

Sanctification

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of internal transformation and understanding God's heart in the process of sanctification.

Duration: 1:10:14

Scripture: Judges 6:34, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:38-42, John 7:38, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of building our lives with either wood, hay, and straw or gold, silver, and precious stones. He emphasizes the importance of focusing on our inner walk with God and allowing everything to flow from that. The speaker also highlights the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, using the story of Mary and Martha as an example. He encourages believers to prioritize serving God and living selflessly, rather than being consumed by external actions. Additionally, the speaker mentions a booklet called 'God Needs Men' that he believes was directly inspired by God and discusses the need for true discipleship in today's world.

Transcript

This is a place for rest, where we'll never feel alone. And it's here, yes it's here, Lord is here before your throne. So I bow down before you and cry at your feet and praise your name.

I am bathed in the light of your glory. And it's here, yes it's here, Lord is here before your throne. There are rivers of tears.

Lord is here before your throne. So I fall down before you and cry for you. And I fall at your feet and praise your name.

I am bathed in the light of your glory. And it's here, yes it's here, Lord is here before your throne. I want to turn to a verse, first of all, in Psalm 103.

As I've studied through the scriptures, I've discovered that though there are two covenants, Old Covenant and New Covenant, Law and Grace, there are some people who lived in Old Testament times who had a New Covenant spirit. And there are lots of people living in New Testament times who have an Old Testament spirit. That's a very sad thing.

Now it's amazing that before the New Covenant was even established on the day of Pentecost, after the death and resurrection of Christ, that there were people before that who had that spirit. And those are the people who challenged me the most. I mean, praise God for people like Samson who delivered the Israelites, but to tell you quite frankly, he's not my example.

I'm not particularly interested in tearing lions to pieces and killing 300 Philistines and things like that. There were other lions inside Samson he never conquered. You know that.

But I read here of another man, Psalm 103 verse 7. It says here about Moses. Now that man was a New Covenant man in Old Testament times. There were times in David's life when he was another New Covenant man in Old Testament times.

Not all the time. There were certain expressions of Job in his book which shows that that man understood something of the New Covenant spirit. And what it says here is, God made known His ways to Moses, but His acts or His external actions to the sons of Israel.

God's ways are internal. God's actions are external. There were two types of people in the wilderness.

The Israelites who saw God's actions and wanted to see more and more of God's actions. They want manna from heaven. They want water from the rock.

They were not satisfied with manna. They wanted meat and God gave them meat. It was always external.

And they had a tremendous testimony. Imagine if one of them got up here in a meeting and began to tell you about the miracles they saw for 40 years. We'd sit with our mouths open.

Boy, we'd like to meet this man of God who experienced miracles for 40 years. And you read the Bible and you discover God was angry with that chap for 40 years. Do you believe that some people who have actually seen miracles are not necessarily accepted by God? Jesus said Himself in Matthew 7, verse 22 to 24, Many, not one or two, many will come to me in the last day and say, Lord, didn't we do miracles in your name? And He'd say, get away from me.

It's your attitude to sin that I'm concerned about, you workers of iniquity. That should be something that should speak to our hearts. But you'll never find a man who lived a holy life on earth who stands before Jesus and Jesus says to him, Get away from me, you who never did any miracles on earth.

You got to live a holy life to get into God's kingdom. You don't have to do miracles. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who, not he who does miracles, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven.

That's the important thing. So, here we see, and I see there are two types of Christians even today. Like in this verse, those who are taken up with God's external acts, like the sons of Israel.

And those who are taken up with God's ways, who want to know His ways. That means the reason why God works in the way He does. That means people who want to get into the heart of God and who are not just concerned with external actions.

The world is full of people who want to see God's external actions. I mean, look at the prayers that most people pray, Lord, do this for me, do that for me. And I believe 99.9% of the prayers that are sent from earth to heaven, even from believers, is concerning external things.

Lord, I need a house, or I need some healing, or I need this, or I need that, I need the other thing. And I think, I don't know, because I don't know what all prayers go to heaven, but from my fellowship and meeting with believers around the world, I've discovered that most people are interested in God doing something for them on the outside. But very few are interested in understanding God's ways.

They don't want to know God's heart. Through the years, more so of late, I find that I want to know God's heart. And if that's your desire, you'll be a new covenant person.

But if you're always taken up with the external, you'll be an old covenant person. You may be a good person, you may go to heaven, but when you get there, you'll be very disappointed and you'll have a lot of regret about the way you lived on earth if you were more taken up with the external than the internal, if you're more taken up with the action rather than the motive and the spirit. Because the person who's taken up with the external, the things about God, he also finds in his own life he's taken up with the external.

You know, Jesus was always going to the heart of the matter, to the root of the problem. How did he know that adultery consisted of more than the physical act? How did he know, as you read in Matthew 5, that it consisted of lusting with your eyes as well? He didn't need a special revelation from heaven. You know that? You know, we can think that, oh, Jesus came with a message from heaven.

Shall I show you that verse in the Old Testament written by a man who lived before Abraham? If you haven't seen it, let me show you. In Job 31, verse 1. And then you ask yourself, how did Job know that? What Jesus said 4,000 years later. How did Job, who never had a Bible, who never had any believers around him, who was one lone godly man in the whole world, how did he know, Job 31, verse 1, that he should not lust with his eyes? And Job lived even before there was a commandment saying, thou shalt not commit adultery.

He probably lived in the midst of people who were committing adultery. Because he lived before the law. And just in case you didn't know, Job was the first book of the Bible written.

Because Genesis was written by Moses. And Job is the only book in all the 66 books of the Bible which has no reference to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. No, every other book has some connection with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob except the book of Job.

And that's because he lived before Abraham. And if Moses wrote the book of Genesis, then Job must be the first book of the Bible. And it's very interesting that God decided to write a book for man, the first book he chose to write was about one godly man who understood his ways, and about one godly man who suffered so much.

Godly men suffer. Godly men are attacked by Satan. That's what you read in the first book of the Bible.

But ultimately God brings his servants through that trial and blesses them double. What did Satan succeed in doing to Job? Make him blessed double. What did Satan succeed in doing to you when he harasses you? If you react in the right way, like Job did.

Job said a lot of stupid things, but he repented. And when he repented, God immediately wiped out the record of all those stupid things he did. You know, that's one of the wonderful things I read in the book of Job.

If you read the book of Job, he said things like, God, why have you made me your target? Why are you firing your arrows at me? Haven't I done this? Haven't I done all this good? And a lot of things which... But then once in a while he'd say some good things too. He says, even if he slays me, I'll trust him. I know my Redeemer lives.

He says, even if I die and rise again, I will see him face to face and things like that. And one of those things he said here to his God was, Lord, I made a covenant with my eyes that I will never look at a virgin. I've got my wife.

And remember, Job was a grandfather. He wasn't a young man. Grandfathers need to make a covenant with their eyes.

He had ten children. We read in chapter one, they were all living in their own homes. They were not living with him.

And they used to have feasts in their own homes and Job used to call them to his house, pray for them. He was a man who prayed for his children even after they set up their own homes. He called them home.

Oh, in those days they respected their parents. Very different from our day. He called them, these ten married children of his who come, I want to pray for you fellas.

And at that age, he says, I'm quite happy with my wife. There was a new covenant man who lived even before the old covenant was given. What do these things teach us? That it's not a question of which period of time you live in.

Whether you lived 2,000 years before Christ or 1,000 years before Christ like a lot of people under the law or 2,000 years after. It's got to do with your heart. Man looks at the outward appearance.

But God looks at the heart. You can say, well I'm living in the New Testament age where Christ has died and risen again, the Holy Spirit has come. And you may have none of those benefits in your life.

And I've discovered that the vast majority of people who live in our time, even as believers, don't have a clue of what it means to live in the blessing of the new covenant. That song we just sang. I'm pressing on the upward wake.

For faith has caught the joyful sound. The song of saints on higher ground. I remember as a young Christian, once in a while, once in a while, I would meet a saint who seemed to be living at a far higher plane than I was living.

And a far higher plane than 99% of the believers I've met were living. And I got close to such people and said, How did you get there? I want to live there. It was my longing from the time I was a young man when I got converted.

I said, Lord, my heart's desire is to live on higher ground. And I'll tell you, it took me a long time. God tested me, but I was never happy.

I wasn't even happy with my ministry. I said, Lord, I'll give up my ministry. I'm not interested in preaching.

I want to live on higher ground. I want to live the way the New Testament says a disciple of Jesus must live. And those were the days when I began to be gripped by this verse in 1 John 2, 6 which says, He who

says he abides in Him, in Christ, must walk as He walked.

Must live as He lived. How many of us sitting here believe that your calling as a Christian is first of all to live as Jesus lived? That challenged me. Is it possible? And every time I thought about it, the devil said, No, it's not possible.

How in the world can you live as Jesus lived? He was Almighty God. Who are you? And I believed that argument for many, many years, and that's why I was defeated. Till one day, I read in the Scriptures that He was made like me.

Not in one or two areas. Hebrews 2, 17, if you've never seen it before. He was made like me in all things.

I mean, it's such a clear statement. I'm sure I had read it. I had read the Bible.

In fact, one of the first things I decided when I was converted at the age of 19 was to read through the whole Bible. And I read through the whole Bible in six months. You know, I'm absolutely amazed how so many millions of people in the world today claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ and say, and there may be some sitting here like that, who say, I believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Perhaps all of you say that. No. How is it that so many people who believe this is the only book in the world which is the Word of God don't spend hours studying it? I just can't understand it.

That means you're telling a lie when you believe this is the only book in the Bible, only book in the world which is God's Word. When I believed that, I decided if this is the only book in the whole world which is what God has written, I'd better get to know it. And I've spent 45 years studying this book.

And I've come to know God's ways, not just His external actions. And when you come to know God's ways, you come to know God. When you see His external actions, maybe you get blessed by God.

I mean, when you get manna from heaven, you're blessed, sure. You don't die of hunger. Jesus said, God makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil.

He sends the rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous. If you're a farmer, you need rain for your crops. You don't have to be a believer, you know that, to get rain.

You don't even have to be a Christian. What about atheist farmers on the earth? Do they get rain on their fields? Sure. Do they get good crops too? You know why? Because God is a good God.

Jesus said that in Matthew chapter 5. He makes the sun to rise on good and evil people. He makes the rain to fall on unrighteous and righteous people, farmers. So, if I get material blessings from God, what does it prove according to that verse? I must be either righteous or unrighteous, that's all.

That's all it proves. It doesn't prove anything more. Don't think that, Oh, God blessed me materially, so I must be a holy man.

Rubbish. Go back to Matthew chapter 5 and see what Jesus said there. He makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil.

Matthew 5.45 And that proves to me that material blessings are no proof of God being happy with you. In fact, He was angry with those Israelites for 40 years to whom He gave all those material blessings. Those

for whom God does things externally.

He gave me a job, praise the Lord. It doesn't prove anything. It just proves God is a good God.

It does prove one thing. God is a good God. And it proves that especially if you are not following Him and He still gave you a job or did good to you, He must really be a good God.

And when I see the way God blesses multitudes of unbelievers and people who hate God, I say, God, you must be a good God. I mean, wouldn't you say that about a man? If you saw a man being good to people who hated him and were trying to kill him and he was going to do good to them, wouldn't you say he's a good man? I can't understand how anybody in the world can think God is not a good God. God is a good God.

And the greatest proof of that is that He does so much good to people who don't care two hoots for Him, who are evil, who are fighting against Him, and He does good to them. And I'm amazed how so many believers can't believe that God is a good God, that He loves them immensely. Is there anybody here who's got any doubt about that? The Apostle Paul had to convince even Christians in his day, saying in Romans 8.32, He who did not spare His own son, but gave Him up freely for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Now, if you allowed your only son to take tremendous risk to save somebody who was drowning, and in the process your son lost his life, wouldn't that be fantastic? You love that person so much that you're really willing to risk your son's life to save that person.

And if that person who got saved from drowning, through your son dying to save him, had some doubt later on in life about whether you loved him or not, that unbelief would be the greatest sin of all. And that's why unbelief is such a terrible sin. When we doubt God, when we doubt His love, Jesus is always going to the heart of the matter, to the root of the problem.

That's why He kept saying to His disciples, He's saying, The Old Testament said, Don't commit murder. But I say, Go to the heart of the problem. It's anger that causes murder.

And if you get rid of the root, the fruit will never come out. Just hit that tree at the root and pull it out. Do you think a man who's got victory over anger is ever in danger of committing murder? That's impossible.

I mean, a rotten tree in your compound may be producing rotten apples year after year and you keep chopping it off, chopping it off, chopping it off. And you get tired of it until somebody says, Why don't you get an axe and get rid of the tree? That's a better way. When that is done, you can throw away your scissors.

You don't need it anymore. Right? Because the tree's been pulled out by the root. When the Bible says that if you walk according to the Spirit, you're free from the law.

That's exactly what it means. You can get rid of the scissors because the Spirit has come into your life and laid the axe to the root. Now, the problem with a lot of people is without the Holy Spirit coming and laying the axe to the root, they have thrown away the scissors.

And they are much worse than the fellows who kept the scissors. At least the guys who kept the scissors cut off the bad fruit. But these folks who say, We're under the new covenant, they don't have the axe laid to the root of their problem and they've thrown away the scissors.

They're not under new covenant. They're not under old covenant. They are under no covenant.

And that's why you find so many... I'm not talking about nominal Christians who are not born again. I'm not talking about those people in those dead denominations out of which people have come out and been born again. I'm talking about born again people that I've seen everywhere whose lives are much worse than those Jewish people who lived under the law.

That's amazing. Here's a man who lived before the law. Job.

How many men, born again men are there in the world? I'm talking about born again, restricted to born again Christians which is about 10% of Christians are born again perhaps. I'm only talking about that 10%. How many of them, men, can honestly say what Job said 4,000 years ago who had never heard about Jesus Christ, never knew anything about the Holy Spirit.

How many men today will say I made a covenant with my eyes that I will never look with lust at a woman. I mean I'm not talking whether they got victory over yet. I'm saying how many of them are even trying.

How many of them made a covenant Lord I'm never going to do it. They're not serious about their Christian life. They're not worried about that inner attitude so long as everything is okay on the outside.

See this is the difference between old covenant and new covenant. And if you're an external type of person you're really living under the Old Testament. That's what I want you to notice.

In the Old Testament everything was external. The temple was out there. You had to go to Jerusalem to meet with God.

In the New Testament this is the temple and God dwells inside here. In the Old Testament the sacrifices were outside. You could see the priest killing the ox or the lamb.

In the New Testament the sacrifices are inside and Jesus said don't let anybody see it. When a godly man prays in secret he doesn't talk about it. When he fasts in secret he never talks about it.

When he gives money to God in secret or to the poor he never talks about it. But the fruit of all those sacrifices you can see in his ministry. You can see in his life.

You can see in the Christ-likeness of character because the Bible says, Jesus said your father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Other people will see. But they won't see your sacrifices.

They won't see what all you suffered in secret or what all you sacrificed in secret. They'll see the result. Here's another new covenant man in Old Testament times.

Genesis chapter 22. This is Abraham. He was a new covenant person who lived even before the law.

It's great to see these men. Not everything they did was new covenant. Abraham told lies.

And I don't want to follow him there. You know, he lived before the Holy Spirit was given. So I can't say that I can follow Abraham or David or Moses and everything.

Moses lost his temper. But there were certain things in these men that I can pick out and say, boy! That's new covenant. Like we saw about Moses.

He wasn't just taken up with the manna and the quails and the water out of the rock. He got behind all that, got up into the mountain alone with God, fasted and prayed, got to know God's ways. And because he had a hunger to know God's ways, God revealed His ways to him.

And the Israelites who had only a hunger to get some external miracles done for them, that's what they got. You get what you want. If you're only interested in God giving you physical healing, I tell you, you may get that.

But you may still go to hell. A lot of people whom Jesus healed in His lifetime went to hell. A lot of people whom Jesus healed in His lifetime were the people who shouted, crucify Him, crucify Him.

I'm amazed how that happened. I can't believe that in that crowd there was not a single person who was healed by Jesus. He healed so many thousands of people in His lifetime.

But they forgot all about it. Because they were taken up with the externals. But there were a few who wanted to know God's ways, even in Jesus' lifetime.

Very few. And those are the ones Jesus prayed for. Can you imagine a man spending... a person like Jesus, who had such a perfect life and a perfect ministry, and at the end of the ministry He's only got eleven people about whom He can present to His Father.

Eleven. You read in John 17, Father, I'm praying for these eleven. Would you say that man has a successful ministry who spent all his life producing eleven people? We wouldn't think that today, right? But those eleven people turned the world upside down.

They were much better than eleven million of today's believers who can't even turn their own life upside down, leave alone the rest of the world. It's a quality of person Jesus produced. You know, I have felt, Lord... I've been in the ministry now forty years.

And I'll tell you something. It's difficult to produce one person like those apostles. That's my testimony.

Maybe it's my failure. But it's not easy. The best believers I find today are so selfish, so proud.

They don't know how to fast. They don't know how to pray. They don't know how to live utterly for God.

There's a lot of activity in their life. But there's not much overcoming sin in secret. They don't know what it is to be filled to the Holy Spirit.

They get into theological arguments and doctrinal controversies over the baptism in the Holy Spirit instead of saying, God, I'm a dry person. That's what I... You know, I heard about all these controversies about baptism in the Holy Spirit. One group saying this, another group saying that.

I said, Lord, I don't know what these groups are saying, but I know I'm dry. And I need rivers of living water flowing out of my life. And I don't care for this theology or that theology.

I want God. I want the fire of the Holy Spirit in my life. And I tell you, God met with me.

My whole ministry changed when God baptized me in the Holy Spirit and fire. And I'm not a Pentecostal or a charismatic, by the way. That's not for certain groups of people.

What was Peter? He was a Christian. Period. And that's what I want to be till the end of my life.

Abraham, Genesis 22. Now, this person is now 125 years old. 50 years earlier, God had tested him first.

When he was 75 years old, with his wife 65 years old, retired, living a comfortable life. And God said, Pull up everything and move on from here. And he obeyed.

How many people who are 75 years old who built their house and decided to settle in one place for the rest of their life would be willing to let God pull them out and say, Go on. I've got to take you out. And they asked God, Where are you leading me? He said, No, I'm not going to tell you.

He said, Sure, Lord, I'll follow you. That was a test. And it was an even greater test for Sarah just to follow her husband.

50 years later, after God has tested him in many areas, he tests him again. You think God's finished with you? I find a lot of young people, they think, Well, after 2-3 years of God testing me, I'm ready to serve the Lord. I want to tell you something.

50 years from now, you'll still be tested. If you want to go to a still higher plane. Lord, lift me up.

I've been walking with you 50 years, God. You've lifted me up in so many levels. I'm still crying.

I want to scale the utmost height. What a verse! I don't know whether it hit you when you sang that last verse. I want to scale the utmost height.

I remember as a young man, I prayed this prayer. And I prayed it in different times. I said, Lord Jesus, as much as it is humanly possible for a human being like me to experience everything that you experienced in your earthly life, I want it.

And a few years ago, when some religious Christians took me to court, exposing their own doctrines, etc. I walked into court for the first time in my life, about 5 years ago. The Lord said, You remember that prayer you prayed? Everything that Jesus experienced, I wanted to experience.

Well, I wasn't exactly asking for this. But once I heard that, boy, that was a spring in my step as I went to the court that day. I said, I see the footsteps of Jesus here.

Hallelujah, praise the Lord. He was taken to court by religious people on false charges. Boy, this is an answer to prayer.

The next thing is only martyrdom. In the Living Bible, there is a wonderful translation of Proverbs 14, 14, which says, The godly man's life is exciting. That's really how it has been for me since I've come to know the Lord's ways.

And not just in taking up his external actions. I want to encourage all of you, if you want to live a godly life, if you want to scale the utmost height, if you want to go to a higher plane, be more interested in understanding God's ways, rather than the external actions. The spirit.

Because a person who wants to know the inner heart of God more than his external actions, will become an inner person himself. You see, Christians can be divided into two categories of people. Those who are taken up with the externals, and those who are taken up with the internals.

As I said, the Old Testament, everything was external. In the New Testament, everything is internal. In other words, it's not that we don't do anything external.

We do a lot of things externally. For example, we have a meeting like this, we serve, we help others, we do a lot of external things. But, please understand this difference between law and grace.

Old covenant, New covenant. In the law, it was only the external. Under grace, it had to come from the inside.

That's the difference. Jesus said, John 7, 38, He who believes in me, out from his innermost being, will flow rivers of living water. Got it? Where is it going to flow from? It's not just the rivers of living water.

The point is, where is it going to flow from? From his innermost being. Whereas in the Old Testament, you read in verses like Judges 6, I think it's verse 34, it says, The Spirit of God clothed Gideon. You know, the shirt of mine.

You know, this is not part of my inner being. This is external. I can take it off in a moment.

And I can put another shirt. And in the Old Testament, people could be like that. The Spirit of God came upon them just, it was external.

It was not from the innermost being. The Spirit of God clothed Gideon. Judges 6, 34.

That means it was his dress, which he could take off. Like Samson would put on that dress and go and kill a lion. And when he met Delilah, he'd take it off and wear some other dress.

It was a double life. And when a Christian lives like that, he comes to church. Oh, I'm going to church now.

I got to put on the right shirt. And he acts spiritual there. And then he goes home and takes it off and he's a normal self at home.

That's Old Testament. And a new covenant person does not live a double life. Anyone who's living a double life here, I tell you, I don't care what you believe, you believe in another Jesus.

Not the Jesus of the Bible. You haven't understood the new covenant at all. In the new covenant, there is no double life.

When Ananias and Sapphira tried to live that double life, God killed them. And that's because they made the big mistake of joining a church, which is on fire for God. If you want to live a double life, don't join a church, which is on fire for God.

Now, Ananias and Sapphira had been in Corinth, which is a half-hearted church of compromisers. There had probably been elders in that church. It depends which church you belong to.

I remember somebody asked me, why doesn't God do things like He did those days in slaying Ananias and Sapphira? I said, there hardly be anybody alive if God did that today. That's the thing. Very few people are interested in that inner life.

You know the story of Mary and Martha? A classic example of new covenant and old covenant. You know that story in Luke 10, verse 38 to 42? I'm just rushing through those verses for lack of time. You read it if you make a note of it.

If you know the story, it's okay. Martha, as soon as Jesus came, she was busy. She went to the kitchen and began to prepare food for Jesus and His disciples.

Now, do you think that's a good action to prepare food for Jesus and His disciples? To unselfishly forget about yourself and go and work hard to make food for other people. That is one of the most unselfish actions I can ever think of. Where you're thinking of serving Jesus' disciples.

And there were 13 people she had to cook meals for. But yet, when she came before the Lord, the Lord said to her in Luke 10, verse 42, Martha, you're worried about a lot of things. To paraphrase it, unimportant things.

Mary, whom you're complaining about. You know, Martha's complaint was tell Mary to come and help me. She's just sitting there like a lazy woman listening to you.

And Jesus said, No, that's more important. How many people believe that it's more important to listen to God than to do something for Him? Martha was doing something for the Lord. And Mary was just sitting, listening.

You know, I think I have met more Christians than all of you sitting here. And I'll tell you, I have met very few in my life in any part of the world who believe that it's what Jesus said in Luke 10, verse 42. One thing is needful.

And that is to listen to me more than going out and doing unselfishly a lot of work for me. You find it's all these people who are trying to do work for the Lord unselfishly, whose lives are so shallow. They're defeated by sin in their homes.

But they're doing a lot of activity. Plenty of it. Today Christendom is full of activity.

And you can distinguish these Marthas by one mark. When they come together, they always talk about what they're doing for the Lord. How many dishes they've prepared for the Lord.

What they're doing here and what they're doing there. And how many people came to the Lord here and how many people came to the Lord there. And what they're doing here and what they're doing there.

And then the Marys, when they come together, you know what they're talking about? This is what the Lord said to me. This is where the Lord gave me light on myself. I find it's pretty easy too.

It's not that the Marys do nothing. I find in the long run, the Marys accomplish much more from an eternal standpoint than the Marthas do. Statistics wise, the Marthas have got huge structures there built of wood, hay and straw.

And the Marys have got small little vessels of gold, silver and precious stones. And the final day, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 13 to 15, God is going to take all this and put it in the fire and you'll know which is going to last forever. It's the person who is concerned with that inner walk with God that everything came out of their inner life.

I'll give you another example. In the Old Testament, God commanded people to type. Give 10% of... It wasn't money by the way.

Just by the way, in case some pastor tries to fool you in this. I want to tell you that the Old Testament, they were not asked to give money primarily because they were not businessmen. They were not working in factories.

They were not getting a monthly salary. They were farmers. Every Israelite was a farmer.

There were no factories there. It was not an industrialized nation. All that's in the last 200 years.

This is way back 3,000 years ago nearly. They were farmers. That 10% meant from their fields.

And that's why Jesus said, you fellows are so careful even about the little bill and come in your way and take 10%. It's all great. But the point in the Old Testament was it had to be a percentage.

It was quantity. Is that exactly 10% of your crops? In the New Testament, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9, God loves a cheerful giver. You see how suddenly the emphasis has shifted from quantity to quality.

Not 10%, but cheerfully. It's not how many things you've done for the Lord, but what has it come out of? Has it come from inside? It's not a question of how much you gave, but did you give it cheerfully? I love to tell that story of the little girl who went to Sunday school and her mother had given her \$1 to put in the offering box and \$0.25 to go and buy some candy on the way home. And when she came home, the mommy asked her, did you put the \$1 into the offering? And she said, well, mommy, I really wanted to put the \$1 in.

But just as we were going to put the offering, the Sunday school teacher said, God loves a cheerful giver. And I felt I could give the \$0.25 more cheerfully than I could give the \$1. So I just obeyed the Sunday school teacher and put \$0.25 in, bought candy for \$1 on the way home.

Do you know that she was really a new covenant person? Do you think God wanted her to reluctantly, grudgingly, complainingly put that \$1 in and say, oh, this demanding God, I wish I could keep that \$1. You know, God was happy with that little girl. I don't know if anybody understands that.

Don't let these covetous pastors fool you. We're interested in your money. I know I come from a country where lots of people think that Christianity is all about money.

And that's why we decided when we started 25 years ago that in all of our churches we would never take an offering. And we've never done that in 29 years. We have 40 churches.

We've never taken an offering on a single Sunday or weekday for 29 years. We keep a box at the back and say those who want to give can give because if you put a... if you stick an offering bag in front of somebody he's compelled to give at least for the sake of decency because people are looking at him from either side, you know. And we don't want that.

We say it's there at the back and if you don't have anything to give don't give. It doesn't matter. God loves a cheerful giver.

And we've got a verse put on that box that's there at the back. You know what the verse says? Not give and it shall be given to you but first be reconciled to your brother and then give. So that we're actually stopping the person from giving because he suddenly realizes somebody's got a grudge against him.

I find that God's not so interested in your money. He owns all the silver and the gold in the world. Why in the world would He be interested in your little few cents? It's not that.

He's interested in your heart. God's interested in the inside. It doesn't mean we don't have to give but it's a question of whether it comes from the heart or not.

Everything. That's what we see here in Genesis 22. God tested Abraham.

God's testing us all the time. He's not testing how much we give. He's testing how we give.

He's not testing what we do. How we do. You know you just heard Dale and Karen sing here.

I've heard a lot of people sing solos. But I tell you this is my honest testimony. I have never in my life heard anyone sing like them.

I'm not saying that lightly. Because first of all I can understand the words. In a lot of today's music I don't know what the fellow is saying.

Maybe Christian music but I can't understand what they're saying. And secondly do you see the modest, humble spirit there? I tell you it's a blessing. It's a spirit.

If you want to learn how to sing learn something from that. God is interested in the inside. It's a spirit that matters more to Him than all the songs we sing, all the sermons we preach and all the things we do.

It's the inside. That's what we see in Abraham's life. He's testing us.

God tested Abraham by speaking to him one night. And even Sarah didn't hear it. Don't we have that type of experience? For example, right now God may be saying something to your heart and the person sitting next to you, maybe your wife, doesn't know what God is saying to you.

Right? We always have that experience in an anointed meeting. And you don't realize that when God says something to you in a meeting and nobody else heard it, that's when God tests you. Now if God were to call out your name publicly from heaven right now and say, Hey you! Tom, Dick or Harry or whatever it is.

Do this! You'd better do it otherwise you'd lose your testimony before all the others who know you. Right? But when God says something to you secretly, you don't have to do it. You don't lose your testimony because nobody ever knows what God said to you.

That's how it was with Abraham. God spoke to him in the middle of the night saying, Abraham, God wanted to make sure nobody else was listening. That's why God's given us all a private area in our life, our thought life.

He can speak to you right now without the person sitting next to you knowing what God is saying to you. He spoke to Abraham. Sarah was sleeping next to her.

She didn't have a clue what God was saying to Abraham. Abraham woke up and said, What's it God? Take your son. Offer him up in the land of Moriah in one of the mountains.

I'm going to tell you. I want you to notice two things here. Genesis 22.2. God didn't tell him when to do it.

He could do it next year. He could do it ten years later. And He didn't tell him to do this just around the corner.

Moriah was three days journey. Imagine having to drive three days in your car. The point is three days journey, not distance.

When we talk of distance in those days and distance today, we don't get the idea. Three days journey. What was God testing him about? A number of things.

First of all, when you get up in the morning, let's see whether you're going to do what I say. And secondly, let's see whether you'll do it immediately or whether you'll pray about it and think about it. I know God said it, but let's think about it.

You know, people read something in God's word and say, yeah, I see it in Scripture, but I'm still praying about it. You don't have to pray about something if it's already in Scripture, brother. Those are all silly excuses for people who actually want to disobey God.

And I've seen one thing through the years. Those who are very sluggish in their obedience early on in their Christian life are sluggish all the way to the end. Those who are quick to obey God as soon as they hear, I found they're usually quick all the way to the end.

I decided when I was a young Christian that if I was doubtful about God's will, then I could wait. That's permitted. Very often we are doubtful.

Does God want me to do this or that? Those are areas which are not written in Scripture. Does God want me to marry this one or that one? I don't know. Or go to this place or that place? I don't know.

For that, I may have to wait. Sometimes wait for years. That's okay.

But if something's written in Scripture, I don't have to wait for a single second. Unless I haven't understood it. That's also possible.

And I say, I haven't understood this, Lord. Can you just explain it to me? That's okay. But God tests us when He tells us something and nobody else has heard what He said to us.

Supposing you left it with your eyes and God said, That was adultery. And you say, Well, nobody saw me. So what? God was testing you.

That thing you did was not righteous. Your handling of money there was not righteous. It's not according to the law of the land.

You cheated on your taxes there. Or something like that. You say, Well, they can never catch me.

There's no evidence. Those are all for unbelievers. Those type of arguments.

A man who wants to go to a higher plane doesn't have such arguments. He says, Lord, I want to do what's right before you. That's the first thing.

God tested Abraham. I want to see whether you'll obey me even when you have a good testimony even though you disobey me. Abraham got up next morning and acted as if nothing happened.

He would still maintain his testimony as a man of God. You read in the previous chapters people recognize him as a man of God. And a lot of people standing in the pulpits today who through the years maybe got a testimony as godly men.

But at some point in their life I know wonderful men of God were mightily used by God at one time. And then their heads got swollen because God used them. And they began to think that they were special favorites of God.

Let me tell you, God doesn't have any special favorites. He deals with you as you are right now not as you were 10 years ago or even yesterday. And they got swollen headed thinking that they were special favorites of God and began to inwardly backslide.

It happened to me 30 years ago when I was a well-known preacher. And God tested me to see whether I'd continue that way. And I got so fed up I said, Lord, I'm going to quit the ministry.

I will not preach anymore because I'm not living what I'm preaching. And if you don't do something in my life to make everything I speak to come out of my private personal life that's not 100% true I'm never going to preach again. That's when God filled me with the Holy Spirit and turned my life around.

So I want to say this, that it's very easy for a man to build up a reputation and then inwardly disobey a lot of things that God's saying to him to set right. And there you discover he's a man who's only interested in his outward testimony. He's not interested in the inside.

But what did Abraham do? It says, early in the morning he got up verse 3 and he went. He obeyed immediately. And he didn't tell people about this tremendous sacrifice he was going to make.

That's the other wonderful thing about him. He walked all the way three days. It says on the third day, verse 4 he reached Moriah.

He didn't say, does it matter to you where I offer my son? I mean, why travel all this journey up there? There was a reason. Many years later, about a thousand years later, in the very spot where Abraham offered his son. That was the place where God built the temple in Jerusalem.

You read that in 2nd Chronicles 3 verse 1 That was the very spot God had prepared a spot in Jerusalem. It wasn't called Jerusalem those days. Where he was going to build this temple and he wanted Abraham to take his son there and offer his sacrifice because he said, my house is going to be built in a place where people are obedient.

In a place where people are obedient and secret. Where people make secret sacrifices. Do you know that's where the house of God is built even today? Where people like Abraham obey God in secret.

And they are rewarded openly. So that's why God told him to go those 3 days journey. Abraham didn't know all that.

Abraham didn't know this very spot on which I'm going to offer my son. One day God's going to build this temple and the glory of God will come upon it. He didn't know all that.

And a lot of things you don't know. The reason why God asked you to do something which is a bit inconvenient for you right now is because there's a glory that's to come on that at a future time. And you try to use your reason and say it doesn't matter if I do it this way or that way.

It does matter. When God tells you to do it one way that's the only way you can do it. And Abraham did it.

He went there. And then when he got there he told all his servants you hang around here. You're not going to come up with me.

He was going to make a tremendous sacrifice the greatest sacrifice he had ever made in his whole life. And he did not want a single person to watch him. You know that's what I mean by a new covenant man who's going to make a tremendous sacrifice for God and he doesn't want a soul to know about it.

Are you like that? Have you ever made a tremendous sacrifice to God and not a soul knows about it. Not even your wife. Your left hand didn't know what your right hand did.

Do you know the meaning of that verse? That your wife shouldn't know the sacrifices you've made. That's the meaning of that verse. Have you ever done something like that where there are a lot of sacrifices we can't prevent other people from knowing.

If you're fasting for example your wife will know about it. How many sacrifices have you made in your life which not a soul knows about till today. That is a new covenant person.

Abraham he told his servants you wait here and verse 5 he told all his young men stay here I and do you know what he said? He didn't say well fellas I'm going to make a great sacrifice before God now. None of all that. He said I'm going to worship God that's all.

I will come back don't worry. Not a clue they didn't have a clue what he was going to do. What a way to live.

That you've made all these fantastic sacrifices in secret and people look at you and say well he's no different from anybody else. You've really concealed from all those people those sacrifices you've made. That's how Abraham was.

And up there in the mountain alone with God nobody else watching him. He said God it's only you and me here. And I'm going to prove to you that I love you more than anything on this earth.

This is the darling of my heart. I don't love anyone on earth more than him. I'll give him up to you.

That's the area where God is testing all of us. And the person who passes that test is not in danger of going back under the law. There was an old saint who lived many thousands of years ago a Christian who said You know you don't really need any rules other than this.

Love God with all your heart and then you can do whatever you like. Try that. Make sure you do the first part.

Love God with all your heart and do whatever you like. You know why? That's safe. Because when a man loves God with all his heart more than money more than his life more than everything a thousand things in the world he'll never do.

He cannot do. Because he loves God with all his heart. And he doesn't judge people by rules.

You know the trouble with the Pharisees was always this. They were not seeing whether a person loved God. They were seeing does he wash his hands like we wash our hands.

You know the Pharisees had this rule about it wasn't in any law of Moses because we all need to wash our hands as a hygienic practice. But they had this special law of washing it up to the elbows and they do it for so many minutes. That was a ritual.

And when they didn't see Jesus doing that they questioned him. You know legalists are like that. They would even question Jesus.

They were always questioning Jesus. How can you allow this sinful woman to wash your feet? They were always trying to catch him. What does he think about this? What does he think about that? I've met people like that who question me about what do you think about this? What do you think about that? And I know they are exactly like those Pharisees who want to catch Jesus.

They want to try and catch me in some statement. It's amazing. You know you can have a hang up on something.

I remember once I was with a group of people who believed that a man should never shave his beard. And I was the only one there with a shaven face sitting in the midst of all these people in that church who had beards. And one of them tried to embarrass me over lunchtime and said, Brother Zach, did God make a mistake in giving you hair on your face? Or did you make a mistake in shaving it off? Cutting it off? I said, Lord, I've got to get a quick answer now.

I said, Did God make a mistake brother in giving you nails or did you make a mistake in cutting them off? And he was silent. He was embarrassed. I changed the subject because I didn't want to lose a friend.

I didn't want to push him to a corner. But that showed me the things that people are taken up with. It's just an example.

It's probably an extreme example. In your case, it may not be such an extreme example. It may be some other little gnat, mosquito.

Jesus said, You Pharisees, you strain out mosquitoes and you swallow camels. He was a master of exaggeration and sarcasm. And I want to follow Jesus.

You know, some people tell me, brothers, you exaggerate sometimes. I say, I'm just following Jesus. To make, drive home a point.

What does it mean by swallowing a camel? Can anybody humanly swallow a camel? Can anybody have a log inside his eye? Do you know who made those statements? He said in Matthew 23, You strain at a mosquito. Here's your cup of tea and you see a mosquito. Oh, I don't like mosquitoes.

Strain it out. And there's a camel inside there. You swallow it.

Now, do you know what that means? It means, in modern language, you major on minors. Do you know the meaning of majoring on minors? There are small commandments, there are big commandments in scripture. Jesus himself said that in Matthew 5. I think it's verse 19.

Where he said, If you don't obey the least of these commandments and you teach other people not to obey the least of these commandments, you'll be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. You won't go to hell. You'll go to heaven, alright.

But you'll be the least there. But he who teaches other people to obey the least will be the greatest. Now the point is this.

If you strain at those small commandments and you ignore the big ones, that's exactly what it is. You go to Matthew 5.19 and you say, I'm interested in obeying the small commandments. Good.

But make sure you obey the big ones too. Otherwise, you can say, Hey, doesn't it say in the Bible, you take a microscope and says, doesn't it say in this verse like this? And you say, I'm one of those who keep the small commandments so I'm great in the kingdom of heaven. Not necessarily.

You may be a Pharisee who also kept the small commandments but ignored the big ones. He said, You fellas, you type, mince and dill and come in and you can't have compassion on a fellow who's got a withered hand whom I'm coming to heal and you don't want him to be healed because it's a Sabbath day. What about if your donkey fell into a ditch on the Sabbath day? Would you pull him out or not? Jesus really put people on the spot.

He says, You're so narrow minded. You strain at small mosquitoes and you're swallowing camels. Abraham was tested.

He said, Lord, I love you more than anything else. That is the greatest commandment. You know, once people came to Jesus and said, What is the greatest commandment? They wanted to test him because a lot of people in Israel thought the greatest commandment was the Sabbath.

You've got to keep the Sabbath. There are a lot of Christians today who feel like that. The greatest thing is to keep the seventh day holy.

Garbage. Garbage. Somebody asked me, What should we do on the Lord's day? You've got to please the Lord.

I've got seven Lord's days a week, I said. Not just one. Which is the Lord's day for you? Is Monday not the Lord's day? This is the day the Lord has made? Which day? Only Sunday? As far as I'm concerned, He's made seven days for me.

Every day is the Lord's day. Which day am I permitted to be unholy? Which day am I permitted to sin? Which is the day which is not the Lord's day? Which is my day? If it's not the Lord's day, it's my day. I don't have any.

In the Old Testament, they did have the Sabbath, I know. But, every day is the Lord's day. But, they expected Jesus to say something else and to catch him in that.

And Jesus said, You know, they were trying to look through the ten commandments. Which is he going to pick up? Adultery? Sabbath? Honoring father and mother? Whichever you picked up, they would say, but it also says this. So, he fooled all of them.

He said, I'll tell you which is the greatest. Love God with all your heart. Which commandment is that? And he said, that's not all.

There's another one linked to it. You can't have one without the other. Love your neighbor as yourself.

That includes all ten. And he said, that's the greatest thing. And he was talking about something inward there.

He wasn't talking about washing the hands or these external things. There are a lot of external things. God himself commanded it.

Sure, he said, when you offer a sacrifice, you must do it like this, do it like this. But there was more to the law than just that. The law was primarily inward.

And God showed his ways to those who hungered after that. To know the truth. We'll stop there.

Spar heads in prayer. Lord, help us to understand your ways. So many are taken up with the external.

Help us to know your ways, we pray. In Jesus name, Amen. I want to tell you about a little booklet that we kept out there.

Is it out there? See, this is actually an article. It's probably found in one or two of my books as well. It's called, God Needs Men.

And on all the books and articles and things that I've ever written in my whole life, this, I would say, is the closest to what I felt was something God gave me directly. And recently, God put a burden on my heart. This is written in 1986.

Just one time, God put me in a hospital bed for about 10 days and told me what to write. And recently, God put a burden on my heart to try and get this booklet out to Christian leaders, pastors, in different countries, those who know in English. So, just to make sure you don't pick up something unnecessarily, we put a price on it.

Only 10 cents. But, more than the 10 cents, if you have a burden for somebody, maybe a pastor, maybe a leader, maybe someone who claims to be a Christian, who you feel needs to hear... This is talking about the deeper life, not the way of salvation. It's not for unbelievers.

The type of man God wants him to be, I would encourage you to take maybe 5 or 10 copies and don't give them out. If you can't give them out with prayer, maybe with a personal letter, in an envelope, or personally. And, you never know what result can come from that with 10 cents, but with a lot of prayer behind it.

So, today, I want to request you not to take more than 10 copies. If there's more left over tomorrow, you can take just so that others get an opportunity too. But, I'm really burdened that a lot of people in Christian leadership don't understand, don't have a clue about the type of man they should be if they are going to serve God.

That's the reason why this burden is on my heart.

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