

Repentance, Dying To Self and Being Filled with the Spirit

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of continuous spiritual growth and becoming more Christlike every year. It discusses the concepts of repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit as essential steps in the Christian journey. The path of the righteous is compared to the sunrise, symbolizing being born again, and progressing towards the second coming of Christ. The sermon encourages believers to repent daily, live out the principles of baptism in their daily lives, and seek the power of the Holy Spirit to be bold witnesses for Christ.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Acts 2:37, Acts 2:38, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:3, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Acts 1:8, Matthew 16:24, John 14:26

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Bold Witnessing"

Description

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Transcript

There is a verse that has been for many years like a direction to my life that's found in Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 18. Here's a verse that I'd encourage all of you to be familiar with. It's talking about the path of the righteous.

The New God declares us righteous in Christ when we repent and come to Him and receive Him as our Savior. We are immediately declared righteous. The word justified means declared righteous in God's eyes immediately, whatever our past may have been.

But from there onwards, there is a path. Jesus said, the way to life is narrow. The gate is narrow, the way is narrow.

So there's a gate and a way, a narrow gate and a narrow way. So the gate that we enter in when we first get converted, it's not the end of our salvation. Jesus said there's a way from there that leads to eternal

life.

So that path is described here and is compared to sunrise. Sunrise is a picture of being born again. From the darkness, the light comes up.

And the noonday position, the full day as mentioned here, refers to the second coming of Christ. So from sunrise to noonday means from the time you're born again till the coming of Christ, till we meet Him in the air or we leave this earth. God's will is that our life should shine brighter and brighter, meaning that we should progressively become more and more like Christ, preferably every day or at least every year.

Just like we want our children to go from one grade to another every year. We don't want our children ever to sit in the same class for one more year. Every year they must be in a higher class.

We all have that passion. We are parents. Now I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, do you have a similar passion that every year should find you a little more Christlike than the previous year? That's the only way we will grow spiritually.

There'll be no backsliding then. The sun never backslides. It never hesitates.

It's never stationary. It's always moving. The moving of the sun is not visible, just like our spiritual growth is not visible.

But if you look after an hour or so, the sun has moved. And so we need to examine our lives and see over a period of a year whether we have become more Christlike. And if you're married, the best person to ask is your marriage partner.

You think I've become more Christlike over the last one year? Have I become more patient with you? Have I controlled my anger a little more at home? Do you see me a little more free from being occupied with money and possessions? Do you see me not getting upset over little things that go wrong? It's a good test. Otherwise, we can be like children who are content to live in the kindergarten forever. So in connection with this, how shall we ensure that we make progress? I want you to turn to the first message that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost.

And there were three things there that strike me, which I'd like to share with you. After Peter preached this message in Acts chapter 2, it says in verse 37, when people heard this message, they were pierced to the heart. They were convicted and said to Peter and the apostle, what shall we do? So here's the answer to the question, what shall we do? And that refers not only to the beginning of the Christian life, but to something that should characterize us throughout our Christian life.

And I want to make this very simple. I hope the children can understand too. So there are three things mentioned in verse 38.

And the answer to this question, what shall we do? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter filled with the Holy Spirit replies, number one, repent. Number two, be baptized. Number three, receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So those are the three things I want to say. First of all, repent. We need to understand clearly what repentance means.

Repentance, I've discovered the best way to describe it is with the military term, about turn. If you've seen a military parade, they sometimes say left turn, everybody turns left, or right turn, everybody turns right. And the other command is about turn.

About turn means you turn right around and face the opposite direction. That is the best definition of repentance, to turn right around. Now the trouble with a lot of Christians when they accept Christ is they have not done an about turn.

They've done a left turn or a right turn, which means they have not turned completely from that old sinful way. See, when we are unconverted, our faces are towards the world and sin. The world means, like it says in 1 John 2, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Those are the three things describe the world in 1 John chapter 2, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, and everybody's eyes are in that direction to a greater or a lesser extent. About turn means I turn completely around from that, not halfway, where I'm sometimes looking at there and sometimes looking at God. God is behind us when we are unconverted.

When we turn around, we've turned our back to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, and we are turned towards God. So if you find yourself in your life after you say you were born again, looking occasionally at these other things, you can be pretty sure you didn't do an about turn. You did a left turn or a right turn, 90 degrees instead of 180 degrees, and that is why spiritual progress in your life has been so slow, and that's why you don't seem to get revelation on the Word of God.

I long, my own desire has been to get revelation on the Word of God continuously, not just in the Bible. The Bible is a great temptation for those who preach to have knowledge, but we must never be satisfied with that. The New Testament Word is revelation.

Knowledge is for the scribes. Jesus criticized the scribes for having knowledge. Revelation comes when you have a desire to obey God, and the mark of revelation on God's your life.

So whenever you read God's Word, pray for revelation, and that will change your life, that you will repent and turn around 180 degrees. And repentance is not something that we need to do just once. We need to repent constantly.

In 1 John chapter 3, it says that Christ, we will become like Christ only when we come back. Let me turn to that verse. 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, the last part.

We all know this. We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him. That is the end of the race, the finishing line.

Now, how do you know that you're looking forward to the coming of Christ? I think everybody sitting here who's a Christian will say, I'm looking forward to the coming of Christ. Well, here is the test. Or rather, here is the proof that it's not just an empty knowledge you have in your head.

I mean, what's the difference between you as a born-again Christian and a nominal Christian? What is the difference between what you were as a nominal Christian and now as a born-again Christian? Did you learn something more? Is it something that you now you believe Jesus is the Son of God? You did not believe that in those days? Maybe you were from a non-Christian religion, yes. But if you grew up in a Christian home, you would always believe that Jesus Christ was God. So, it's not a change in head

knowledge for a Christian when he's born again.

It's a change in a life and a lifestyle. So, here it says that when He appears, we're going to be like Him. So what? Okay, here's the next verse.

If you really have this hope in you, you will purify yourself until you reach His standard of purity. Read that. How do you know you're waiting for the coming of Christ? 1 John chapter 3 verse 3. This is the only proof that you have a living hope, otherwise a dead hope.

Everyone who has this hope fixed in him, everyone, will purify yourself. How often? I believe every day. Until when? Until you become like Him, which is when He comes.

It's like running a race, a marathon race, where every minute finds you a little further from where you started and a little closer to the finishing line. And that's a good way to picture it. That if we are really walking with the Lord, every year should find us a little more Christ-like than we were the previous year.

And the best person to ask is your husband or your wife, whether you become a little more Christ-like or others who know you well. And the people who know us best are the ones that live in our own home. So repentance means I'm turning around.

And if I find anything in my life at any time, which is un-Christ-like, I need to repent from that immediately. Turn around. Lord, that was wrong.

Acknowledge the error first. Lord, that was wrong. I was wrong.

I have sinned, maybe in my thoughts or the way I spoke or something I did, or perhaps a wrong attitude towards someone. Lord, I had a wrong attitude. We sin in five areas.

Please remember these five areas. We sin in action. That's more visible.

We sin in words, when we speak with anger or bitterness or something like that. And we sin in thoughts. Nobody can see that.

Actions, words, thoughts. And then we can sin in attitudes towards people. That's inward and not visible.

You can have a wrong attitude towards a person for a long time and never even think that you need to repent of it. And number five is motive. Motive is where I did a very good thing, but the motive was wrong.

It was to get honor or it was to please somebody, not to glorify God. Any motive that is not to glorify God is sin. 1 Corinthians 10 31 says, do everything for the glory of God.

My whole life must be in one direction. I want to glorify God in my life. And I want to say this straight to you.

You think that's a very high standard? That's the only standard the Bible says. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 31, do everything for the glory of God. Whatever you do, it says in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 31, do everything for the glory of God.

Have you seen that verse? If you haven't seen it, my brother, sister, see it now. Do every single thing for the glory of God and evaluate your life by that standard, and whenever you come short, you acknowledge it. Action, word, thought, attitude, and motive.

Any area, Lord, I repent. I want to turn towards you, and progressively the path of the righteous will shine brighter and brighter and brighter. And I want to encourage all of you, if you have not done this, I think most of you may not have taken this seriously till now.

Take it from now onwards. That is the meaning of repentance, number one. We need to repent constantly.

The second thing I said was baptism. Baptism symbolizes death and burial and resurrection. The person goes down into the water.

He's accepting death and burial with Christ. Coming out of the water is symbolizing God lifts him up, just like God raised up Christ from the dead. So Jesus said we must take up the cross every day, and this is the meaning.

The baptism is symbolically just once, but the meaning of it, I must live on the principle of that baptism every single day, that when people put me to death, what do I mean by that? Not physically, when they insult you, abuse you, speak evil of you, tell lies about you behind your back, or treat you in a bad way, just like the children of Adam are, and sometimes even believers can treat you like that. What should you do? Let that chap put you to death. Go down.

Don't respond. Don't fight back. Somebody accuses you, keep quiet.

Let them believe whatever they want about you. Choose to die with Christ. Like Paul said, I'm crucified with Christ, and you can be absolutely sure of one thing.

Why did Jesus submit to death? Because he was absolutely sure his father would raise him from the dead, and you can be just as sure that if you accept death in some situation, when somebody treats you badly, or speaks rude way to you, and you keep quiet, and you love him in return, you can be absolutely sure you'll experience a spiritual resurrection inside. That is the meaning of baptism. You may not have understood it the first time you got baptized.

I got baptized in 1961, which is what, 63 years ago. I never understood all of it then, but as time went on, it became clear to me. I testified to something, and I want to live in that principle of that every single day.

I want to accept death. When people put me to death inwardly, I accept it. I'm not going to fight back.

I'm going to leave it in the Lord's hand, and if I accept it, you can be absolutely sure, my brother, if you accept it, God will raise you up from there, just like he raised up Christ from the dead. That's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, always bearing in our body the dying of Jesus. That's the meaning of baptism, symbolically.

Always I carry in my body this principle of dying with Jesus. I want to die with Jesus. I want to die with Jesus whenever people treat me badly.

I don't crucify myself like some Roman Catholic monks have understood they've got to whip themselves and flagellate themselves. No. Other people put me to death.

Other people crucified Christ. He accepted it. He did not resist it.

I believe he stretched out his palm, put the nails in, go right ahead. He put his legs together, put the nails in. He yielded, and if I do that, it says the life of Jesus will be manifested in my body.

That's a resurrection life. So that's another thing that we need to do every single day. First is repentance, and second is the outworking of this baptism that Peter spoke about.

And what was the third thing? You remember Acts 2? The third thing that Peter said, if you choose this, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that's the third thing, the power of the Holy Spirit. Why is the Holy Spirit being given? Here's another thing which has brought tremendous confusion in Christendom.

For some people, born-again believers of some denominations, they feel the only way you know you're filled with the Spirit is when you speak in unknown tongues. Well, Jesus never spoke in unknown tongues in his entire life. He was the most Spirit-filled person of all.

We're not against it. God has used it for, I think it's a gift God gives to enable the limitation of our human personality, enables us to communicate with God. It is only meant for communion with God.

On the day of Pentecost, there was a unique use for it to speak in 17 languages for people to hear. But thereafter, it is only meant for communion with God. When we find ourselves unable to express in any earthly language, praising God, God gives us an ability to praise Him with an unknown language.

That's the only way. It's not meant for sort of showing off to other people like most people do. But that's not the primary mark of being filled with the Spirit.

That's not the reason for being filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Acts 1-8, this to me is the clear answer. What will happen when you're filled with the Holy Spirit? Jesus didn't say when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, Acts 1-8, you will speak in tongues or you will cast out demons.

You may do that. I never cast out a demon until I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I never spoke in tongues until I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

But that's not the primary thing. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses. That is the purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Otherwise, we are shy, ashamed to testify about Christ in our place of work. I remember when I was in the Navy, and I said, Lord, I seem to be ashamed to be a bold witness for Christ in my place of work, because they're all non-Christians around me, and for me to stand up for Christ, what do my senior officers think and all these ideas in my head? But I'm supposed to be a witness for Christ. That's why I sought and sought and sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And I was filled with the Holy Spirit, I got power to be a witness. And the other thing I want you to notice here is the word, be my witness. Do you know the difference between being a witness and bearing witness? Jesus did not say, you will bear witness to me, you will be my witness.

Bearing witness is with our lips, we speak. Being a witness is by our life and our speech. So that is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit, that our life and our speech bears witness to the Christ who lives within us.

And I believe, or I seek to do, every single day, I seek to repent, find out something in my life that is un-Christlike. Every single day, I seek to take up the cross. Like Jesus said, you cannot follow me unless you take up the cross daily.

Every day, die to myself. And thirdly, every single day, I seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God is my witness.

And the way I know whether I'm being filled with the Spirit is by, am I being a witness for Christ by my life? Dear brothers and sisters, please pursue this, pursue this, you will find a change even within one week. Believe me. God bless you.

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