

Sin is More Serious Than the Worst Sickness

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God intimately, comparing sin to sickness and the cure provided by Jesus' sacrifice. It highlights the need to live by faith, not fear, as the world approaches the end times, and encourages a life filled with grace to prevent sin. The speaker urges a deep understanding of Scripture, humility, and a focus on exalting Christ above seeking recognition or appreciation.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 8:17, Philippians 3:20, 1 Peter 2:24, James 5:14, Luke 21:28, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Intimacy with God", "Living by Faith"

Description

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Transcript

We have a fellowship in Pittsburgh, CFC Pittsburgh, and those are the ones who produced that. There's a brother there called Satish Bennett who's got a tremendous gift of illustrating. And there's a whole series of illustrations he's made of different truths that we have proclaimed in CFC.

I would encourage all of you to go to that site and watch all of them. In Isaiah chapter 53, it speaks about the cross. It says here, verse 5, he was pierced through for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his stripes we are healed, or by his scourging we are healed. Now, most charismatics and Pentecostals take that verse to apply to healing from sickness and say that Jesus died not only for the sins of the world, but also to heal us of our sicknesses.

Now, we have to always compare the Old Testament with where it is quoted in the New Testament to understand truth correctly. So, if you turn to Matthew chapter 8, we read of one of those prophecies in Isaiah, which is quoted here in verse 17, Matthew 8, 17. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet.

He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. That is Isaiah 53, verse 4. But the point is, when was it fulfilled? Matthew chapter 8 is not speaking about the cross. Matthew chapter 8 is speaking about a time when Jesus, verse 16, last part, healed all who were ill.

And when he healed all the sick people who came, if there were 2,000 people there who were sick, all 2,000 were healed, not 90%, not 1% like we hear today, 100%. They were all healed. And that was to fulfill that he took away our infirmities.

Where did he take it away? Right there. He took away their sicknesses. It's not talking about the cross at all.

So does it mean that Jesus didn't die for our sickness? He died to take away the entire curse. Sickness is a result of the curse that came upon Adam. God did not curse Adam, he cursed the ground.

You read in Genesis 3 that when Adam sinned, God said, curse it as the ground. And it is that ground from which our body is made. That's why we get sick.

And until the curse is removed from our body, sickness will come even to believers. We've got to face reality and not live in a world of delusion. Our spirit has already been redeemed from the curse.

There's no curse in my spirit. But my body will be redeemed only when Christ comes. We read in Philippians chapter 3, you know if you compare scripture to scripture, you can never go astray.

And you live in a world of reality instead of living in a world of illusion. And deceiving other people. Philippians chapter 3, it says, verse 20, Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform this body of our humble state, this curse, this body which is formed out of dust, of the ground which God cursed in Genesis chapter 3, will be transformed into the body of His glory.

That is the time when the body will be redeemed from the curse and there will be no more sickness. But till then, what does it mean that by His stripes we are healed? Well, the best is to compare scripture with scripture. The Holy Spirit has inspired the Old Testament and the New Testament.

So if you compare scripture with scripture, you can't go wrong. If you just listen to the interpretation of some human being, whether it's me or anybody else, you can't go astray, unless it's based on scripture. So in 1 Peter chapter 2, it says here, in the last part of verse 24, 1 Peter 2 24, this word from Isaiah, Isaiah 53 verse 4, By His wounds we are healed.

It's quoted there in verse 24 towards the end. By His wounds you are healed. That's the verse we found in Isaiah.

But see the interpretation of it which the Holy Spirit gives through Peter in that verse. He doesn't say He bore our sicknesses on the cross. He bore our sins in His body on the cross, not so that we might be healed from sickness, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness because by His wounds you are healed.

Healed from what? From sin. It's so obvious in that verse. So we find here that if you go by scripture, you'll never live in a world of unreality, imagining and claiming things which are not promised in scripture.

Does it mean that we cannot pray for healing when we are sick? Of course we can pray for healing when we are sick. Because James says in chapter 5, James 5 in verse 14, If anyone is sick, call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. See that is, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

And when we put oil in a person's head, we are saying this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's like the symbol of baptism. Baptism is only a symbol.

You don't become spiritual going into that water, but it's a testimony. Jesus said how you are testifying that you are buried to your old life and risen again to a new life. It's like breaking your bread.

That bread is not the body of Christ, but it's a testimony to the fact that I share in the brokenness in Christ's body and I am cleansed by his blood. That's why I drink in the cup. In the same way, the oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

And we are testifying this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and therefore we ask for it to be healed in the name of Jesus Christ. And it says here, The prayer of faith, verse 15, The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Now there are two things I want to mention there. That is, sometimes the fact that sin is mentioned there indicates that some sicknesses are due to sin. We must recognize that.

There are some sicknesses not due to sin and some sicknesses due to sin. Again, so here it says, in connection with healing, it says, If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Maybe that sickness was a result of some sin in his life.

So when he is healed, he is also forgiven because he has repented of that sin. And therefore, verse 16, Confess your sins to one another. It is in the context of being healed.

Whenever I pray for any sick person, there is one question I ask him. Are you aware of any sin in your life that you have not repented of? I am not talking about whether you have overcome it. But do you hate it? Have you turned from it? Total overcoming from sickness will only be when Christ comes again.

But do you hate sin in your life? Have you turned from it to the best of your knowledge? That is very important before you pray for healing from sickness. And also, very important, have you forgiven everybody who has hurt you? Can you think back of any person who hurt you in your entire life? You have not forgiven. You hold a grudge against that person.

I say, don't ask anybody to pray for your sickness. It is a waste of time. First of all, learn to forgive completely, totally.

It doesn't matter how great a crime that person did against you. The Lord teaches us to forgive because we have committed a million times more sins against God and He forgave us. Forgive us our trespasses, our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

It is a very important requirement for healing. But to show you how some sicknesses are due to sin and some sicknesses are not due to sin. In John chapter 5 we read of Jesus going into the pool of Bethesda and there was a great multitude we read in verse 3 of sick, blind, lame, withered.

John chapter 5 verse 3 Waiting for the moving of the waters and an angel of the Lord would come at a certain time and stir the waters and whoever stepped in first would be healed. It was an act of God's mercy. I don't know why God did not allow everyone who jumped in to be healed.

Everyone in the world is not healed. It is just a plain fact. There was a man for 38 years who was lying there and Jesus saw him and He went to him and He healed him.

I want you to picture this in your mind. There are two things I want you to learn from this incident. One is, can you imagine all these maybe two or three hundred people around that pool since it is a great multitude, verse 3, and here is this one man who is lame and all these other guys have got various sicknesses and Jesus comes in and they hear him speak to this man saying, do you want to get well? And they have seen him lying there for years and they see him suddenly getting up and walking away with the bed.

What do you think all those other guys did? They say, hey, Jesus, we are also here. And Jesus just went away. Who said Jesus healed everybody who was sick? He certainly didn't heal everybody who was here.

He healed only one person and went away. So we should not have a wrong idea of what scripture says. There were times when He healed everybody.

There were times when He healed one person and went away. That teaches me that healing is in the sovereign power of God. But there was never a single case where people came to ask Jesus for forgiveness of sin where He said, no, we can't forgive you.

I'm only going to forgive that person. In the case of forgiveness of sins, it was universal. Every single person who wanted forgiveness of sins was forgiven.

But every single person who was sick was not healed. We've got to face that reality and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Does He heal everybody? No.

Does He heal some people? Yes. That's what we see in scripture. The man at the beautiful gate of the temple whom Peter and John healed was a beggar saying, give me some money.

And Peter said, I don't have any silver and gold, but in the name of Jesus, get up and walk. That man had been lying there for 40 years. Can you imagine the number of times Jesus walked by that gate and He asked for money and Jesus told Judas Iscariot, give him some money? He didn't heal him.

Because He did not have a command from the Father to heal. Jesus didn't live by a law which says, Thou shalt heal everybody. He never lived by the law.

He lived by every word that proceeds from the Father's mouth. Man shall live by every word that proceeds from the Father's mouth. We prefer to live by rules, even among Christians.

We make certain rules. Or even in the church we can have certain rules. It's much easier to live by a rule than to live by daily, constantly, not daily, but constantly hearing what the Father is saying.

The true Christian life, the spirit-filled life is not a life where you heard that somebody did it that way, so I'm going to do it that way. No. That's living by rules.

It's a lazy way of living. I make a bunch of rules and I'm going to live by that. That's not life.

Life is where you're in touch like the branch in the tree, constantly receiving sap. Man shall live by every word that proceeds from the Father's mouth. And Jesus would walk by that temple gate and say, Father, shall I heal this man? Father says no.

Twenty times he walks by that man in three and a half years. Every time. Father says no.

Okay, Judas, give him some money. He gives him money. One day Peter comes by and he heals him.

What is the result? 5,000 people. You read that in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4. There's a purpose with which God delays healing. So, in everything, it's possible to try and do things before God's time.

And Jesus never did it. Man is like that. You live by a rule, you go around, you see a man in the gate of the temple, of course, in Jesus' name, he'll be healed.

Nothing happens. Because we don't know how to live by every word that proceeds from the Father's mouth. I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, one of the most important things that you need to learn, it's one of the first things God taught me when I was born again.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. By the way, those are the first words that proceeds from Jesus' mouth in his ministry. What are the first words of Jesus' ministry? Man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.

Learn that, the importance of that. He told Martha, one thing is needful, to sit at my feet like Mary and listen to me. Do you believe that is the one thing that is needful in your life? That even if you don't do a hundred and one other things during the day, there's one thing you need to do every single day, and that is to hear what God has to say to you.

And I don't mean by just having a quiet time with the Bible. There are millions of people who have a quiet time with the Bible who don't hear God at all. They just ease their conscience, I've read the Bible.

Well, it's good to read the Bible, it's good to meditate on it, but you've got to hear God. And that takes a little more effort than just sitting and going through a ritual of reading the Bible for 15 minutes. It's one of the things we need to develop, to hear what God is saying.

And to hear what God is saying, you need to be rooted in Scripture, of course. You need to be careful in studying Scripture, to be diligent in studying Scripture, just like I showed you just now, and not put your own interpretation into something, but compare Scripture with Scripture, and gradually you begin to understand God's mind. The Bible says that it's by the renewing of our mind.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 12. There are two things the Bible says we must do if you are really grateful for all that God has done for you. Have your sins been forgiven? Has God been extremely merciful to you in a hundred and one ways, or a thousand and one ways? What shall you do in response to God's mercies? Here it is.

Present your body and your mind to God in simple terms. Romans 12.1. In view of all of God's mercies to you and me, the Holy Spirit says number one, present your body as a sacrifice. A sacrifice means you are not going to do your will in your body anymore.

That's a sacrifice. Lord, I praise my body on the altar. That's the sacrifice you want, and that is called here spiritual worship, or worship in the spirit.

The Old Testament worship in the Psalms was a worship of the soul. The soul is your mind and your emotions and the worship of the soul is getting excited when you worship and worship of the body, moving the hands. There's nothing wrong in that, but it's just limited to body and soul.

Raise your hands, clap your hands, be emotional, like the Psalms. Say frequent hallelujahs. It's okay, it's good, but it's Old Covenant worship.

New Covenant worship, Jesus told the woman of Samaria, the time has now come when the true worshipers, John chapter 4 verse 24, will worship not in the soul, but in the spirit. That woman didn't have a clue what it meant, but that word is something for us to hear. The time has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

And it goes on to say the Father is eagerly wanting such worshipers. And I read that and I say, Lord, are you eagerly looking for such worshipers? I want to be one of them who will worship in the spirit and not just in the body and soul. Yes, I will use my body, I'll clap my hands, I'll raise my hands, I'll be emotional, but beyond it all, I'll worship in the spirit.

And worship in the spirit is mentioned here first of all by presenting our body as a living sacrifice. So if I want to worship God in my spirit, I've got to lay my body on the altar and say, Lord, I never want to use my tongue anymore to say what I want to say. I never want to use my eyes to look at what I want to look at.

I never want to use my eyes to read what I want to read. That's the meaning of presenting your body as a sacrifice. In the Old Testament, you were not allowed to just take a bullock and put that ox, a bullock or ox on the altar.

Here it is. No. The law was you must cut that bullock into pieces.

That ox must be cut into pieces, piece by piece by piece by piece. And you wonder why in the world does God make such a law when the whole thing is going to be burnt up in any case? Why take all the trouble cutting it up when you might as well just put the whole ox there and burn it up? Because it was a spiritual principle the Lord was teaching. When you say present your body, it's very easy to say, yeah, I give my whole body to you, Lord.

But when you put it piece by piece, you realize it's not so easy. Put your tongue there and say, Lord, here's my tongue on the altar. I'm never going to use it to do my own will or speak what I like.

I'll never speak to my wife what I like with this tongue. It's on the altar. I'll never speak to my husband what I like with this tongue.

It's on the altar. I tell you, there are very, very few Christians in the world who worship God in this spirit. They have not laid their tongue on the altar.

Or their eyes. Lord, here are my eyes on the altar. I cut that up and put there.

I never want to use my eyes to read something or to look at something which you don't want me to look at. That's worship in the spirit. That's what it says here.

This is your spiritual worship. Who understands that? The Christian world is full of people who think singing Hallelujah and singing a few songs on Sunday morning, that is what they call praise and worship. It is not praise and worship.

It is praise. Worship is something entirely different. And the devil has blinded Christians to the truth of worship.

People say, what does it matter whether you call it praise or worship? Well, it means, it does mean something because if the devil can cheat you of something, I mean, if a man does not know what a Cadillac car is and he goes to the store and somebody gives him a bicycle and says, this is a Cadillac car. He's written on it Cadillac. And he comes home and he pays those hundreds of thousands of dollars and comes home with a bicycle and calls it a Cadillac car and you say, what does it matter? What does it matter what you call it? Doesn't it matter? We are very careful when it comes to money and material things.

What about being careful about what the Bible says is worship in the spirit. If you think it's the same as that, you miss out on the real thing. If you think a bicycle is a Cadillac car, you missed out on the real thing you're supposed to get.

And that's exactly what's happened to millions and millions of Christians who've never tried to find out from Scripture what does Scripture say is worship. Not Old Testament worship. New Covenant worship.

In CFC we emphasize New Covenant. New Covenant not only in overcoming sin. New Covenant in worship.

Which is not worship of the soul and the body, but worship in the spirit for which the time has come. So for that I have to present my body. And if I have not presented my body, no matter how well I sing, I'm not worshipping at all.

Not at all. I'm just fooling myself. The Christian world is being deceived and that's why their lives are so shallow.

That's why people nowadays know God so little. Eternal life is to know God and to know Jesus Christ. I want to tell you my brothers and sisters, if you want to face the difficult times that are lying ahead in this world, you're not going to face them with plenty of money.

It won't solve your problem. You're not even going to be able to face them by coming to church regularly. That's good.

All this is good. But you've got to get to know God. Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent and know Him personally.

You know the difference between marrying a wife and getting to know her over a period of 30-40 years? The day you get married, you may love your wife intensely or love your husband intensely but you don't have a clue what type of person he is. But once you live 30-40 years in love with each other, you really know each other. That's the difference between getting married to Christ which is being born again and knowing Him.

So I want to ask all of you who say you've been born again for so many years, how much do you know the Lord? Have you come to know the Lord better? Have you come to know the Lord's ways? Have you come to know what the Lord loves? Have you come to know what it means to be intimate with the Lord? Like you got married and you love your partner and you're intimate with her or him. Are you intimate with the Lord like that? Many Christians are not. They don't know the Lord.

That's the thing that's going to help in the last days. Let me show you a verse in Daniel chapter 11. In Daniel chapter 11 we read verse 32 Daniel 11 verse 32, the last part The people who know their God will be strong.

It's speaking about the last days. It's speaking about the Antichrist and the spirit of the last days. And in those days, says the Antichrist verse 32, with smooth words, turn to godlessness those who act wickedly towards the new covenant.

But in that time, the people who know their God, they'll be strong. Years ago I memorized that verse. The people who know their God will be strong in the last days.

Remember this. It's not Bible knowledge. There's a world of difference.

Bible knowledge the Pharisees had that. Knowing God, Jesus had that. There's a world of difference between the two.

There's a difference between heaven and earth. So I was telling you how worship is, first of all, presenting our body and then Romans 12 is our mind. That's the next thing.

My body must be presented, I told you piece by piece. And my mind must be transformed, renewed. My mind must be renewed and as it's renewed, I'm transformed.

So how do I get transformed into the likeness of Christ? By the renewing of my mind and thereby I prove what is the perfect will of God. In the old covenant God spoke from outside. Abraham, Samuel do this, do that, do the other.

Because God was outside. But from the day of Pentecost God came inside. The Holy Spirit's inside and he speaks from inside.

And there, as I allow God to renew my mind in different situations I prove what God's will is for my life. And when we think of God's will we think of what job I should take, whom I should marry. Those are not the primary things.

They are important but they are secondary. The primary things is, what should be my attitude to this sin? What should be my attitude to this thing? What should be my attitude to so many things in this world which don't please God? That is where I need to have my mind renewed to think like God thinks. And if I want to think like God thinks it's a legitimate paraphrase of my renewing of my mind and being transformed.

To begin to think like God thinks, like Jesus thinks, I need to be saturated with scripture. Because this is the only book in the whole world that tells me how God thinks. Even the Old Testament.

I read the Old Testament passages like Hosea and Joel and all that and I see God's tremendous hatred of sin. Of idolatry for example. How he condemned those Israelites for idolatry.

And the biggest idolatry today is the worship of money. And God hates it. If I see that I say, Lord, I want to hate it too.

I want to use it but I don't want to worship money. I don't want to worship pleasure. I don't want to worship anything because God hates idolatry.

So there as I read the Bible I begin to see the things that God hates. He hated adultery. He hated fooling around with the opposite sex.

He believed in the sanctity of marriage. Malachi says in chapter 3 God says, I hate divorce. Chapter 2, sorry.

As I read the scriptures I begin to think like God thinks about the different subjects that I'm facing in the world today. That's the renewing of my mind where I begin to think like God thinks that I can prove what is God's perfect will. So I was telling you about John chapter 5. How Jesus came by the pool of Bethesda and his mind was always thinking about how the father thinks.

Father said, heal this one man and go. And he went. What I wanted to point out to you further in John chapter 5 was afterwards Jesus met this man in John 5 verse 14 this man whom he had healed he met him in the temple and Jesus told him John 5 14.

Now you have become well don't sin again. Otherwise something worse will happen to you. What do you get from that? That his paralysis was due to sin.

That's why he was sick for 39 years 38 years and Jesus said don't sin again. So there is a case of a sickness that was due to sin. Now you go to John chapter 9 and you read of another man who was blind and the disciples asked Jesus in John chapter 9 in verse 2. Rabbi, who sinned? Was it this man who sinned or his parents who sinned that he is blind? And Jesus said no.

He did not sin. His parents did not sin. His blindness was not due to sin.

So when you put John 5 and John 9 together what you learn is there are some sicknesses due to sin and there are some sicknesses not due to sin. We got to be realistic and it is absolutely true. So that's why we read in James chapter 5. We are talking about healing from sickness.

In James chapter 5 he says the prayer of faith will heal the sick and if he has committed sins, John 5, 15 it's all in the same verse he will be forgiven and he will also be healed. So now the question comes will everyone who has prayed for be healed? It says here in verse 15 James 5, 15 the prayer offered in faith. Now I am mentioning this because sickness is a very is a reality in the world in which we live.

We got to face up to it. Prayer offered in faith this is God's word. James 5, 15 the prayer offered in faith will not might, will restore the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up and if he has committed sins they will be forgiven him.

So what does that mean? I've had to pray numerous times for people who are sick but I find sometimes I have faith for it many a time I don't have. The prayer offered in faith will definitely heal. Now faith is not something I can work out.

No. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. It's the man who has the habit of listening who has faith.

It's not just by memorizing scripture. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, not by reading the Bible. Begin by reading the Bible but you got to go beyond reading the Bible to hear God.

Faith comes by hearing God and Jesus heard and he would heal. Other times he did not heal. So the prayer offered in faith would heal.

So in a particular situation if God gives you faith to believe a person will be healed. And there are other times where the person is not healed. So we must be realistic.

That's what I say. It's not an absolute yes or an absolute no in the matter of healing from sickness. But when it comes to forgiveness of sins it's absolute.

In 1 John 1 If we confess our sins, verse 9 He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all all unrighteousness. There is a difference between asking God for forgiveness and asking God for healing. That's what I'm trying to say.

I'm just trying to be realistic so that none of us live in a world of delusion. Because there's a lot of confused teaching in the world, mostly by people who don't study the scriptures carefully. Who don't read what the Bible says, who have their own ideas or who live by logic.

If it is like this, therefore it's like this. If A equals B and B equals C, then A must be equal to C. This is mathematics. Scripture doesn't operate like that.

Man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. It's a living thing. The living word of God.

If I hear God in each situation, it's different. I mean if you see in the Old Testament there are different instances where God told them to do something in a certain way and then another time he said, no, don't do it that way, do it another way. One time God said to Moses to hit the rock for the water to come and the other time he said, no, don't hit it, speak to the rock.

And because Moses went and hit the rock, he missed out on going to Canaan. It was that serious. So God's word is a living thing.

It's not like a rule book and say, God will always work like this. He doesn't always work like this. Remember that verse in John chapter 3, the Holy Spirit is like the wind.

It blows and you can't say where it's coming from, where it's going, you can't say how the Holy Spirit is going to move. So this is why it's only if you walk with God closely that you can hear what God is saying. And that's why it goes on in James chapter 5 to say, after talking about the prayer of faith, the prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James 5.16. That's a man who's walking with God. He's more likely to hear what God is saying than some other person who just has got an academic knowledge of the Bible. Far too many Christians have got an academic knowledge of the Bible.

They don't know God. They know the Bible. They know the doctrines in the church.

But they don't know God. The people who know their God will be strong. I want to encourage all of you, my brothers and sisters, get to know God.

Jesus said in John chapter 17 in verse 3, This is eternal life. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. We all know that verse.

That whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. And again, 99% of Christians would say eternal life is to live forever. Wrong.

You never find that definition in the Bible. You get that in the English dictionary. I don't go to the English dictionary to find out the meaning of eternal life.

I go to the Bible. And I find Jesus defined eternal life in John 17 verse 3 saying eternal life is not living forever. People who go to hell live forever.

Did you know that? The rich man was living in Lazarus time. Do you know the story? It's a true story. Jesus said the rich man went to hell and he begged for a drop of water.

That man has been in hell for 2000 years already. He was a Jew. He was the one who went to the synagogue.

But he's in hell. Yeah. Eternal life.

He's going to live eternally in hell. But that's not eternal life. It doesn't mean living forever at all.

Eternal life, John 17 verse 3 is to know God and to know Jesus Christ personally. To know him means to know him intimately. To know the way Jesus thinks.

To know the way God thinks. I want to ask you my brothers and sisters do you have a passion to know how God thinks? Do you want to align your mind with God's mind? Do you want to know how Jesus thinks in a particular situation? It's the answer to all of life's problems. Lord, how do you think in this situation? What should I do? And you can't get the answer immediately.

Because you should have spent your life getting to know him and then you know what to do there. It's not an academic question like you call up and say, what should I do? And he says, you do this. No, it's not like that.

That's old covenant. In the new covenant, by the renewing of my mind I prove the will of God. And if I have not allowed my mind to be renewed through past years, here I am in a certain difficult situation and I say, Lord, what is the answer? I'll tell you, you do whatever you think you should do.

And you'll think that is the will of God. That's what multitudes of Christians are doing. Lord, should I marry this girl? You feel like marrying her and you say, yes, God told me to marry this girl.

That's exactly what's happening. They are too lazy to spend time getting to know God day by day by day by day. They have forgotten what Jesus said to Martha.

One thing is needful in your life to sit at my feet and listen to my word every day. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Martha, Martha, you're worried about many things but one thing is needful.

It's not serving me. It's not helping other people. It is listening to me.

Now, that doesn't sound right. You think it's lazy. That's what Martha thought.

Mary is so lazy. What I'm quoting is from Luke 10, 42. Sitting there and listening and Jesus said that is the one thing that's needful.

It looks a bit lazy. And Martha is busy serving, serving, serving, serving. You know, there are people I've seen in Christianity, Christians in churches who are always serving.

They're always doing something for the Lord. And they have a sense of satisfaction. I've done this for the church.

I've done that for the church. I've served the church in so many ways. I've sacrificed.

I've spent my money. You may be like Martha and the Lord will rebuke you. The Lord will rebuke you.

I was not interested in all that thing you were doing. You sacrificed so much money, so much of your time. Fine.

But the one thing needful you didn't do. You never sat at my feet to listen to what I had to say. You were busy doing this and that.

I'll tell you this. I've seen through the years. Zealous Christians prefer to be Marthas rather than Marys.

And they think they are more spiritual. I'm sure Martha thought she was far more spiritual. Sacrificing her time, her energy, working in that hot kitchen.

Making something for Jesus. But she saw Mary just sitting there lazily listening to the Lord. And what a shock she got when the Lord told her that's the one thing that's needful.

I want to ask you whether you understood that. Have you understood it my brothers and sisters? That to listen to God, to know Him, to listen to Him is the most important thing. Not only in the first thing in the morning, but to have an attitude in the midst of all of your life.

I want to be in touch with God. I think of these police officers in their police cars. They go around in their walkie-talkie or their communication system with the headquarters.

It's always on. You never know when they are calling you. You in this car.

Go there. There's a need over there. They are not always talking to them, but they are ready to listen all the time.

It has to be on all the time. That's a picture of how we should live the life. It doesn't mean he doesn't do anything else.

That police officer is doing 101 other things, but all the time that his communication system, his phone with the headquarters is on. It's never off. And that's how we are to live our daily life.

Man shall not live by bread alone, or by working alone like Martha, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. The most spiritual people in any church are not the ones who sacrifice their money or sacrifice their time doing 101 things for the church or anything like that. The most spiritual people are those who have learned to listen to God and to get to know Him because those are the ones who know how to lead the church forward.

I would any day have a brother like that to be an elder of the church even if he's not very efficient or in administration and capable in other things. It's knowing God that makes you valuable in a church. Eternal life is to know Him and to know Jesus Christ personally.

And when we know Jesus Christ personally more and more as time goes by, we have the same attitude that Christ had towards people for example. We can be merciful to people who are backslidden terribly.

And we learn to distinguish between backslider A and backslider B. For example, is this a sheep that has gone astray accidentally? That's backslider A. Then I must go after him, carry him on my shoulders and bring him back to the church.

Is this backslider B? The prodigal son who has gone away from the father. I must never go after him. I must let him suffer and reach the level of the pigs.

Never send him any money, never send him any food till he repents and comes back. Do you know how to distinguish between backslider A and backslider B? Most Christians don't. They have a law.

You shall always go after backsliders or never go after backsliders. They live by laws. That's not how Jesus lived.

That's not what Jesus taught. You have to go after the lost sheep but you must never go after the lost son. So many people hinder the work of God by going after the lost son and bring him back to the father's house when he's not even ready to come back.

He's not properly repented. He needs to get to the level of the pigs before he's allowed to come back. At the same time, you can't treat the lost sheep like a lost son.

That poor sheep went astray. How to know the difference? You've got to know God. If you want me to confuse you a little more, I'll show you a verse in Proverbs 27.

The Bible is a wonderful book to confuse people who live by logic and by human reason. Proverbs 27, it says here. No, Proverbs 26.

Proverbs 26, verse 4. Don't answer a fool according to his folly or you'll be like him. And to balance that out, next verse. Answer a fool as his folly deserves so that he doesn't become wise in his own eyes.

Now what should you do? The rule book says don't answer a fool. The rule book says answer a fool. Enough to confuse any logical, clever Christian.

How do you discern when you're talking to a person? How do you discern whether he's fool A or fool B? Am I supposed to answer him? Or am I supposed to not answer him? There's only one way to know. You've got to know God. Then you'll understand why in certain times Jesus said to people, I won't answer you.

If you don't answer my question, I also won't answer you. Haven't you read that in the Gospels? At other times he took such a long time to explain and answer questions that they asked. Why was that difference? Because he knew the Father.

And dear brothers and sisters, it is such people who make a church strong. Those who know God, those who know Jesus Christ. And you'll find, always find, that such people are extremely humble.

They never seek to promote themselves. They never seek to project themselves. They're not always going around trying to give advice to people.

No. I don't mean those who are just withdrawn in the background. I'm not talking about that.

There's a humility about them, the humility of Christ. They have absolutely no desire inside. If you search their inside and their heart, you'll see they have no desire to exalt themselves.

They only want to exalt Christ. Because they know God. They know that in the Kingdom of God, only Jesus Christ is to be exalted.

That's why they have zero desire to exalt themselves. They have zero desire to promote themselves. They have zero desire that other people should appreciate them.

If you have a desire in this church that people should appreciate you and recognize you as spiritual brother, sister, you have a long way to go. That's all I can say. You don't have a clue what Christianity is all about.

You want people to appreciate you? Or do you want people to appreciate Christ? When you get to heaven, you know, the only song they're going to sing is Thou alone art worthy, O Lord. You look around for Paul or Peter or James or anybody. No.

Jesus alone is worthy. Meditate on that. Say, Lord, I want to know you more.

If you really learn to know God like that, I'll tell you this. You may not be very well known in the church, but you will be the most useful member in this church. Whether people appreciate you or not, you'll have such an influence on this church just by sitting here.

Even if you never get up and speak. I believe that a person can influence a church by just being present in that church, even if he never speaks one word. It's just by his presence.

There will be something about the radiance of Christ that will affect, you know, it's like these women with perfume. From quite a distance you smell, oh wow, look at that. Perfume or like a radiant person with light.

So it's very important these days to know God and not live by laws. Turn with me to Luke's gospel now. Luke's gospel in chapter 21.

You know, it's speaking here about the return of Christ. They asked him about when are these things going to happen. And Jesus replied to them.

One of the things he said in Luke 21, there's a whole list of things in the latter half of Luke 21 about the last days. And one of the things it says here is, you know, it talks about tsunamis in verse 25. The mighty roaring of the sea and the waves.

And then men, verse 26, fainting from fear. The expectation of things coming in the world. Fear is going to be one of the great characteristics of the last days and people.

Fainting from fear. It means fear is going to grip their minds so much. Fear of this and fear of that and fear of what's going to happen in the future.

What'll happen to me and what'll happen to my children and doing everything to preserve myself motivated by fear. And it says here it's one of the signs of the last days. And then verse 27, suddenly they'll see the sun of man coming in a cloud.

So what should you do? When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads for your redemption is drawing near. So when you see the world filled with fear that's the time to lift up my head and say, praise the Lord. Your coming is near, Lord.

I'm waiting for you. I'm not going to have any fear. The most common statement that Jesus made to his disciples was not sin not.

Not do not sin, but do not fear. If you don't believe me, read the Gospels. The number of times he said, don't be afraid.

When they were in the boat and it was about to sink, don't be afraid. You may think I'm sleeping but I'm not sleeping. God is awake.

He's never asleep. The Lord never slumbers, nor sleeps. Don't be afraid.

Don't be in a panic. Some little pain in the body. Don't be afraid.

Trust me. It's so important in these days and I tell you, fear and faith are absolute opposites, like black and white, like light and darkness. Don't imagine that you have faith if you've got fear in your heart.

It doesn't exist. Fear comes in, faith goes out. Faith comes in, fear goes out.

You cannot have both living in the same heart. Impossible. It's like darkness comes in, the light goes out.

Light comes in, the darkness goes out. It's like night and day, you know. The dawn, the sun rises and the darkness goes.

And then the sun sets and the darkness comes in. It's very much like that. Fear, more and more it comes in, faith gradually moves out.

It may not be sudden like the darkness doesn't suddenly come on or the light doesn't suddenly come. But gradually it becomes dark. Gradually it becomes light.

Gradually faith goes away. Gradually fear takes over. Be very, very careful.

Fear and faith are opposites. And there's no place for fear in the heart of a child of God. Carefulness, caution, yes.

You have to be careful. You have to be careful if you're walking through a forest infested with snakes. Very careful.

Carry a torchlight. Carry a stick. Be careful.

Take all precautions necessary. But fear? Always Jesus said, don't be afraid. I'm with you.

I'm with you. I'll be with you. It's very important that we teach our children that the Lord can be with them.

That's why we must teach our children to keep a conscience clear always. That means when they do something wrong, we must teach our children to apologize. Just ask the Lord to forgive them for the wrong they did.

To ask their brother or sister also to forgive them for hitting them or hurting them or speaking rudely to them. If we teach our children to have a good conscience in every little thing, don't take it lightly. Don't take it as a joke when one child hurts the other or speaks rudely to you as parents.

It's a serious thing for a child to speak rudely to the parents. I have warned people back in my home church in Bangalore when I've seen a child speak rudely to their parents. Be careful of this child.

He'll grow up to be a rebel. I'm sorry to say there are people who have not taken my word seriously and their children have grown up to be rebels. Because they did not take this disobedience to parents seriously.

Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you. I want it to go well with my children, so I'll teach them to honor their parents. Sure.

If you really love your children and you want it to go well with them, you better teach them to obey you. And to obey you 100%. Not to do their own thing.

If you don't teach your children to do that, I would say you as a parent do not want it to go well with your children. You don't want it to go well with your children. That's why you allow your children to disobey and speak rudely to you and you ignore it and you think it's all a joke.

No. Fear is something which is going to be very much prevalent in the world as we approach the end of time. He said that men's fainting from fear.

And it's very important at such a time that it says in Luke 21, 28 Straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near. So that should be our attitude brothers and sisters as we approach. We don't have the answer to everything.

I certainly don't have the answer to everything. But I showed you that verse in 1 Peter 2 where it says By his stripes we are healed. Meaning healed from sin.

That we might do righteousness. So it's my attitude to sin that I need to compare with my attitude to sickness. It's a very good way to compare.

In the Old Testament, leprosy was a picture of sickness. See for example, with this coronavirus that's going on Think if somebody discovered a cure for it. A perfect cure.

If anybody took that tablet 100% definitely cured. He would get the Nobel Prize for medicine. Do you know that's what the blood of Jesus does for sin? 100% Sin is cleansed.

There's not a trace of it. But do you think people take that seriously? They would take a tablet or a medicine that healed coronavirus completely. Oh wow, what a wonderful thing that is.

What a great person that person is. And here Jesus' blood cleanses every trace of sin when we confess it. Even Christians don't take it so wonderfully.

They're not so grateful. That is a cure for sin. But what if somebody also discovered a vaccine that would prevent you from getting it? That's another thing.

A cure is a medicine. A vaccine is something that prevents you from getting it. You know, the time of my grandparents our grandparents in that generation the early part of the 20th century there were many people in my part of India, in Kerala who died of smallpox.

25 years old, 30 years old, they die of smallpox. Many, many cases. So we all got vaccines I mean a vaccination of smallpox when we were kids.

They don't give it nowadays I suppose because it's all eliminated. But I remember I had to get it. So that I don't get smallpox.

It was a vaccination that prevented me. That's different from a medicine that cures me. So there's a provision for both in the New Testament.

The medicine that cures is the blood of Jesus Christ. I've already sinned and it has to be cleansed. I've already got this coronavirus and here's the cure for it.

But there's a vaccine that can prevent me from getting it. And that's what the Bible calls grace. Sin shall not rule over you because you've got grace.

I don't have to get it. Can you imagine how excited people would be if there was a guaranteed vaccination that would prevent you from ever getting the flu or ever getting the virus. How excited are Christians to get that grace, the real grace of God that will keep me from sin.

That will vaccinate me against sinning. This is the question we need to ask ourselves as believers. Forget the rest of the world.

Do you take sin as seriously as you would take sickness in yourself or in your children? By his stripes we are healed that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. That's what 1 Peter chapter 2 we read. So in the midst of a world which lives on fear, we lift up our heads because our heart is strengthened by grace as it says in Hebrews 13 verse 8. The heart is strengthened by grace.

It's vaccinated against sin as long as I continue to receive that grace. And that is how we are to live and be a blessing in the church. Amen.

Maybe you want to pray before I finish. Let's bow our heads. This is eternal life that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

Help us to know you Father. To know what it means to know you. To know what it means to know Jesus Christ.

To know what it means to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God every day. Help us to recognize and live by the one thing you said was needful in these days. To give no place to fear in our hearts.

And we know the only way for that is to let faith fill our hearts and drive all fear out. A faith that is founded on listening to your word hearing you speak to us through the Holy Spirit. Help us to live a Spirit filled life every day.

Filled with the Holy Spirit. Listening to your voice. Walking in your ways.

Give us grace and help us Lord to teach our children to go that way too. Cleansed from all sin and receiving grace from a very young age. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/oCPh4mEgyis.mp4>

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