

# Some Things I Have Learnt in 50 Years Part 1

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God's love for us and being honest with Him in order to experience deliverance from sin and a secure Christian life.*

**Duration:** 52:21

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:32, Job 36:5, John 17:23, 2 Corinthians 9:7, James 1:26, James 3:9, 1 Peter 2:17, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 John 2:6

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "True Worship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes four key lessons learned over 50 years as a believer: 1. Understanding God's immense love for us, equal to His love for Jesus, provides security and eradicates insecurity. 2. Embracing honesty before God, acknowledging failures without pretense, is vital for true repentance. 3. Recognizing that God desires cheerful, voluntary obedience, not compelled actions, fosters genuine worship. 4. Treating every human being with dignity, honoring all as made in God's image, reflects true reverence for God and transforms our interactions.

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## Transcript

It's been a great joy to speak here at Abundant Life for I think nearly 10 years now. And one of the things I've, I've usually spoken on a biblical subject each time, but I thought this time I would share something about what the Lord has taught me in the years that I've been a believer. This year has been significant for me for two reasons.

The Lord has been very good to me. I completed 70 years last week. Thank you.

And I completed 50 years as a believer three or four months ago. I was born again when I was nearly 20. And so what I wanted to share in these four sessions this weekend was 16 things that the Lord has taught me in these 15 years, 50 years.

So I'll take four of them in each session. The most important truth that changed my whole life some years ago was what I read in John 17, 23, that God loves Jesus' disciples as much as he loved Jesus. In John 17 and verse 23, we read in the last part that Jesus prayed that the world would know that the Father loved us, if we are disciples of Jesus, as he loved him.

Now there are many verses in the Bible that teach us that God loves us. As far as I know, this is the only one that teaches specifically how much. Now this is, it's an incredible truth.

To believe that God loves us is fairly easy. I believed that all my life. But when I discovered that the extent of that love was as much as he loved Jesus, it was almost unbelievable.

And I never stopped speaking about this truth because I believe this is the most important truth for Christians to know. There's so much of insecurity among Christians everywhere I find this. Many who appear to be very happy on when they come for a time of worship like this are not like that during the week, are not like that when they face life's problems.

And the fundamental reason is because they are not secure in the love of God. Now I know that was true in my own life. Even after I was born again and baptized, I was so discouraged, defeated, depressed, in bad moods.

And I thought that was normal because all the other believers around me were like that too. And I read in the scriptures in 1 John 2 6 that he who says he abides in Christ must walk as he walked. Or as the living Bible says, anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Jesus did.

That was a tremendous challenge. I almost never heard anyone challenge me with that. But I saw it in scripture and I say scripture is true.

And I looked at Jesus' life and I found he was never insecure. Never. He was never in a bad mood.

He was never depressed. He was never discouraged no matter what he faced. And he faced bigger problems than any of us can ever face.

And I saw the reason for it was that he was absolutely secure in his father's love. I think of a time when at the last supper he knew that in a few moments he'd be going to Gethsemane and that everyone would, all his disciples would run away too in a little while. And see what he says in John 16 and verse 32.

He looks at his 11 disciples. One has already gone away to betray him. And the 11 that are left, he tells them in John 16 32, an hour is coming and it has already come for you to be scattered.

Each one to his own home and you will leave me alone. You'll run away from me. When trouble comes you'll run away.

But I'm not alone. The father is with me. You see the security he had there.

It didn't matter if everyone on earth forsook him. He said I'm not alone. My dear brothers and sisters this is the type of life God wants you and me to have.

And for that we need to be secure in the knowledge that God loves us exactly as much as he loved Jesus. He said security is the foundation, the true foundation of a Christian life. Whatever you may have lacked on this earth of love from your parents or others.

The answer is the solution to that is to find it in God's perfect love for you. And this means for what I discovered in my life was I'm trying to say what I learned from this was that if he cared for me like he if he loved me like he loved Jesus he would care for me in different situations. And when I studied the life of Jesus I saw how the father cared for him when he was in helpless situations.

For example when he was a little baby and Herod was planning to kill him. The father took care of that. Took him away from there before Herod ever came there.

I believe God would do that for me too. I mean there was a particular time when it's not that we'll never die. There's a particular time when Jesus had to die.

And God made sure that nobody could touch him till that time came. What a security it brings. I mean even if there was swine flu around in those days in Nazareth it wouldn't have touched Jesus.

It's impossible. It is impossible for him to be killed by disease or enemies or anything because there was a particular time. There was a plan that the father had for Jesus.

God sent Jesus into the earth to earth with a particular plan. If you read the book of the gospel of Matthew you find many times you find these words so that the scripture might be fulfilled this happened. And he even went and lived in Nazareth so that a scripture might be fulfilled.

He was taken to Egypt so scripture might be fulfilled. When he was hanging on the cross it says numerous scriptures were fulfilled. The life of Jesus was planned down to the last detail from the time he was born right until the time he died.

You know what that meant for me to believe that if God loved me as he loved Jesus everything in my life has been planned already. Now it's up to me whether I believe it or not. If I don't believe it I live in insecurity.

But if I can believe it this is the reason why Jesus was not afraid. He could say my hour has not yet come. There are places in the gospels where it says they couldn't arrest him because his hour had not yet come.

They had the forces I mean they had the military forces there at their disposal but they couldn't arrest him because his hour had not yet come. It's amazing. God's care for him was down to the last little detail.

You read about a time when they people got upset with him when he was preaching and they took him up to the top of a cliff to throw him down but they couldn't do it. It says he walked away and went away because his hour had not yet come. Now if we believe that God loves us as he loved Jesus we will have the same security whether we're attacked by people or sickness or anything.

This is what brings a solid foundation in our life and if we don't have this foundation our life will always be unstable. If you ask me what is the greatest truth in this book is this that God loves us as he loved Jesus. That's the essential message which Jesus came to give us and so in different situations that we face if we can believe this that God's going to plan for my life and nothing's going to happen to me outside of that plan because he loves me and cares for me just like he loved Jesus.

It'll bring such a security in our life. It'll deliver us from fear, deliver us from depression, discouragement, complaining and even jealousy. You see very often we are jealous of someone who has something which we don't have.

If I believe that God loves me as he loved Jesus he'll give me exactly what's right for me. One of the great truths in scripture is that which we all believe is that there is no partiality with God. There is no partiality with God.

I'm sure we all believe that. It's written also in Romans chapter 2. When we see that the Bible teaches that Jesus is not only our Savior and our Lord but when we receive him as our Savior it says he becomes our elder brother. This is an amazing truth which many Christians don't know but it's written in Romans 8 and

verse 29.

Romans 8 29 that God foreknew us and he predestined that we should be if I were to paraphrase those words that we should be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the eldest among many brothers. So he becomes the elder brother of all of us. He's not only our Savior he's not only our Lord but he's our elder brother.

Now this is not true of anybody in the Old Testament. This is true only of those who have surrendered their life to the Lordship of Christ received him as their Lord and thereby become children of God and it's open to anyone. So what happens this is why on the day of resurrection Jesus said to Mary Magdalene go and tell my brothers that I ascend to my father and your father.

One of the most wonderful truths of the New Testament is that we become the younger brothers of Jesus Christ. So when you call someone a brother or a sister it's a tremendous title of respect. You're you're calling him a younger brother or a sister of Jesus Christ.

Now what does this mean in practical terms? It means that what God did if there is no partiality with God now listen to this if there is no partiality with God he must treat all his children the same and what he did for the eldest son he would do for all his children. This is what I learned. This is what changed my whole removed all the insecurity from my life the fear about the future the fear that sickness would come or some other thing would interrupt God's plans for my life.

God loved me and everything that he did for Jesus he'd do for me if I fulfill the same conditions. This is the number one truth I want to encourage you to believe. The second truth which I want to share with you is from 1 John chapter 1 verse 9. God delights in honest people.

He doesn't ask us to be perfect first. He asks us to be honest. Perfection takes a lifetime and even then we wouldn't have reached that mountain peak.

We press on towards it but honesty how long does it take to be honest? I mean a prostitute can be honest right immediately and say I'm a prostitute. The thief on the cross he could be honest and say yeah I deserve this. I'm to blame and I want to say this my brothers and sisters because very often we miss out on God's plan for our life because we're not absolutely honest with God.

When I witness to atheists I tell them well you know that God won't be upset if you looked up and say I don't even believe you exist. He won't be upset because you're being honest about what you really feel. So why don't you tell him that? I say why don't you say well I don't know whether you're there but if you're there like and listen to me I don't believe you exist and if you do reveal yourself to me in some way.

I say I assure you he will not be upset. God is not a person who gets upset with what you say. He loves you.

He wants you to be honest. He doesn't want you to pretend. Now when we look at the ministry of Jesus you find that he warned his disciples beware of the leaven of hypocrisy.

He spoke against hypocrisy more than almost any other sin. Now if I were to ask you to make a list of sins what would you put as the worst sin of all? How many of you would put as number one pretending to be more spiritual than we really are? I don't think you would put that at the top of your list but that's what hypocrisy means and that's what Jesus was constantly warning his disciples against. That's what he

condemned the pharisees for.

He says the trouble with you pharisees is you pretend to be more spiritual than you really are. How will you escape the damnation of hell? Now these were people who read the bible every day. These are people who went to the synagogues regularly every week but Jesus said that they were on their way to hell.

I want to ask you is it possible that some of you sitting here are on your way to hell even though you come here every Sunday. Now people don't like to talk about hell much these days but what would you think about a doctor who saw your scan report and saw that you had a cancer and didn't tell you about it? He wouldn't be your friend. Jesus spoke more about hell than anyone else and what is it what is it he said to the pharisees that was going to take them to hell? Pretending to be something that they were not.

It's very very serious. God loves honest people. When that woman caught in adultery acknowledged honestly.

Jesus said I don't condemn you. Just go and sin no more. The thief on the cross.

I don't know how many people he had murdered. I don't know how much money he had stolen. He never even got a chance to apologize to the relatives of the people he murdered.

He never got a chance to repay the money he had stolen and yet he went to heaven. How did he go to heaven? He was absolutely honest. He was not like the other thief who said get me down from this cross.

He said I deserve this. I'm a bad man. I don't deserve a few years in jail.

I deserve to be crucified. I'm so wicked and Jesus said really? Well heaven's meant for such people who are honest about their sin. And you're going to enter paradise with me today.

You don't have to wait till my kingdom comes. And then you look at the opposite of that. How Adam was turned out of paradise.

That's what you see right at the beginning of the bible. A man who was dishonest. I'll tell you how he was dishonest.

God came to Adam after he had sinned and asked him did you eat of that tree? It's like these multiple choice questions that people have in examinations you know. You don't need to write a big answer. They're just two boxes yes or no and you take one of them.

And that's how God gave this multiple choice question to Adam. Tick yes or no. And he doesn't tick yes or no.

He writes something underneath. He says well first of all the problem is with my wife. That's what I mean by dishonesty.

She gave me this fruit. And second problem you gave me this wife. Don't forget that.

I'm not making it up. You read it in Genesis chapter 3. Those are Adam's exact words. Do they sound familiar? And thirdly in very small letters and I ate it.

Now that's how a lot of people confess sin. It was dishonest because he was not willing to take the blame. And when you're not willing to take the blame for your sin.

I mean after all Eve didn't force open Adam's mouth and put the fruit in. He opened it and ate it. Why not acknowledge it? Why put the blame on your wife or your husband or your neighbor or that person provoked me or this that and the other and on God ultimately.

Take the blame. That's what that's the difference between Adam and the thief on the cross. God loves honest people who will acknowledge honestly Lord this is not my wife's fault.

This is not my husband's fault. It's not my neighbor's fault. It's not because my parents brought me up wrong.

It's my fault. 100 percent. And I'll tell you you'll experience deliverance when you acknowledge it like that.

That was what the Pharisees lacked and Jesus warned his disciples beware of the word hypocrite is actually a Greek word which means acting. Beware of acting. So this is the second lesson I learned that I didn't have to pretend before God.

I could be honest with him. I could tell him you know if you you call sin sin don't call it by some other more decent name. You know if you lust with your eyes don't say I was just admiring God's creation.

You'll never get deliverance from sin if you call it by all these decent names you know or or when you get angry you say that was a righteous indignation and something that was done wrong. You'll never get. But if you call it what Jesus called it Lord when I clicked on that internet pornographic site I committed adultery with that woman there.

And when I clicked on another site I committed adultery five minutes later with another woman. And then later in the evening with another woman. And Lord I'm sorry today I committed adultery with 10 women.

Call it that. That's honesty. And you do it again tomorrow and tomorrow and the day after and the day after.

When you call it by its proper name you'll get deliverance from it. But you call it by other names and try to excuse yourself saying well that was a lot of passion in me. You'll never get deliverance from it.

And I'll tell you this. If you continue in that way you can end up in hell. Because Jesus said it's better to pull out your eye and lose an eye than to go with your whole body into hell because you kept on lusting lusting lusting with your eyes.

It's serious. And what's the deliverance? Be honest. Call it by call sin by the dirtiest name you can ever think of.

When you get angry with someone Jesus said call it murder. Lord I felt like murdering that person but I'd get caught by the police so I just got angry. You know Jesus equated it with murder in Matthew chapter 5 by the way.

He said your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of the pharisees. And then he that's in Matthew 5 20. And in the next verse he said I'll explain what I mean.

The pharisees said you shall not commit murder. I say to you don't get angry. He equated anger with murder because he said anger is the seed from which this tree called murder comes out.

And in God's eyes it's the same thing. Call it by that name and you'll get victory. But if you say well I was under a little pressure I mean imagine you're saying well I was under a little pressure so I killed that fellow.

And the next day well I was a little more under pressure and killed another person. I mean if I say if I call anger murder every day and every time you do it you'll get deliverance quickly. God loves honest people.

I believe it's God's will to free us from sin. But he won't free us till we call sin sin. There's certain groups of people who teach a doctrine called entire sanctification.

It's not a scriptural doctrine where they teach that the sin nature is eradicated and you never sin again. And you know what happened to these people who first began to preach it. After some time they discovered they were doing certain things their conscience troubled them about and they didn't know what to call it because their sin nature had been eradicated according to their belief a few years earlier.

So they called it a mistake. Now the tragic the problem is that the blood of Jesus doesn't cleanse mistakes. It cleanses only sins.

So if you call it mistake it won't be cleansed. It'll remain as a sin in your heart forever. Call it a sin.

We walk in the light. What does it say in 1 John 1 7? If we walk in the light as God is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. There's a verse also in Proverbs 28 and verse 13 which says he who covers his sin will not prosper but he who confesses acknowledges honestly and forsakes he will find mercy.

Let me show you another verse in Matthew chapter 21. These are amazing words. Imagine getting up in a church like this.

The synagogues were like you know they were the holiest the groups of people meeting. There's the only place in the world where the true scriptures were expounded in those days the synagogues. They were the ones who had the old testament and in the synagogues there were these pharisees who studied the scriptures regularly.

They worshipped the true God. There was no idolatry in their midst. They believed in the ten commandments and Jesus looked up at these people in Matthew 21 and verse 31 and he tells them in the last part of that verse the tax collectors who were the biggest crooks in those days and the harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you.

Now if you want to see how shocking that is imagine if Jesus were to get up here and say that to us the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into God's kingdom before you. It's shocking. That's exactly how it sounded when Jesus spoke in the synagogue.

What was it that the tax collectors and the harlots had which these holy people who read the bible didn't have? Honesty. The harlot would say yeah I'm a harlot that's what I do for a living. The tax collector would say of course I cheat people all tax collectors do and there was honesty about them whereas the people who sat in the church of those days the synagogue they pretended that they were holy.

They didn't have all these bad thoughts. They didn't backbite or gossip against others at home. They pretended as if they were always praising the Lord all the time.

That's why Jesus said the tax collectors and thieves would get into God's kingdom before them. It was dishonesty. It's very very serious.

So that's the second thing. I'm very thankful that I learned it so that I could go to God and honestly acknowledge Lord I was wrong there. I don't want to blame anybody in the world.

It's me. It's me Lord. It's a hundred percent my fault.

Such people get free from sin very quickly and for me it was the first step to be free from sin. Conscious sin that's what I mean. The third lesson that I have learned in these 50 years is from 2nd Corinthians 9 and verse 7 that God delights in cheerful givers.

In other words he doesn't compel people. He doesn't force anybody to do anything. He's talking about giving.

The Holy Spirit inspires the apostle to write these words in the last part of 2nd Corinthians 9 7. In the whole of verse 7. Let no one give, let everyone give as he is purposed in his heart not grudgingly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. I learned from that verse that God wants me to do everything voluntarily, joyfully, cheerfully and not under compulsion. Now there's a reason for this.

God is a God who gave Adam freedom of choice when he created him and he never took it away. Think of all the thousands of people who went to hell in the last 24 hours. God never stopped them.

Think of the thousands are going to go to hell today in the next 24 hours. God doesn't stop them. He knows it's not good for them but he doesn't stop them.

Think of the believers who are going to commit sin in the next 24 hours. God doesn't stop them. Think of some believer who's planning to divorce his wife or husband.

God doesn't stop them. God will never stop anyone because if the moment he begins to hold them back like that he's taken away their free will. If he took away your free will you'd be like a robot.

You'd be like the planets that automatically obey God year after year after year. You know that the planets never sin but they can't become children of God either. To be a child of God you have to free will and God gives you freedom of choice in everything.

When you're born again you still have freedom of choice. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit you still have freedom of choice. The Bible says the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

When a man says I got filled with the Holy Spirit and I lost control of myself I say that was not the Holy Spirit that's for sure. No. I've heard people say this that I was praying somewhere and I got thrown to the other end of the room.

I said well that was not the Holy Spirit. Definitely not. Because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is more self-control not less.

God the Holy Spirit doesn't control you. He doesn't make you do things. He gives you the power and leaves it to you whether you want to do it or not.

Even when he gives us gifts of the Holy Spirit he doesn't force us to use them. He gives us the gift and it's up to you whether you want to use it or not. He gives us the power but it's up to you whether you want to use it or not.

There's freedom. Demons on the other hand possess people. To me it was a great help to discover this that the Holy Spirit would never never never force me to do anything.

Everything was voluntary. God loves people who would obey him voluntarily. For example there's so much pressure nowadays particularly from television evangelists on people to give money.

Give, give, give. There's so much pressure and they're almost made to feel guilty if they don't give. This is not of God.

It's not of God because God loves a cheerful giver. If a person doesn't give cheerfully God doesn't want it. I heard the story of a mother who sent when her little daughter was going to Sunday school the children's class gave her a one dollar to put in the offering box and the children's offering and gave her 50 cents to buy some candy on the way back.

When she came back the mom asked her did you put the one dollar into the offering? She said mommy I was going to put that one dollar but just before I put it the Sunday school teacher said God loves a cheerful giver and I felt I could more cheerfully give the 50 cents rather than rather than the one dollar. So I obeyed her and I put 50 cents and I bought candy with the one dollar on the way back. Now what I want to say is God loved that little girl whether the Sunday school teacher loved her or not God loved her because God only wants people who give something cheerfully.

He doesn't want a single cent from you or anything in your life which you don't give cheerfully. Don't let any preacher fool you to believe that you'll be blessed if you're forced to give something to God. He doesn't love you when you do that and when we understand that God is like this.

I believe this is the mark of any genuine man of God that he doesn't force anybody to do anything. When you try to force people to do something you're not behaving like God you're behaving like the devil. The devil when he controls people I've seen demons possessed demon possessed people they have no control over themselves.

They say things they don't want to say they do things they don't want to do because the demons control them. That's why the bible speaks about demon possession and spirit filling. You know the difference between being filled with the holy spirit and possessed by a demon? You never read in the bible about the holy spirit possessing people and you never read in the bible about demons filling people.

Demons do not fill people they possess people. That means they take away that person's ability to control himself and anything. Anybody who puts pressure on you to do something is not telling you to do things in a godly way and if he is a preacher or a pastor he doesn't know the scriptures and he doesn't know God.

God never forces people under the law. We know that God treated people like little children the bible says and of course when we have little children at home we have to keep them under the law and we've got to compel them to do things like that but we have to compel them to do things because it's good for them but Galatians says that now in the new covenant God treats us like grown-up sons. He doesn't force us.

God loves a cheerful giver. Please remember that and don't ever feel guilty if you don't feel like doing something and you don't do it. You don't feel like giving something and you don't give it.

God loves you just when you give cheerfully when you give with all your heart when it's obedience in the same way and this is the way to maturity and I've been tremendously blessed by understanding this in many many areas in my handling of money in my giving God obedience and I've seen a lot of people who been forced to do this and forced to do that and by the time they come to the end of their life they're so miserable and unhappy because they felt compelled all their life and I want to liberate you from that. God loves cheerful givers. I want to say one more thing in the new testament we read of a type of type of work called dead works.

That's another of the things I discovered in my life. What is a dead work? I knew what good works and evil works were. My conscience told me that but what my conscience did not tell me was what a dead work was and this in the old testament there was no such thing as dead works.

In the new testament we read of dead works and I read in hebrews 6 and verse 1 that we got to repent of dead works. Now if I don't know what a dead work is how can I repent of it? Now as I studied the scriptures I discovered dead works I mean could come out of many causes but one of the causes is when I'm forced to do something which I don't want to do. I don't feel like doing it but out of a sense of guilt or because I want to please somebody or somebody puts pressure on me I do something.

It may be a good work but it's a dead work because it was not done with total freedom of choice. It was not done to please God and when I saw that I had to repent of this I decided I'm not going to let any I'm not going to allow anyone to control me to tell me what I should do for God. I'm going to be free but when I have freedom to do it even if it's a I remember many years ago a much older godly brother gave me a certain suggestion.

It wasn't concerning sin it was concerning a certain way of doing ministry and I said to him I said brother I know you know the lord much more than me and probably you're right in what the way you tell me to do it but right now I don't have that light on that matter and so if I do it just because you tell me to do it it'll be a dead work so I'm not going to do it. I'm going to do it the way I feel right now. God wants me to do it.

This is not sinful. Now this is very liberating that God assesses us by the light we have in our conscience right now not according to the light somebody else has in his conscience. It's obvious that someone else who's more mature than me will have more more light than I have but I don't have to live by the light of his conscience.

I've got to live by the light of my conscience and if right now I don't feel that something is wrong I don't have to go by what he says. Romans 14 is one of the great chapters that teach that that what is sin for one person may not be sin for another person because he doesn't have light on it. So here's a great liberating truth that God loves cheerful givers and I decided that in all of my life I'm going to do everything cheerfully and what I can't do cheerfully well for God anyway I'm not going to let anybody pressurize me to do it.

You'll find tremendous liberation if you get free in this area. The fourth thing I want to say is this we must treat every human being with dignity. If God you know it flows from the other three things God loves me so much and gives me freedom.

I must also treat other people the way God has treated me the way God's been good to me. In James chapter 3 we read these words James chapter 3 you know sometimes we have a question whether that unbeliever can we say that there's anything of the likeness of God in him? Here's a verse that answers that he's talking about our tongue which we cannot tame. Verse 8 no one can tame the tongue and he says with this tongue verse 9 we bless our Lord and Father and we curse men.

Now we're not talking about believers. We curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. Now this is inspired scripture.

This is inspired scripture you take whatever version you like I mean even if you're a King James version fan it says there it's made in the likeness of God. Men are made in the likeness of God that's why even that unbeliever he's got a conscience that tells him he's got a spirit maybe dead but it's a spirit. He was made in the likeness of God and because of that that's the reason James says how can you bless God with this tongue and that's what we all did this evening and you go away and you speak to another person in a very rude and crude way a true Christian will give respect to all human beings because they're made in the likeness of God.

That's what this verse says and that's why James says that if you cannot control your tongue all your Christianity is worth zero. I don't know whether you believe that. I want to show you that verse in James 1 and verse 26.

This is one of the great truths I learned in the last 50 years and when you learn this and you say Lord if this is right I better take seriously the way I use my tongue. I've learned to be extremely careful in the way I use my tongue because of these couple of verses that I read. How can you bless God in the meeting and then go and speak rudely to someone who was made in the image of God? That's a very serious verse in James 1 verse 20 26 James 1 26 says if anyone thinks himself to be religious or in other words he thinks he's a very spiritual Christian but he doesn't control his own tongue he's deceiving himself and his whole religion or his whole Christianity is worth zero.

I want to ask you very honestly my brothers and sisters remember what I said earlier God loves honest people. How many of you how many of you believe that if you cannot control your tongue all your Christianity is worth zero nothing. It's this is what the Bible says I mean if you don't believe it at least from today onward say Lord I want to believe this that all my Christianity is worth nothing if I cannot control my tongue and it's in the home that we have to be most careful.

Treat every human being with dignity and let's begin at home. I remember hearing of a wife who told her husband if you will speak to me at least with the graciousness with which you speak to the strangers who come to the door that'll be enough. I don't ask for I don't ask for anything more than that.

How do you how would you speak to a stranger who came to your door? Total stranger and we have in our people those whom we call loved ones. The stranger who comes to your door is not one of your loved ones. The way we use our tongue shows how much we have come to learn the fear of God.

Now I want to show you an Old Testament verse. You know the Lord gave some laws in the book of Leviticus chapter 19 and one of the laws he gave to people in the Old Testament was this in verse 32 Leviticus chapter 19 in verse 32. You shall rise up before the gray-headed.

When you see a gray-haired person someone who's older than you in age the Lord taught the Israelites you must respect him. You must stand up and honor him. That's the way you show your fear of God.

That's what it says. That's how you show that you reverence God in the Old Testament. That's how the Israelites taught their children to you reverence God by respecting an older person especially a gray-haired person.

I am the Lord honor the agent verse 32 honor the older person and that was old covenant. Now in the new covenant I'll tell you what the standard is. You know the new covenant raised the standard much higher.

I'll show you what the new covenant says. It's even more wonderful. 1 Peter chapter 2. Now you got to contrast this with what you read in the Old Testament.

1 Peter 2 verse 17. 1 Peter 2 verse 17. Here it doesn't say honor the older person.

Here it says honor all men because you're in the new covenant. Honor all men and that's how you prove that you fear God. Again it's linked with the fear of God in the same verse.

Everything in the old covenant has been raised to a higher standard in the new covenant. So how do I show I fear God? All of us would like to believe that we reverence God. Fear of God means reverence for God and we think we reverence God when we praise him and say oh God you're so awesome etc.

It's not there. We can deceive ourselves. It's by the fact that I honor human beings who've been created in the image of God.

Do you despise anyone? That would indicate how unlike God you are. That's what I've discovered. I read a verse in Job chapter 36 in verse 5 once which really I've never forgotten it.

From the time I read it for all my life. Job 36 verse 5. It says God is almighty but he doesn't despise anyone. It's an amazing verse.

God is almighty but he doesn't despise anyone. The devil is full of evil and he despises everyone. So I looked at it like this.

If God is here and he doesn't despise anyone and the devil's here and he despises everyone. We're all somewhere in between. How do I know I'm moving closer to God? By the fact that I despise people less and less and less and less and less.

We all grow up despising certain people. We have prejudice against certain communities. We have prejudice against certain people.

Even though we say we're Christians and very often we think we're better Christians than somebody else. But when we despise people we're showing that we are more like the devil than we're like God. It's a tremendous truth.

It's really changed my life. Just to learn that God, if I say I'm a Christian, one way in which I prove my Christianity is by treating everybody with respect. He may not agree with me.

He may not agree with my doctrines. It doesn't make a difference. He's still a human being and I have to respect him.

Peter says even if somebody were to ask you to when you give your witness to somebody 1 Peter 3 and verse 15. If somebody asks you for a reason for the hope you have, he says give it to him but with verse 15 with gentleness and reverence. 1 Peter 3 15.

That my witnessing to others must never be in this arrogant way where you're down there and I'm up here. But with gentleness and reverence. I found this in witnessing to non-Christians in India.

That the first thing I seek to do is to show them that they are on the same level as me. I'm not on any pedestal above them. I say you and I are both sinners.

We were born sinners and Jesus loves sinners. He came to save us and that puts him at ease because he realizes I'm not trying to show that I'm superior to him. This is so important in witnessing.

It's so important in our treatment of others. When we speak rudely to somebody or you know speak rudely about someone behind their back. We're actually showing that we are closer to the devil than we are to God.

To me it's been a great truth to realize this. There may be people around us who speak evil of others and sometimes we are not able to shut their mouths. I'm not saying that you've got to act sort of holy there and tell them to shut up.

No but don't let it sink into you. Let them live like that. Let's say Lord I'm not going to absorb that.

I'm not going to speak like that. I don't agree with that. I'm also a sinner whom you saved by your grace.

I think of a very godly man who saw a drunkard walking down the road one day and said there go I. There go I but for the grace of God. See that's the mark of a godly man. He recognizes that if it were not for God's grace he would be just like that drunkard and so often we find that we despise people not only for sin in them but for other things.

So many things just because they are different from us. They don't agree. Maybe they've done some things wrong.

Okay we can correct people but I've learned one thing through the years never to despise a human being because they've been made in the image of God and it's not just a matter of the tongue. I will not be able to control my tongue if I despise them in my heart because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. So it's not a question of you know being a good Buddhist and controlling our tongue.

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about yoga controlling our tongue. No Jesus doesn't teach us yoga.

He changes our heart attitude towards people and then our tongues will be all right. Now I want to share this with you dear brothers and sisters. Please be honest.

When you say something with your tongue don't just say oh that wasn't right. It wasn't right I know but go back to the Lord and say Lord why did I say that? It's because of a certain attitude I have in my heart towards that person or towards those type of people and if I don't deal with that I'm going to do it again. I've got to deal with that attitude in my heart.

Jesus has come to save us from all sin. So let me repeat those four things I said today. First of all God loves us as much as you love Jesus.

I find my security in that. That's the first thing I learned in my life that changed my life. Secondly I don't have to be dishonest.

I can acknowledge honestly my failure, my sin. God delights in honest people. Third I never need to feel compelled to do anything.

I don't have to feel that I have to obey till I'm sure God wants me to do it. I'm to do God's will like they do it in heaven. Thy will be done on earth as it's done in heaven.

Cheerfully God loves cheerful givers and fourth let me treat every human being with dignity. I believe if you take this type of Christianity the Bible speaks about you'll change your whole life and our witness as Christians will be completely different. Very often I feel that people have not rejected Christ.

They have rejected the Christ they have seen in Christians and we need to hang our heads in shame and say Lord forgive me for being such a poor testimony. Help me to be a little better testimony for Christ in the days to come. Shall we bow our heads in prayer.

I've spoken primarily to those who are children of God but if you're not a child of God you can respond to Christ also and ask him to come into your life. Don't be turned away by what you've seen in Christians. Jesus is far more wonderful than any Christian you've ever known.

And if you are a Christian if you find that God spoke into your heart today will you say Lord I really want to take seriously even if it's just one thing you spoke to me today I want to take that seriously. I want you to give me the power of your Holy Spirit so that my witness as a Christian will be far better more Christlike than it's been so far. Heavenly Father help us all.

Help us that our lives will be transformed into the likeness of Christ. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you. Amen.

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