

Religiosity or Spirituality - Choosing the Profitable

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the critical distinction between religiosity and true spirituality, advocating for a life lived in love and for the glory of God.

Duration: 1:00:47

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:1

Topics: "Religiosity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the blessings and consequences of obedience to God's commandments. The first 14 verses of the chapter emphasize that if the Israelites keep God's commandments, they will be blessed with prosperity, health, and success in their work and family life. However, the remaining 54 verses highlight the punishment that awaits those who do not obey God, including sickness, poverty, and suffering for themselves and their children. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for God's work and growing spiritually, rather than remaining like spiritual babies.

Transcript

Over the weekend, we've been considering the subject of religiosity or spirituality, and it's a constant need, it has been, even in Old Testament times when Jesus was on earth, and throughout these two thousand years of church history, to distinguish between what it means to be religious and what it means to be spiritual. Because I believe this is the area where the devil deceives Christians the most. The devil is a deceiver, he deceives the whole world, and the area where he seeks to deceive Christians is to make them think they're spiritual when they're only religious.

And the example of a religious person would be a Pharisee. The example of a spiritual person would be Jesus Christ himself, the apostles. And in the conflict that we see in the synagogues, in the Gospels, in the four Gospels, you find the conflict is always between Jesus and religious people, not between Jesus and sinners.

In all the Gospels, you never find Jesus getting into conflict with thieves and murderers and gamblers and drunkards and adulterers, etc. They had no conflict with Jesus. They were sinners, they acknowledged themselves to be sinners, and Jesus said, I came for you people, and many of them were saved.

But the people who were not saved, and who missed the opportunity that they had in their lifetime to fellowship with the Son of God, they were the religious people, who prayed and went to church or synagogue and read the Bible, knew all the doctrines, but did not know God. It's possible to know the Bible and not know God. The clearest example of that is the devil himself.

He knows the Bible better than anybody else. In fact, he knows the Bible so well that he could even quote a verse to Jesus to try and tempt him in the wilderness. Knowledge of the Bible or knowledge of Christianity is not what makes a person spiritual.

It's knowledge of God. So that's what we've been thinking of over the weekend, and I just want to continue a little further along that line. I want to turn, first of all, to 1 Corinthians 10.

In 1 Corinthians 10, we read, whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. It's a very simple sentence, perhaps disobeyed more than any other command by Christians. You know what it says? Whatever you do in your life, do it for the glory of God.

Now, a religious person is one who has separate compartments in his life, a sacred compartment and a secular compartment. Then he classifies his activities as either sacred or secular. Going to church, reading the Bible, giving money for missionary work, all this is sacred.

Doing one's business, living at home, all that is secular. And these are like two watertight compartments with no connection between the two. Eating and drinking and watching television and all these things are another compartment.

And religious activities are another compartment, and there's no connection. And when a person lives like that, he will never know God. And his so-called sacred activities are only to ease his conscience, because he recognizes that he must acknowledge God.

So give God his due, and then let me run my life as I like. It's like in the Old Testament. Once they had given God 10% of their income, they could use the 90% as they liked.

And it was almost as though they reluctantly gave 10% to God and said, Well, God, here's your 10%. Take it and don't disturb me in the way I use the other 90%. That's my business.

Now, when a Christian... Now, that was okay in the Old Testament. The law didn't demand anything more than that. But when you become a Christian, a true Christian, a child of God, you don't live by that.

You live by this verse, which says, Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. It's not that you give 10% of your money to God and then the 90% you use as you like. Everything is to be for the glory of God.

In the Old Testament, they gave one day in seven, which they call the Sabbath, to God. Do you know why Jesus abolished the Sabbath? Because He said every day is to be given to God. Every day is to be a Sabbath.

You got to be holy on Monday, just like you got to be holy on Sunday. You got to live for the glory of God on Tuesday, just like you live for the glory of God on Sunday or Monday. Every day is the same.

He abolished this. The one day in seven was only a picture, a taste of what was going to come in the New Covenant or the New Testament. And a person who felt that one day of fellowship with God would be a burden, would definitely think that Jesus came with a heavier burden.

When He said seven days in seven, you got to have fellowship with God. But on the other hand, a person who really enjoyed fellowship with God, I mean, when a person is truly spiritual, do you know that his relationship with Jesus, the closest that you can compare it with on earth, is two people who are deeply in love with each other. Now, if you told two people who are deeply in love with each other, well, you can only spend one day in seven together, they'd be very disappointed.

They'd be delighted if they are told you can spend seven days together in a week. That's exactly how a spiritual person sees the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's not a burden.

It's not a duty that he has to reluctantly do. For a lot of people, Christianity and their demands of the Christian faith are like a burden. They're not enjoyable.

And that's because their relationship with Christ is not what it should be. They can't do everything for the glory of God. They do the minimum necessary to ease their conscience, to give God his view.

And they say, well, I want to enjoy life. And I don't want to give the rest of my time or my money to God. Because the devil has deceived them to think that you're going to be much happier if you keep God out of your life.

I mean, give him his due, give him his one day in seven and ten percent of your income, and then leave him alone and mind your own business. Do you really think that's Christianity? That's not Christianity at all. That's a false presentation of Christianity.

Because it does not come out of a love relationship with Christ. Now I want to show you a verse in Revelation chapter 2. When the Lord spoke to the church. Now this is a Christian church comprising of believers.

And in those days, they were only born again Christians. There were no other type of Christians in those days, unlike today, where we have nominal Christians and born again Christians. In those days, Christians were all born again Christians.

There was no separate category of people who happened to be born in a Christian family and therefore called themselves Christians. They were born again in those days. And to this church, the Lord writes this.

He says, I know your deeds. Revelation chapter 2 and verse 2. I know your deeds, your toil, your perseverance. You put evil men to the test.

You expose false apostles. You got perseverance. You've endured for my name's sake.

You've not grown weary. Now what would you think of a church that had all these good qualities? They worked. They worked.

Toil means they worked hard. Perseverance means they never gave up. They did not permit evil men to have any power in their church.

They exposed false doctrines and people who claimed to be apostles but were just sort of cult leaders. And they endured, suffered for the name of Jesus. You would think that such a church is a very spiritual church.

And that such a Christian is a very spiritual Christian. But the Lord says to them, in spite of all this, I still have something against you. And that is, that you have left your first love.

In other words, years ago, you did this out of love for me. Today you're doing the same thing, but it's not out of love. And when something is done for the Lord and it's not out of love, it has no value.

And therefore the Lord says to them, remember from where you have fallen. Verse 5. So, here's where they were and here's where they are now. They've fallen because once upon a time they did it in love and now they're not doing it in love.

A spiritual man is one who does everything for the glory of God. And everything he does springs out of his love for Jesus Christ. And therefore, everything he does is a delight.

He doesn't feel anything in the Christian life is a burden. Whereas a religious person feels that Christian activity is a burden. He's got to do the minimum required like go to church once a week.

Anything more than once a week is a burden. Because he doesn't have a love relationship with Christ. It's like getting married to somebody you don't love.

Well, your marriage is going to be a burden. And a lot of people are married to a Christ whom they don't love. Or claim to be married to a Christ whom they don't love.

That's not Christianity. That's not what Jesus Christ came to offer. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

The Old Testament was not like that. The Old Testament was, if you don't want to be punished, keep my commandments. If you want a reward, keep my commandments.

That changed when it came to the New Testament. Where Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. So, we can do the will of God with different motives.

Now, I want to show you something from the Old Testament in Deuteronomy chapter 28. Deuteronomy 28 illustrates what I just said. The Lord said to the people under the law.

And I believe that this chapter describes perfectly what it means to live under the law. And the reason I pointed out here is because even though the age of the law was finished with the day of Pentecost. The vast majority of Christians that I've met throughout the world live under the spirit of the law.

And what is the spirit of the law? That's what makes people religious. A person who lives under the spirit of the law will never be a spiritual man. And that's why it's important for us to understand it.

You see, in Deuteronomy 28, this chapter could be divided into two parts. The first 14 verses and then from verse 15 onwards to verse 68. So, that's the last 54 verses and the first 14 verses.

And the first 14 verses say, If you keep my commandments, God says to Israel, you'll be blessed. You'll be blessed with prosperity. You'll be blessed with health.

You'll be blessed if you work in the city. You'll be blessed if you work in the country. Your children will be blessed.

Your cattle will be blessed. Your business will be blessed. And you will never be in debt.

And the Lord will make you the head and nations will be under you if you obey me. It's like offering a reward for obedience. The remaining 54 verses of the chapter say the other side of it.

And that is, if you don't obey me, I'm gonna punish you. You're gonna get sickness. You're gonna get diseases from which you'll never be healed.

You'll be poor. You may be blind. You may become mad.

Your children will suffer. And you'll be frequently in debt. Your fields will not produce crops.

There won't be rain on your fields. Your cattle will die. And your life will hang in doubt.

And you'll live in fear all your days. So you better obey me. And that was the threat of punishment.

So we can say that Deuteronomy 28 can be divided into two sections. One, the offer of a reward if you obey God. And the other, the threat of punishment if you don't obey God.

That is the principle of life under the law. And when a Christian lives, does God's will or obeys God, on that principle, we can say he's a legalistic Christian. He's living under the law.

He obeys because he wants a reward from God. He obeys because he's afraid that if he doesn't obey, God will punish him. Now that was only a temporary phase in which God kept people to teach them how not to do my will.

The law never brought anyone to eternal life. The law only exposed a man's sin. The law was like a mirror, a very faithful mirror, a perfect mirror that showed me my true condition.

You know, when you go to the bathroom and you look at a mirror, it shows you exactly the dirt on your face or what you look like, but you can't remove the dirt with the mirror. And the law could not cleanse anyone. It could show you what your condition was, convict you, but it couldn't help you.

When you come to the New Testament, you have the answer to this cleansing that the law shows us we need. Through the blood of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. I showed you what the law demanded.

When you come to the New Testament, Jesus said in John 14 and verse 15, If you love me, keep my commandments. Not, if you don't want sickness, keep my commandments. Or if you want prosperity, keep my commandments.

No, if you love me, keep my commandments. It's very important for us, my brothers and sisters, to understand that anything that does not originate in love for God, has no value before Him. Consider in a home where a wife works in a kitchen, cooking a meal, and if it's a wealthy home, let's say they have a maid in that home, who's also working in the kitchen, cooking the meal also.

Now here are two women working in the kitchen. Both working hard, preparing a meal. And yet, though the external action is the same, there's a fundamental difference between the two.

One is a wife, not doing it for a salary, doing it out of love. And the other is a maid, doing the same work for a reward. There is the difference between a spiritual person and a religious person.

A spiritual person does not do anything for reward. He does not do anything out of fear. He does it out of love.

The Bible speaks about sons and servants. And he says, in the Old Testament, God treated people like servants, but in the New Testament, it says in Galatians 4, that God treats us like sons. Now what's the difference between a son and a servant? If a man's running a shop, and he employs people to work there, they're servants.

And they will work only from a certain time to a certain time. And when the time is up, they have to say, we've got to go. And they've got to be paid for it.

But a son who works in his father's shop or business, he doesn't work from a certain time to a certain time. He may work till late at night. And he may not even get paid for it.

Because he's a son. And if you examine your attitude towards the Lord's work, whether it's even a simple thing like going to a church meeting, you can take it as an obligation that you have to fulfill once a week. Something that you don't really want to do, but your conscience bothers you if you don't do it.

So you do it. And once you've done it, you say, okay, my obligation's over till next Sunday. See, there's no love there.

That's an obligation. It's like paying your income tax. Okay, I have to pay my income tax.

Otherwise I'll get caught or punished. So I pay it. Do you know that the vast majority of Christians have that type of relationship with God? God's like an income tax officer who's come to collect the taxes.

And we go and give our dues to Him. Not with any great delight. That's Old Testament way of life.

And that is not what Jesus came to give. Jesus came to lead us into a personal relationship with Him. The Bible says that He's our bridegroom.

And we are the bride. It's a relationship of... You know, the Bible says that when Christ comes again, there's going to be a marriage. It's the relationship of a true Christian with Christ His Savior is exactly like a fiancé who is just waiting for her bridegroom to come so that they can get married.

And who is longing every day for the wedding day. And who wants to keep in touch with her fiancé every day because she loves him. Nobody has to tell her to call him up or write letters to him.

No. And she just delights to do it. And when she's with him, she's not always looking at her watch to see whether it's time to go home.

She wishes, if they're really in love, she wishes that time would stand still. And that she could stay with him as long as possible. Do you know that this is true Christianity? That this is the type of relationship that Jesus Christ came to give us? Now I want to ask you, is that the Christianity you have? Probably isn't.

Probably for you, the Christian life is a burden. Something you do to ease your conscience. Like I said, paying the income tax.

Something you don't really love to do, but you have to do because you'll be punished if you don't do it. Or you'll be rewarded if you do it. It's exactly like the way we bring up our children.

I mean, how do we bring up our children? With these two things that we read in Deuteronomy 28. We offer them a reward if they'll obey, and so they obey. Or we threaten them with punishment if they don't obey, and so they obey.

But we don't want our children to be like that forever. I mean, think of the delight that comes into the heart of a parent when one day that child obeys you, when he's grown up, he's 20 years old, and the hope of reward is gone, and the threat of punishment is too late now, and he still obeys you because he loves you. It's got nothing to do now with hope of reward or threat of punishment.

He is matured from that to the place where he loves his dad and mom, and cares for them, and respects them, and is glad to obey out of affection. And think of the delight that comes into your heart when your son or daughter has that type of relationship with you, which is not one of fear, and not a business transaction. That's how we know whether we've become sons, or whether we are still babies.

A lot of Christians are babies. They seem to be babies forever and ever and ever. You know how, supposing the father is a businessman, and has gone on a long journey, and when he comes back, what's his four-year-old son gonna ask him? His four-year-old son gonna ask him, Daddy, did you bring me any candy? Did you bring me any sweets? And he wants to open up the suitcase to see if there are any toys for him.

That's all he is interested in. What can I get from dad? What has he brought for me? And a Christian who comes to God and is only thinking, What can I get from God? What can I get from God? Every time he prays, he is asking for something himself. He is a baby.

The only thing he can think of is what he can get from God for himself. Now, you take a 25-year-old son in that home, when his dad comes back from his business trip, what does he look for? He doesn't go opening the suitcase to see whether there is any candy or any toys in there for him. Unless he is retarded.

What he would ask his dad is, Daddy, how did the business go? Did we get some orders? Can we make some profit this year? He is more interested in the business. He is not interested in the candy and the toys. And that is the mark of a Christian who has come into the new covenant.

Who has become a son and is not a child. He is interested in the furtherance of the kingdom of God. He is interested to know whether God's word is spreading.

Whether people are getting saved. Whether the kingdom of Christ is spreading across the earth. He is interested in that.

He is interested in his father's business. Do you remember the words that Jesus spoke to Joseph and Mary when he was 12 years old? They looked for him and he was not with them. And they went back to Jerusalem and found him sitting in the temple.

Talking to the great scribes and scholars. And they asked him, why are you here? And he said, didn't you know that I must be about my father's business? You know, a sense of responsibility towards the father's business. Like I said, if a father has got a shop, would he put his 4 year old to look after that shop when he goes away somewhere? That 4 year old won't sit at that chair for too long.

Just some friends of his come to call him to play and he will run away immediately, leaving the shop empty. He has got no sense of responsibility towards that business or that shop. He is ready to eat and

receive all the gifts that his parents can give him.

And the new clothes and the good food and the ice cream and all that. He is happy for all that but to take some responsibility in the father's business. Oh no, he would rather go and play with his friends.

But a grown up son would sit in that shop till midnight if necessary. And by that illustration, all of you sitting here can find out whether you are a baby or whether you are a son. You may say you have been a Christian for 25 years but 25 year old people can be retarded.

I have seen 25-30 year olds with down syndrome. I mean, they are no use to their parents as they are like little babies. Retarded and with no sense of responsibility, cannot take any responsibility in their home.

How many parents would be happy to have children like that? How many parents would be happy to have a child who is 25 years old and has zero sense of responsibility? Who is always looking for gifts and whose mental age is 3. No father or mother would ever be happy with such child and I want to say God is not happy with such children either. And yet the vast majority of God's children are retarded. They have no sense of responsibility towards God's work on earth.

Most churches are filled with babies who have no ability to even feed themselves. They need to be fed all the time. You know how babies are.

They don't know how to eat food themselves. They've got to be fed. A grown up person doesn't need to be fed.

He can feed himself. In fact he can feed his younger brothers and sisters too. And yet how many Christians are there even in large churches who can feed others? They go Sunday after Sunday after Sunday to be fed.

And so the pastor is weighed down. It's like he's got 200 little babies lying there on the floor, kicking their legs with a bottle to their mouth, drinking milk. That's how it is in a lot of churches.

And the pastor is like a mother with 200 babies. How in the world can he look after all of them? Nobody is growing up to take a responsibility to take care of the others. To feed them.

To take care of them. And don't you think a father or mother would be tremendously disappointed if they had children like that. That out of many children only one is normal.

That is the disappointment God feels in heaven. When he looks down on earth and sees so many people who claim to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Who say we are born again, we are children of God.

But who have no sense of responsibility for God's work. They do not do everything for the glory of God. They do everything for their own gain and profit.

They evaluate everything, every decision they take by how it will benefit them. Not how it will glorify God. And yet the Bible says, in that verse we read, even your eating and drinking, you must think of how it will glorify God.

Let me turn you to a verse in 1 Corinthians in chapter 6. In 1 Corinthians in chapter 6, Paul tells us what I could say is one of the secrets of why he became such a spiritual man. And if we take this seriously, anyone of us sitting here can be spiritual. Otherwise we will just remain religious.

1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 12 it says, Paul says, everything is lawful for me, but everything is not profitable. Now Paul was a born again Christian. And when he said about everything being lawful, he was not referring to all the unlawful things he had already given up.

We could divide everything on earth into two categories. Lawful and unlawful. Adultery, murder, theft, these are all unlawful.

There are many other things which are lawful. Now a Christian who avoids all unlawful things, avoids all sinful things, and does only lawful things, we would consider such a Christian as a very good Christian. Because even such Christians are rare to find, who avoid all unlawful things, and who never cheat on their taxes, never cheat other people, never take advantage of other people, who avoid all unlawful things, and will only do lawful things.

But do you know the Apostle Paul was even one step higher than that. He says here in this verse, of course I avoid all unlawful things, that's understood. But, even among the multitudes of things that are lawful for me, I still don't do all of them.

Because I don't have time to do all of them. I select from these lawful things what is profitable. Verse 12, I select what is profitable, and I spend my life doing that.

That's how he became a spiritual man. But a Christian who is not spiritual will only think in terms of, well that's lawful for me. I've been to many conferences where we have question answer time.

And I've noticed many questions that many believers ask is, can I do this, what's wrong with doing that, what's wrong with dressing up like this, or what's wrong with this other thing. And I say these are people who are trying to see how close to the edge of the cliff they can come without falling over. Now personally I'm not interested in finding out how close to the edge of a cliff I can come without falling over.

I'd like to stay far away. I mean, little children are interested in these things. You know when, we have a lot of our traveling in India is by train.

And one of the things little children sometimes when they're waiting on a railway station platform for the train to come, they will compete with each other to find out how close can we stand to the edge of the platform without the train hitting us. I mean a grown up wouldn't get into that type of competition with anybody. I'm not interested in finding out how close I can stand to the edge of the platform without the train hitting me.

And this is how a lot of Christians are living. What type of movies can I see without being polluted? Or how close can I get to the edge of impurity without becoming impure? These are babies. A mature person would say, I don't want to see how close I can get to the edge of the cliff.

I don't want to fall over. I'm not in that type of competition. How close can I get to the edge of the platform without being hit by the train? I'm not interested.

I want to stay a good distance away. I want to stay a good distance away from impurity. Why is it so many Christians have these type of questions? Can I see this? Can I watch that? Can I dress like this? What's wrong with this? What's wrong with that? These are little children.

They have no sense of doing everything for the glory of God. They are trying to find out where is the borderline between lawful and unlawful. Does this come under lawful or does it come under unlawful? Whereas Paul says, I'm not interested in finding out the borderline between lawful and unlawful.

I have no interest in that. I'm trying to find the borderline between lawful and profitable. Which is a much higher level.

Do you understand what I'm saying? Out of all the things I could spend my life doing, Paul says, I want to find out what's profitable, not just what's lawful. Because that's how Jesus lived. I could spend the money I earn in many ways, but all lawful ways.

I would not spend my money on anything unlawful. But Paul says, I would like to spend my money on what's profitable. Profitable spiritually.

Profitable for eternity. The way I spend my time. The way I spend my money.

The way I spend my life. You can either spend it all doing lawful things and get a good testimony before others. Or become a really spiritual man and spend your life on earth in the most useful way possible.

Let's take an illustration from building a house. Now you know that when you build a house, you'd like to budget your expenditure very carefully. So that you can get the maximum benefit out of the money you spend.

You'd buy a bit of property in an area which would be convenient and good for you. And as you plan the house, you say, well I want to get the maximum out of the money I spend on this house. I don't want to waste money on trivial useless things which are not going to be any benefit for me in the house.

Now a lot of Christians don't have that attitude when it comes to the life they are building. They don't feel that I've got to spend my life, my time and my money and my earthly life in the best possible way. Because I'm only getting one chance to live it.

And one day I stand before the Lord and I look back over the way I lived. And I'll tell you this. Lots and lots and lots of Christians are going to have tremendous regret in that day when they stand before the Lord.

Because they'll discover they wasted such a lot of their life. They wasted such a lot of their time and money and life in useless pursuits that have no eternal value. They live like babies with no sense of responsibility.

When God wanted them to be sons. So this is the thing that hinders the work of the Lord in the world. That so few of God's children are growing up.

So one of the things I find a great necessity for in every country is the same. To challenge people. To recognize your responsibility if you claim to belong to Jesus Christ.

Paul once wrote to the Corinthian Christians and said, He said, I can't give you any meat to eat because you're still babies. You still quarrel and fight with each other and all I can tell you is that Christ died for your sins. And that's all that you seem to live on.

That, oh, my sins are forgiven. But he says, there are deeper things that I want to share with you but I can't share it with you because you're not mature enough. I mean, you can't put meat into a baby's mouth, it'll

choke.

It'll die. And so that's what Paul told the Corinthians, I can't put any solid food into your mouth. I've got to just keep giving you milk.

Because you're not growing up and yet they were Christians for many, many years. And the Holy Spirit's written there, written that down there as a warning for us. Do everything for the glory of God.

Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount how Jesus taught his disciples how to pray? Prayer is communication with God. And what you pray for is a pretty good indication of where you are spiritually. If you want to know what your spiritual level is, just look into your heart and ask yourself the things that you pray for.

What are the things that you long for in your life? In the Old Testament, if you look at the things people prayed for, it was usually prosperity and kill my enemies. You read the Psalms, for example. If you read the Psalms, it was, Lord, finish off those fellows who are troubling me over there and please bless me in every possible way.

And give me all that I need and make me rich and prosperous and happy. And that's how it was in the Old Testament. And those were the prayers that the disciples had heard from childhood in their homes and in the synagogues.

And then they came in touch with Jesus and they found he was so different. He was so different from all their religious leaders. And they heard him pray and they said, Lord, teach us to pray.

And then Jesus said, OK, I'll teach you to pray. When you begin to pray, don't start praying that God will finish off your enemies. That's not number one.

And don't even pray that God will make you prosperous. That's not what you need first. When you pray, the uppermost longing of your heart must be, Father, hallowed be your name.

God, the greatest longing of my life is that your name should be glorified. That's a spiritual prayer. Religious people may repeat it like parrots.

But only a spiritual man can really pray that prayer. And God, my second request is still not that my back ache should be healed or anything like that. My second request is, thy kingdom come.

God, I'm longing for the day when your kingdom will be established across the face of this earth. I want your kingdom to spread. And third, Lord, I want your will to be done on earth, in my life, every day, exactly like it's done in heaven.

See, this is not like the prayers in the Psalms. This is New Testament. Most Christians are still living in the Old Testament.

It's almost as though Jesus hasn't come. It's almost as though the Holy Spirit hasn't come. Do you know that on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon his disciples, it ushered in a completely new age, a completely new dimension of a relationship that man could have with God, which was impossible under Old Testament times.

It would make a man truly spiritual. It would make a man follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. His primary ambition on earth, once the Spirit of God filled him, would no longer be to make money, or to be famous, or to live a comfortable life, or any such thing.

His primary ambition in life would be that God might be glorified through his life. That the kingdom of God could be spread on earth through his life. That God's will would be done in his life, like it's done in heaven.

However painful it may be. And after we finish those requests, then the Lord said, then you can go to your earthly requests after that. It's not that God doesn't care for our earthly needs.

It's not that we can't pray for our earthly needs. But a spiritual man, a man who's a real disciple of Christ, would pray like Christ prayed. First of all, God, let your name be glorified.

Let your name be hallowed. I want your kingdom to spread. I want your will to be done on earth.

See, he's not thinking of anything for himself. Have you noticed in that prayer, which we know is the Lord's prayer, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Have you ever noticed that the words me and my are never found in that prayer? Even once.

And if you compare that to the type of prayers the average Christian prays, the average Christian's prayer has got me and my frequently. Give me this and my this and my that and my the other thing. Give me this other thing.

And yet in the prayer which the Lord taught his disciples, those two words never occur even once. Even when we had to pray for our needs, he said, pray, give us. And there's a lot of difference between us and me.

Us means, I'm thinking of some of the other people around me who also are in need. Not just me. It's not give me my daily bread.

It's give us. First of all, I think of God. His name, His kingdom, His will.

And then when I come down to myself and my needs, I don't think only of myself. I think of my fellow believers, people around me who are hungry. Give us our daily bread.

And notice there in Jesus' prayer, that prayer, give us our daily bread, is, we could say, symbolic of all our material needs. But notice, He's thinking of our necessities. It's not give me my daily ice cream.

It's give me my daily bread. What is essential. It's not asking for luxuries.

It's asking for necessities. A spiritual man, I mean, God may give him ice cream. That's another thing.

God usually gives us much more than we deserve, and much more than we ask for. But that's something God throws in. But the spiritual man doesn't ask for it.

That's my point. I'm not saying he's wrong to eat ice cream. I'm just saying that, that's not what he longs for.

He's not asking for luxuries. God may give it to him without his asking. That's another thing.

But he doesn't look for that. He wants his life to count for God before he leaves this earth. And I want to say to any of you, if you really want to express your gratitude to Jesus Christ for dying for you on the cross, you cannot express it just by easing your conscience, going to church once a week, putting a little bit of money in the offering bag.

No. It requires a lot more than that. What would you think of a woman who gets married and the day of her wedding tells her husband, well, I'll spend one day a week with you and give you 10% of my time or something like that.

Who would want to marry such a woman? Would Christ want such a bride? If a man wouldn't want such a wife, would Christ want such a bride? Who gives part of her time and part of her life to him and says, I've got other interests too. Well, I think the Lord would say to such a person exactly what any man would say to his wife who wants to have that type of relationship. Well, you better be occupied with those other interests.

I'm not going to marry you. Do you see that the relationship that the Bible describes of Jesus and his disciples is exactly like a husband and a wife? The Bible says, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. See, that's the relationship that Jesus wants to have with us.

Exactly like a husband and wife. One of affection and deep love and care where everything is done out of love. That's why we read in Revelation chapter 2 where the Lord says, well, if you've left your love for me, everything else that you do has got no value for me.

You might as well not do it. Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. Now, this type of life, it's impossible to live it without the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know, as you hear a message like this, you can think of the Christian life and say, what a burden. Boy, well, it is a burden if you don't have the Holy Spirit. It's true.

I fully agree with you. But it was never meant to be lived without the power of the Holy Spirit. You know that? The Bible says, the Holy Spirit fills our heart with the love of God.

We love Him because He first loved us. In my own life, I can testify that my Christian life is not a boring, you know, drudgery. It's exciting.

Because I have sought to live it the past many years in a love relationship with my Lord and my Savior. If it were not that, it would have been a burden. Now, I want you to listen to the testimony of someone who is much older than me.

And that's the Apostle John. At the age of 95, he writes these words in 1 John 5, and verse 3. Now, remember, this is not the testimony of a young 25-year-old man. It's the testimony of a man who is writing at the age of 95, having walked with Jesus Christ for 65 years, being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, suffered a lot for the Gospel's sake, and he says, at the age of 95, this is the love of God.

1 John 5, verse 3. This is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not a burden. Think of that testimony. He says, 65 years, I've obeyed God, and it's been exciting.

It's not a burden. I praise God for that testimony. I want to have that testimony when I walked with God for 65 years.

To testify His commandments are not a burden. Why is it so many Christians find it to be a burden? Because they don't have a love relationship with Christ. As I said, you go to two people who are deeply in love with each other, and you ask them, is it a burden for you to spend half an hour together? He says, half an hour? I'm just hoping the time will stop.

We spent 10 hours together. I didn't realize it's 10 hours up already. Why is it? But you put that person to work in an office with a difficult boss, and he's just, the whole thing is a drudgery.

You know, that's the type of relationship a lot of people have with Christ. It's like working in an office for a salary. It's not like a love relationship.

And that's why the Christian life is so heavy and so boring. It was never meant to be that. It was meant to begin with a love relationship with Jesus Christ.

Do you have that first? Can you say like John says in 1 John 4, earlier he says in verse 19, we love Him because He first loved us. That's why His commands were not a burden. That's the place where Jesus wants to bring every one of us into a love relationship with Him.

That is New Testament Christianity. That is the purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not just to give us experiences.

It's to fill our hearts with love for Christ, with gratitude for what He did for us on the cross, that we fall in love with Him. We're deeply in love with Him and that any sacrifice, anything we do, we don't count it as anything because we love Him. I just want to show you one more verse before I close.

It's a verse that challenged me when I was a very young man. I gave my life to Christ when I was 19 years old. And I decided to love Him with all my heart at that young age.

I had an ambition. I was in the military. I was in the Indian Navy.

I had just joined and just been commissioned as an officer in the Navy. And my goal in life was to end up as the Admiral. I want to go right up to the top.

And Christ came into my life. And my ambitions changed. He gave me something better.

It's in the book of Genesis. I want to show you this verse. Genesis chapter 29.

It's the story of Jacob. When he went to his mother's brother's house, Laban's house. And he saw one of Laban's daughters, Rachel.

And he fell in love with her as soon as he saw her. And he wanted to marry her at any cost. So he went and asked her father, Can I have Rachel? And the father Laban said, Well, you can have her if you work for me for 7 years.

That means 7 years without pay. You work for me for 7 years and you can have her. And do you know what type of work it was? It wasn't office work.

It was looking after sheep. Out in the hot sun. In the summer.

The cold winter. Looking after the sheep. Feeding them.

Taking care of them. How many of you would do that for a wife? For 7 years. And at the end of 7 years, what would you say? Boy, that was tough.

But that's not what Jacob said. Listen to this. Genesis 29 verse 20.

So Jacob served 7 years for Rachel. And they seemed unto him like a few days. They seemed unto him like a few days.

Jacob, how long have you worked? Oh, maybe 3-4 days. 3-4 days? Do you know that you've been working for 2500 days? Oh, really? I forgot all about it because I was so madly in love with Rachel. That I said, boy, at the end of this I'll get her.

That's what it says in that verse. It seemed unto him like a few days because of one reason. That he loved this girl.

And what came to my heart at that time was. Lord Jesus. If a man can serve like that for a woman.

God, I serve you like that. Where even if I serve you for 50 years. It'll be just like a few days.

Because I love you. Why is the Christian life so heavy? Why is it a burden? Do you know it's no burden for me to forgive those who hurt me? It's no burden for me to love my enemies. It's no burden for me to bless those who curse me.

Or to pray for those who persecute me. Not at all. It depends on whether we love.

All these things are nothing. His commands are not a burden. To serve him is not a sacrifice or a burden.

If we love. If we don't love. Oh yeah, then it is a burden.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We pray you'll bring us to the place where we serve you because we love you.

And where obedience to you is not a burden. And where serving you is not a heavy thing. Lord Jesus.

We thank you for what you did for us on the cross. And you look to us this morning not primarily for service but for love. And we want you to find it in our hearts.

You did not come with words. You came. You loved us.

You gave yourself for us. And we want to respond in the same way. And give ourselves for you.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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