speak in different conferences today, you have to pay a lot of money to get them there. They sell their ministry.

That's human nature, to sell. Whatever I do, if I worked hard, I must get some profit out of it. But God gives everything free.

The more you become like God, the more you will give everything free. Because, like Jesus told his disciples, freely you receive, freely give. Freely you receive, freely give.

So God wants us to know the things that are freely given to us by God. There's no charge, you don't have to do any works. They are given freely, we have to receive them by faith.

So, God wants to share his thoughts with us. That's why I used that expression the other day, thinking God's thoughts after him. God has revealed his thoughts in the scriptures, and as I read them and meditate on them, I can think God's thoughts after him, and I can begin to think like God.

Old Testament and New Testament, the word of God. I find great profit in reading the Old Testament, just because I preach so much that the Old Covenant has been abolished, and the New Covenant has been established. People sometimes misunderstand, saying does it mean we don't have to read the Old Testament? I said this word Old Testament is unfortunately used to refer to the 39 books, the first 39 books in the Bible, but let me tell you something, God never called those books the Old Testament.

It's man. When you read, you see the beginning of your Bible, and it says there, Old Testament. That's not inspired.

Man has put that word there. The inspired word begins with in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. But man has called it Old Testament.

Well, it's a convenient name to refer to that section, but the Testament or Covenant refers to what God made with Israel through Moses. That has been abolished. These 39 books are the Bible.

That's not the Old Testament. That's not been abolished. We have to study it.

I find, for example, tremendous profit in studying Jeremiah and Ezekiel, particularly when I observe Babylonian Christianity today. I'm studying the book of Daniel. These men who were in Babylon and made a difference for God and Zechariah and Haggai.

Tremendous books that speak about people who came out of Babylon and built Jerusalem. If you go to our website, we have a whole series of studies from Babylon to Jerusalem. It is very relevant to the times in which we live.

Practically applying it to build new covenant churches. So, to build, to do things God's way, we must understand God's thoughts. And in that connection, we must look at another verse.

Isaiah 55, it says, in Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9, God says, My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. Because as the heavens are high, Isaiah 55, 9, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We are thinking about the thoughts of God, which we want to have. I want to have the thoughts of God. I want to think like Jesus thinks.

In everything. It's my constant prayer. Lord, I want to look at money the way Jesus looked at money.

I want to handle money the way Jesus handled money. I want to look at women the way Jesus looked at women. I want to look at sinners the way Jesus looked at sinners.

I want to look at divorcees. Divorcees, the way Jesus looked at that Samaritan woman who was divorced five times. I want to look at women caught in adultery the way Jesus looked with compassion upon that woman caught in adultery.

I want to look at legalists and Pharisees the way Jesus looked at Pharisees. Do you know that legalism is worse than adultery? You see that in John chapter 8 verse 1 to 12. Jesus standing here, the legalists on one side, a woman caught in adultery on the other side.

And the word of God was very clear in the Old Testament. A woman who is caught in adultery must be stoned to death. And so when the Pharisees quoted that verse, they were absolutely right.

So Jesus said, that's right, I can't stop you from stoning her because the Bible says you must stone her. Moses said that, I agree. But, let the one who is without sin throw the first stone.

And there were these bunch of legalists, their mouth was shut. Oh, Jesus was great at shutting the mouths of legalists. I want to be a preacher like Jesus who shuts the mouth of legalists.

And they went away one by one by one till there was one man left without sin who was qualified according to Jesus own word to pick up a stone and stone her. And that was Jesus himself. But Jesus doesn't throw stones.

He's got no stones in his pockets. And we can say that Jesus disobeyed the letter of scripture by not stoning that woman because he obeyed the spirit of scripture. Legalists go by the letter.

Look at that verse. And you'll find that Jesus did disobey the letter of scripture. But he obeyed the spirit of it.

You read of another time when a woman who was a prostitute brought a vial full of very expensive perfume. And if you see the prices of perfumes nowadays, it must have been very expensive in those days. In fact, Judas Iscariot said in one place it cost 300 denarii, means one year's wages.

What is one year's wages for you? That was the cost of one vial of perfume in those days. Where do you think this poor prostitute got that money from? The only job she ever did was prostitution. She earned money as a harlot.

And there's a verse in Deuteronomy which says, chapter 22 I think, which says you must never bring the money a prostitute earns, a harlot earns into God's house. It's an abomination to God. And you cannot bring what money a man earns as a homosexual into God's house.

That's also written there. It's written, you shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the hire of a dog into the house of God. And here was this woman bringing into the feet of Almighty God the hire that she got as a prostitute.

Do you think Jesus knew that? Of course he knows. And he accepted it. That's what disturbed Simon.

If this man was a prophet, he would have known that verse in Deuteronomy. And he would have known this woman can't bring that. Jesus disobeyed the letter of scripture to obey the spirit of scripture.

There are many brothers who are so careful about the letter and miss the spirit. So what is God saying? My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts.

Your whole way of thinking is different from mine. Even when you become a Christian, you go by the letter of the law. And one of the tragic things I have seen, I've seen it in CFC also, one of the tragic things.

People who have lived in such terrible sin themselves are some of the biggest legalists of all. They have forgotten what they were in their former days. They have taken the forgiveness of Christ lightly.

God is not a legalist. Once when he spoke about saying you got to eat my flesh and drink my blood, John chapter 6, people got offended with Jesus. It says many of his disciples went away.

And he didn't call them back and say, hang on, hang on, hang on. Let me explain that. I'm not asking you to be cannibals.

I don't really mean my flesh. I don't really mean my blood. I'm symbolically speaking, no explanation.

Jesus knew that these people who get offended with a word like that were not serious disciples. If they get offended and go, he said, okay, I just mentioned one sentence. The words I speak are spirit and life.

They left him. Many of his disciples left him, you read. But Peter stuck with him.

Jesus said, as it were, you can also go if you wish. He said, Lord, to whom shall we go? These are the words of eternal life. But if one of those fellows who had left at that time had come to Peter later on and say, you said these are the words of eternal life.

What did you mean? You explained to me. What did Jesus mean by eating his flesh and drinking his blood? Can you explain? Peter would have said, listen, listen, brother, I'm just a fisherman. I can't explain all these things.

Then how do you say these are the words of eternal life when you couldn't explain that meaning of those words? Peter would have said, I don't need to explain. I know the man. I know the man behind those words.

I watched him. I've never seen a man live like that. I've never seen a man live by those principles in all my life.

And even if I can't understand the words he speaks, because maybe they are above my head, I know the man and I trust him. I've seen that his words are the words of eternal life. A legalist won't go by that.

A legalist will examine you. What does it mean? Eat my flesh, drink my blood. And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, it is your legalism, perhaps, that has prevented you from being a burning bush.

You could have been that many years ago. But you haven't understood the spirit of Christ. You're gone by the letter of the law.

And you become a prisoner of the letter, instead of being a servant of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are prisoners of the letter. They jump on other people who do something against the letter.

Ah, you committed adultery, stone her to death. The Lord says, you haven't understood my ways. You don't know my thoughts.

This is what destroys churches. So as Jesus stood there between the adulterous and the legalists, whose side did he take? The side of the adulterous. Legalism is worse than adultery.

Have you understood that? If you're an elder brother and you commit adultery, you'd be ashamed of yourself. What if you're a legalist? You should be more ashamed of yourself, but you're not. Because you've not tried to understand God, you're trying to understand the book.

Like the Pharisees, study the book, study the book, study the book and preach this verse and that verse. See what it says here, are you doing it? That's what I want to liberate people from. Dear brother, sister, try to understand the heart of God.

Eternal life, Jesus said in John 17 3, is not to know the Bible. It is to know God. This is eternal life, that they might know the Bible.

No, this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. This is only a channel, a means by which I can know God, by which I can see Jesus. And it's a very sad thing when you get stuck in this black print on white paper, black print on white paper.

You get stuck here, instead of seeing this as a channel to know the creator of this universe. Multitudes of people, Bible colleges are full of people, teaching people to look at this black print on white paper, analyze it and study it and find out what this scholar and that scholar said about this black print on white paper. One of the things I'm immensely thankful to God for, is that I never went to a Bible school.

The greatest men of God who have influenced me in my life, were all men who never went to a Bible school. It's very difficult to get out certain things out of our system. There is hope, because Paul went to a Bible school for three years under Gamaliel, and that's why God had to send him to three years into Arabia, to get all that trash out of his head.

So, if you're willing to get all that trash out of your head, then there's some hope. But otherwise, it's very difficult, because this is intellectual study. I'd like to see a Bible school where they teach you to know God, and teach you to understand the thoughts of God and the heart of God.

I mean, if a day comes when I'm too old to travel and I have to be in Bangalore, I'd like to run a Bible school like that. Where, so let's talk about God, let's try to understand his thoughts, let's try to understand the spirit of Christ, and let's try and get that spirit. That's the greatest need.

And then, you see, it's that spirit that makes the fire to burn. So, to understand God's thoughts, and the devil's always trying to divert us, not necessarily into sin. He'll try sin, but if he can't succeed with sin, he'll try to make you a legalist, and you'll be just as useless to God as the other person who's fallen into sin.

Let me turn you again to the book of Job. So, to understand the thoughts of God, what is God actually looking for on the earth? I read you that verse the other day in Acts 14, he did not leave himself without a witness. I believe what God needs in India is a witness to his name.

It doesn't have to be very large in number, but there must be a witness to everything that he stands for. Not one or two things. I don't believe God is primarily interested in evangelizing India.

Now, that sounds a terrible thing to say. I'm not afraid to say it. I believe God wants a witness to the name of Jesus Christ in India.

And wherever you live, I believe God wants a witness to the name of Jesus Christ in your village, in your town. A pure testimony, and that's the testimony we must preserve. A pure testimony.

What did Jesus say? All men will know you're my disciples when you love one another. Now, we would think it shouldn't be like that. Jesus made a mistake.

People will know you're my disciples when you love them. That sounds more reasonable. That's what a psychologist will tell you.

Show your love to others and thus show them that you're Christians. Sounds so nice, except that Jesus didn't say it. And why do we think like that? Because we think our ways and our thoughts are superior to God's thoughts.

They're not. My ways are not your ways. You think that the best way to be a witness to other people is to show love to them, be good to them, give them gifts, heal their diseases, start a school to educate them.

A lot of missionaries have tried that. And start a hospital to help heal their disease. It's all good.

But Jesus said, didn't say that. That's what I'm saying. Jesus said, if you want to be a witness to others, let me love one another in the church.

So love one another. Isn't that a very selfish thing? God says, my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts.

Through many, many years, I have learned one thing. That I'm wrong when I try to think my own thoughts. God's thoughts are not the same.

And the cleverer I am, the more difficult it is to understand scripture. Jesus said once in Matthew 11, 25, Father, I thank you that you have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent and revealed them to babes. If you want to understand God's thoughts, become a babe.

Say, Lord, I don't understand. Please teach me. When you come to the book of Job, the first book that God wrote in the Bible, we see what God wanted on the earth.

He didn't want hundreds of people. He wanted one man. Look at the tremendous influence that one man had.

There's something God could boast about to Satan. How many people did he need in Babylon? Daniel. He alone was enough.

Three others joined him. Good. There was just four people.

It wasn't a big church. But look at the influence of one man, Daniel. How he could influence.

He influenced only three others. But that was a fantastic witness right from the king downwards to the nation. In Noah's time, God was happy with one man, one family.

One family on the whole earth. Would you be happy to be one family totally committed to God? You and your children and your wife and their families totally living for God. One family and then nobody else is interested in the high standards you preach.

Never mind. That is what God is looking for. We need to see what this burning bush is.

God would rather have one bush completely on fire than a hundred bushes that are half on fire. I believe that. God would rather have one family totally on fire for God, father, mother, children, everyone than have a whole lot of half-hearted families.

I believe that. One burning bush accomplishes more for God than a hundred or a thousand half-burning ones. That's why we must determine that every area of our life is on fire for God.

Every area surrendered. Every area of my life, I'm trying to understand the thoughts of God and say, Lord, there must be a reason why you commanded this. I may not understand the reason.

Like Peter would have said, I don't understand what Jesus meant when he said, eat my flesh and drink my blood. But I know the man. Therefore, I trust him.

That even if I can't understand it, I know these words are eternal life. One day I will understand it. And later on, Peter did understand it.

For example, baptism, water baptism. You can say, what is there in water baptism? Just dip a person in the water. Does it matter whether you sprinkle on the head or dip or sometimes stand in the water and pour water on the head? I've met people who came from the Anabaptist background who were poured water on their head as adults after they were born again.

And then they realized that that is not the symbolism of baptism. Baptism is burial. And when a man is dead, you don't just pour sand on his head, you put him completely on the ground.

And so they realized that they were not properly baptized, even though they had water poured on their head when they were born again. And you know what they did? The wholehearted ones, they got baptized properly. You say, ah, it doesn't matter so much.

See, it's that attitude where we think we know better than God. Ah, it doesn't matter. It's in the little things.

You remember when Jesus went for baptism to John the Baptist. I can imagine as he went along, the devil would have said to him, you don't need to be baptized. Why do you need to be baptized? All these sinners.

Or he would have said, if you stand in that line of sinners, people will misunderstand you. They'll think you had some secret sin in your life to confess. That's why you're lying.

Don't don't give rise to such misunderstanding. Oh, the devil has got so many arguments. He comes to us with such arguments.

There's only one answer to those arguments. What does God's word say? Jesus rejected the devil long before he went into the wilderness temptation. And he said to John the Baptist, thus, I have to fulfill all righteousness.

I'm going to be baptized. And he came up out of the water. Spirit of God came upon him and said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

And I believe that always happens whenever a person simply obeys God, even if people around him tell him, don't do it, don't do it, or there's no need. And your reason says there's no need to do it. And you say, Lord, I'm going to obey you.

As you come up out of the water, you hear the voice of heaven saying, I'm pleased with you. And the spirit of God will come upon you. I believe some of you have missed something from heaven because there's something God spoke to you.

And your reason said, oh, that's not so important. You know, what is the biggest enemy of faith? Reason. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean upon your reason.

Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6 is the enemy of faith. I'll tell you, there are many things I don't understand, but I do it. I didn't, I could not explain the meaning of baptism when I got baptized.

I can explain it now. The 3,000 people who got baptized on the day of Pentecost, they had not read Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6 was not even written for the next 30 years. How did people get baptized then? Without understanding.

It was a simple act of obedience. They admitted this, submitted to what God had said. Breaking of bread and many other things like that.

Why did God give the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost when he sees the tremendous amount of confusion that is with that gift and the counterfeits in the 20th century? Is it a mistake that God said, oh, I'm sorry, I gave this gift of tongues. I better take it back. God never makes a mistake.

He always does it perfectly the first time. And that's what I believe. I don't understand, but I believe that God did it perfectly the first time.

It was absolutely right that he gave them the gift of tongues and that it continued even 30 years later in the church in Corinth. And it's a gift of the Holy Spirit. There are many things like that.

If you use your reason, I tell you, there's no need to speak in tongues at all. There are many things in the Christian life. When you understand the thoughts of God, you find it's not exactly according to reason.

Some things go against reason. They are not, I'm sorry, not against reason. What I mean is your reason is not risen high enough to understand it.

Let's put it like that. You know, if you talk to a second standard student about trigonometry and physics and chemistry and calculus and things like that, he says, I can't understand all that. It's not because those things are wrong.

They are beyond his level of understanding. They are right. He'll understand them 10 years later.

So there are many things in scripture which are not against your reason, but beyond your reason. One day you will understand. And I've discovered many things as I've gone along that I've understood, which I could never understand 20, 30 years ago.

So when we come to God and say, Lord, there are many things I don't understand, but I want my ways to be more in alignment with your ways. I want to be free from this living according to the letter of scripture. I want to obey the spirit of scripture.

So in the first book that God wrote in the book of Job, I told you God showed the testimony of a man who was a godly man who brought up a godly family and who was the target of Satan. Wherever Satan finds a godly upright man, he targets him in one way or the other. But God, he can't touch him without God's permission.

There's a threefold hedge around every man of God. Satan made the mistake of mentioning it here, and so I know it, that there's a hedge around me, there's a hedge around my family, and there's a hedge around all my possessions. That's in Job chapter 1, verse 10.

It was a tremendous comfort for me when I discovered the truth of these words that Satan said. When Satan speaks to God, he speaks the truth. When he speaks to me, he tells lies.

But when he speaks to God, he can't tell lies. So I know when he speaks to God, that you have, you know, surrounded him, made a hedge, verse 10, around him, his family, and his possessions. I see there's a threefold hedge around me, around my life, my body.

The devil can't touch my body. Around my family. My family is blessed because I'm a righteous man, and your family is blessed if you're a righteous man and not a legalist.

And my possessions, God is interested in my business and my bank account. The devil can't touch it. God may allow me to face certain losses, to enable me to be free from the love of money, etc., but anything that Satan does is with God's permission.

So there's tremendous comfort in knowing that. These are the things God wants to reveal, that when a man stands for him, and wants to be a witness for God, in the midst of so many people or not, God will protect him and take care of him in amazing ways. Satanist churches can target him or pray against him.

It makes absolutely no difference. He's got this threefold hedge. And the way to remain within this threefold hedge, my brother, sister, is very, very simple.

You have to always humble yourself. That's all. Remain in humility, and this threefold hedge will be around you till the day Jesus comes.

You lift up your head, and the sniper the devil gets you. That's why we've got to be very careful when God blesses us. You've often heard me say it's very easy for God to bless a man.

It's very difficult for God to keep him humble after he has blessed him. And that's why it's very important when God has blessed us in any way, or our children, that we keep our face in the dust and make a deliberate effort to do that. The other thing we see in the book of Job is sometimes a man, who's a man of God, may have a very difficult wife.

So, you know, some of you may have difficult wives or difficult husbands, and you may get discouraged and say, well, how can I be a godly man with such a wife like this? Well, the first book in the Bible tells us about a man of God who had a very difficult wife. But I think by the end of the book, chapter 42, Job's life changed his wife, because she had 10 more children through Job, and she saw, and I believe she got converted, by the influence of a man who would not compromise in order to please his wife. He did not do what his wife told him.

He was upright. Don't ever blame your wife for your lack of spirituality. The first book in the Bible is about a man of God who had a very difficult wife, but he still retained his integrity.

The other thing we read is that a genuine man of God like Job will have a lot of people who are jealous of him. Those three preachers that you read in the belief as, they were preachers, and if you read the things they said about God, almost everything they said was right. In fact, one of them is quoted by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. He catches the wise in his own craftiness.

You know who said that? It's one of these preachers. So what they said was right. There are people in the world who sometimes say things that are right.

It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. It's not in the Bible, but it's a very true statement. So these three people said what was right, but they are the first examples in the Bible of legalists.

Right in the beginning of the Bible, let's see what all God teaches in the first book of the Bible. A man of God will be the target of Satan. A man of God will seek to bring up his children in a godly way and pray for them.

A man of God could have a difficult wife. A man of God may go through a lot of financial loss. His whole business may collapse, but it'll be a test.

A man of God may lose his children in death. It'll be a test. A man of God will be the object of jealousy from other people, and particularly when they see that this man is not only spiritual, but he's also rich.

You know, people like to see somebody who's spiritual and poor, or rich and worldly. That's okay. They find comfort in that.

Okay, that guy's rich, but that guy's worldly. And this guy is spiritual, but he's poor. He's okay.

But if you see a person who's spiritual and also rich, it disturbs some people. You say, that can't be. But the first man in the Bible who's the first book in the Bible refers to a man who was spiritual, and perhaps the most spiritual man on the face of the earth, and he was one of the richest men on the earth as well.

You see, it's not rich. It's if you love money, of course it's wrong. But the point is, if God gives somebody more than you, that doesn't mean he's unspiritual.

It's one of the lessons we've got to learn, the first book of the Bible. And that's what made these fellows jealous. And even though Job was probably 150 years old or whatever, he was a very healthy man.

And that's the other thing that disturbed these preachers. A guy, at least he should be sick. Even if he's rich, he should be at least sick.

But look at this guy. He's spiritual. He's healthy.

He's wealthy. Ah, I can't stand it. And then one day, they hear that he lost his mother, and he lost his children, and he lost his health.

And they came to see him and shed the standard tears. Oh, we feel so sorry for you, brother. Actually, inwardly, they were delighted.

At last, at last, God has taught this fellow a lesson. So what we learn in the first book of the Bible is that if you're a man of God, you're going to be the object of jealousy of many people. They will criticize you.

They'll find fault with you. They'll say you're suffering because something's wrong in your life. Your children are suffering because this is wrong in your life.

I wonder if any of you, whenever you see a brother fall sick, have immediately felt, ah, I know, there must be some sin in his life. You are exactly like those legalistic preachers, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. No.

Whenever Jesus heard that somebody was sick, he went and healed them. No. But these people were jealous, and they preached and preached and preached and preached to him.

A man of God can have a lot of people trying to condemn him with their preaching. It's also possible, you know, it's possible that the elder in a church could be like Eliphaz, and somebody in his congregation may be like Job. He's the elder, so he preaches and preaches and preaches, and poor Job is sitting there, and that's the most godly person in the congregation.

God sees that. I'm saying this to encourage you and to show you that right in the beginning of scripture, the first book God wrote, he spoke about legalists. But the other thing I want to come to is that Job could

not preserve himself like a burning bush.

In the first chapters, when he heard that he's lost his property and lost his children, it says he fell down and worshipped, and he said, I came without anything into this world, and the Lord took it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord, and he did not sin. His life was burning bright.

In chapter two, he loses his health, and his wife says, commit suicide. He still doesn't give up. He said, oh, I can.

God can give me good, and God can give me bad. So this is a fantastic man, but by the time he comes to chapter three, maybe he thought that God would heal him in a couple of days or something like that. It didn't happen.

It went on three days, four days, one week, and no healing. Then the doubts begin to come and grumbings against God. Why do you treat me like this, Lord? Have I not been faithful to you? Why do you target me? And Job's experience was up and down.

Sometimes it would rise up and say, even if he kills me, I will trust him. And the next thing would go down in the dumps and say, oh, I wish I had died when I was born. Then he would suddenly rise up and say, I know my Redeemer lives, and I will stand with him.

He'd go into the dumps. See, this type of experience was the experience of the first man in the Bible, is described in the book of Job, because he did not have the Holy Spirit, and he did not have the new covenant. So if your experience is like the book of Job, where one day you rise up and say, God's wonderful, he's great, and then you go into the dumps again, and then you come up again and go into the dumps again, I want to say to you, your need is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Your need is to understand the new covenant, where you can always give thanks, where you can rejoice always. You can pray without ceasing, not for half an hour a day or six hours a day, but without ceasing. There is a new covenant life that we must believe, where the fire is not burning, and then next day you see, it's gone out.

And then the next day it's burning again, and the next day it goes out, or dims and becomes no. It must become brighter and brighter. Dear brothers and sisters, there is a plan God has for us, and we must not miss out on it.

Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 18. Proverbs 4.18 says, the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter until the perfect day. I have faith that by the grace of God, I will be more spiritual in 2010 than I was in 2009.

I don't plan to be a backslider, and I will be more spiritual if the Lord carries in 2011 than I will be in 2010. I want to live in Proverbs 4.18 because that is the path of the righteous. I do not believe in backsliding.

People ask me this question, if a backslider dies, will he go to heaven or hell? I say, I don't plan to be a backslider, so I'm not interested in finding out. And if you plan to be a backslider, go and study the Bible and find out, but I'm not here to find out the answer for you. I'll tell you where you'll go if you're wholehearted, but where you'll go if you're a backslider, don't ask me, because Jesus didn't tell us where the backslider will go.

He told us where the wholehearted will go, and I'm not here to comfort the backslider. No, not at all. I don't answer that question.

Where will the legalist go? I don't know. I know where the first century legalists went. How shall you escape the damnation of hell? That's what Jesus said to the first century legalists.

That scares me. I say, oh my God, the first century legalists, Jesus said, how will you escape the damnation of hell? Oh my God, please save me from being a legalist. But those Pharisees never believed it.

They thought they were on their way to heaven, just like a lot of legalists today. They think they're on their way to heaven just because they've got the scriptures and they do this and that and the other thing. They don't know that they're on their way to hell.

And even if I tell them they won't believe me because they think that they're okay. Those Pharisees didn't believe Jesus. I don't expect today's legalists to believe me.

But I read the scriptures and it scares me to be a legalist. I see a murderer hanging on the cross going to heaven. But I never see a legalist, except those who radically repent.

Paul was a legalist. They radically repented. I want to hate legalism more than I hate any other sin in my life.

I want to understand the thoughts of God. If I'm free from that, my life, I believe, will become brighter and brighter and brighter. I'll be more humble, more holy, more pure, more loving.

I'll be able to love my enemies better. I'll be able to love my brothers and sisters better. I'll be able to better obey that command which says, do to others as you have others do unto you.

I'll be able to control my tongue much better in 2010 than in 2009. I have slipped up with my tongue in 2009 sometimes when I've spoken to a shopkeeper or not evil, but a little hard. And I say, Lord, I want it to be better in 2010.

You know, I want to be, I want to press on to perfection. That I want to speak kindly, more kindly than I've ever spoken to people in my whole life. I'm in the path of perfection.

And I'm not ashamed to say that. I'm not perfect, but I'm on the way. And I praise God when I see what God's done in me in 2009, that gives me tremendous hope for 2010, that it'll go upward.

My brothers and sisters long for this, long for this, to understand the thoughts of God, to see what God is after. He wants you to make you a man of God. One man of God can have a church.

One man. See the Apostle Paul says to the elders in Ephesus in Acts chapter 20. In Acts chapter 20, he says to the elders, Living Bible it says, I've done my best for you.

Verse 26 onwards, 27. I've done my best for you. I've given you my all.

I've held back nothing of God's will for you. But verse 29, I know that as soon as I'm gone, these vicious wolves who are waiting outside the door will come right inside and rip into this flock and you elders will not be able to stop them. What do you think those elders thought when Paul said that? As soon as I'm gone,

these wolves will come inside.

I was with you for three years and not one wolf dared to step inside this church. But you bunch of elders sitting here, you're no match for these wolves. Can you imagine if you were one of those elders sitting there and Paul says, I am never allowed a wolf to come in.

But the moment I'm gone, you guys will not be able to hold them, put them out. And you would have thought, what does this Paul think he is? Is he the only one whom God can use? But Paul was a discerning man. He knew that these people, they were good people, but they did not have that firmness to keep the wolves outside.

Maybe as I said, they wanted to have a reputation for gentleness. I've seen churches destroyed by elders who sought a reputation. You see the influence of one man? One man could keep every wolf outside for three years.

And the moment that one man, I don't know if there were 300 people in that church, that church was protected by one man. And when he went, it was the end of that church. It's happened in history.

Moses kept the nation of Israel pure. He went up for just a little over one month to the mountain. They were all worshipping idols.

And his co-worker Aaron couldn't stop that. But as soon as he came back down, he was a man who lived before God's face. Everything got straightened up again.

The influence of one man who lived before God's face. Can you be a woman like that, a man like that? You know, I believe that you can come into a meeting and never open your mouth and bring such a spirit of Christ into that meeting that you influence the meeting. I believe that.

I believe that I can go and sit in a meeting if I'm filled with the Holy Spirit. And if a legalist is preaching without opening my mouth, disturb him by my spirit, that every time he looks at me, he'll have to turn away. And I believe I can come into a meeting, bring the spirit of Christ in the meeting.

And if a humble God-fearing brother gets up without even knowing who I am sitting there, I can lift that man's spirit. You don't have to preach, brother. You have to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You've got to be on fire. The influence of one man. That's what the Bible teaches.

One man. The Lord told Jeremiah, I'll make you like a brass wall against these people. They'll fight against you.

They will not prevail. You're a one-man army, the Lord said to Jeremiah. They will not prevail against you.

Think of the Apostle John. It was like that with all these great men. Men of God who were blazing fires for God.

1 John, he says in chapter 2, you heard that the Antichrist is coming. And many Antichrists have already come in verse 18, 1 John 2:18. But these Antichrists were in the church. They were sitting in our midst.

But they went out from us, verse 19. This is not talking about the Antichrist in the world. This is talking about the Antichrist who was sitting right inside the church.

They went out from us. If they were really of us, they'd have been with us. But they went out to show that they don't really belong to us.

Why did they go out? Because John came along, the son of thunder, who preached his fiery sermons constantly, and the Antichrist got disturbed and left and found more comfortable churches to sit in. But once John was gone from the scene, I'm sure those guys came back to sit there. Because they thought we can manipulate this new set of elders.

They're not like John. It's not a question of being fiery. It's a question of living before God's face.

The secret of Elijah's life was he lived before God's face. No one could stand before him. The Lord told Joshua, no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life.

I remember a story I heard of the one man I respected in India, whom I knew personally called Brother Bhaktsingh. The early days of his ministry, there was such a tremendous revival in Madras, that a lot of many, many hundreds of people were converted. Women started wearing white saris and taking off their jewelry and really seeking to become wholehearted disciples of Jesus.

And there were some men who were not converted, who were disturbed that their wives and daughters were getting converted and wholehearted. And so they tried to threaten Bhaktsingh. And they sent a senior police officer to that church building where Bhaktsingh lived.

And this man with his big stripes and all on his shoulder came and said, I'm from the police. I want to see Bhaktsingh. You know, put a little scare into people.

It's a common tactic in India. Get a police person to put a scare into you. So they went and Brother Bhaktsingh was kneeling down in prayer as he is most of the time.

They whispered in his ear, the police officer, senior police officer has come to see you. He said, tell him I'm talking to God and I don't know when I'll finish. He's got to wait.

I'm sure in his entire life that man had never heard a reply like that. People are scared of senior police officers. Bhaktsingh, he lived before God.

That is why I respect that man. He wasn't a great preacher, but he was a man of God. And I'm so thankful that he laid his hands on me when I was two months old, two months and prayed for me that I would grow up to be a servant of God and reconnected with him when I was 23 and I learned so much from that man.

The influence of one man and when that man was gone, that was the end of all those churches as far as spirituality is concerned. That's what you can be in your generation. It says David served his generation in the will of God and he slept.

And what the Lord has told me is you can only serve your generation and then you have to sleep or be taken up. My dear brothers, you belong to another generation than me, many of you. You have to serve your generation in the will of God and I pray you will take up the challenge in these days and say, Lord, I want to be a man like the Apostle Paul.

I want to be a man like the Apostle John. I want to be a man like Sadhu Sundar Singh. I want to be a man like Brother Bhaktsingh.

I want to be like that for you, to be a burning bush and a light for you in this land and count everything as lost compared to that. That's the only thing worth living for. Let's pray.

We don't want an emotional stirring that disappears in a little while. We want something permanent. Let's pray that God will do a deep abiding work in us, that you will be a man and a woman of God like God wants you to be.

Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, thank you for these wonderful examples of people who feared no man on the face of the earth, who never sought to impress or please men, who lived before your face and who wanted to live only for you. Lord, I want to be such a man. Help me and help my dear brothers and sisters here.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that in these closing days of the age, we shall be in India, in the different corners of India that you have placed us, the burning bush that you want us to be. Despite all the jealousy and opposition and criticism of people around us, help us, we pray, to go from glory to glory. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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